

THE BELIEVERS' SECRET TO JOY – LOSING OUR LIVES TO FIND THEM

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One of the most misunderstood statements of Jesus is His call to His followers to lose their lives so that they may find them.

“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it”. (Mt.16.25)

People often misunderstand these words from the One who came to give us abundant life, as if they were an invitation to a life of misery. Nothing could be further from the truth. On the contrary, Jesus is inviting us to ESCAPE a life of misery and enter into the ABUNDANT LIFE He opens for us through His death and Resurrection. He offers a life in the care of His heavenly Father to all who receive the reconciliation He has provided, and change from lives of independence from God to DEPENDENCE upon Him. He promises that when we lose our independent lives, we will enter into a much more joyful and abundant life than any life we could plan for ourselves.

It Is More Than Dedication

The invitation to lay down our lives to follow Jesus, goes further than dedicating our lives to Him and choosing the way of unselfish love. It includes that, but there is more to it than dedication, and this is where many miss it.

In urging us “to lose” our lives, Jesus is not just asking us to be unselfish and dedicated to God, but to abandon ‘self’ completely as the GOVERNING PRINCIPLE of our lives. He is showing us a way out of the tyranny of the

self, with its endless demands, to a life of partnership with Him. Imagine if the greatest earthly king invited you into partnership with Him in exchange for your meagre self-created and self-centered life. This is exactly what Jesus’ invitation is – a challenge to abandon ourselves, deliberately and completely, into the plans and ways He calls us to, and for which He created us

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”. (Matt 11.27-29)

To take the yoke of the Lord is to give up forcing ourselves to perform on the basis of OUR energy and instead to **draw from the energy of the One to whom we are joined**. It releases us from every pressure to invent a personal agenda of self-realization and directs us to the life for which Our Father created us. We discover **life in all its fullness** when we are joined to the Lord and **draw life only from Him**. Our lives are no longer ones of self-improvement but of self-replacement. When we lose our lives for His sake, we allow Him to live His perfect life through us, in every circumstance and situation.

If anyone follows Jesus, allowing himself to be directly governed by Jesus and His life, he is released from the pressure of self-improvement, self-righteousness, self-fulfillment, self-realization, self-governance and he discovers the real life for which he was

created. *“As many as are led by the Spirit these are the sons of God”*.

An Essential Part Of The Good News

The invitation to lay down self is actually an essential part of the GOOD NEWS that is too often neglected. Jesus is saying ‘I know you cannot live the life for which you were designed. Let Me live MY LIFE in and through you by My Spirit, by yielding yourself to Me each day and allowing Me to direct your ways, your thoughts and your works. Then I will manifest Myself through you’.

The call to renounce self as the governing principle - far from being a harsh demand - is exactly the opposite! It is an invitation to allow Him to express His perfect way through us. It takes the burden off SELF to live the life that is impossible for us and replaces it with the most extraordinary privilege of all - **Jesus Himself living and doing the impossible through us.**

In Jesus there is no self-righteousness whatsoever. There is no self-anything - there is simply HIM IN US. It is no longer WE living the dedicated unselfish life, but HIM living HIS perfect life in us and through us. When we lay down (and continue to lay down) not only selfishness, self-determination and self-interests, but SELF itself as the governing principle of our lives, we will BEGIN our lives as His disciples.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”. (Galatians 2.20)

Yes as we take up His ‘yoke’, continually yielding to Him and letting Him express His

actions and reactions through us, we lose our self-engineered and self-driven lives, but we discover His abundant life. We then cease from our works ‘for’ Him, and enter into the rest of faith where He does His works through us and with us.

On the surface, the call to deny ourselves and lose our independent life seems like a negative, harsh demand. This is only because we have looked at it through the prism of religious performance. In fact, it is a call to **rest from self** completely and become partners with Him in life – to be joined to Him and led by His Spirit. Jesus did not say: “My yoke is heavy”. He said: *“My yoke is easy and My burden is light!”* (Mt 11.30)

Four Marks of Taking Laying Down Our lives

- 1) I have ceased to exist as an independently operating human – my life is Christ’s life and His life is my life.
- 2) I am enabled (not by will power or self-effort) but by the life of Jesus’ Spirit in me, as I draw my life and ability from Him and not from myself.
- 3) I cease to have independent goals of my own – I am here to do the will of God each day and in every circumstance.
- 4) I am not guided by my own opinions or desires, the expectations, opinions or traditions of others but am directed by the Spirit and Word of God.