

# Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

**Date** : 10 March 2024

**Sermon Title** : Discipleship: The Heart

**Speaker** : Rev Peter Koh

**Text** : Luke 9:23

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## INTRODUCTION

What captivates our heart, also captures our attention. This often means that we will go all out to pursue whatever captures our heart. It is important for us to focus on our heart as it can be the source of good values or pride or selfishness. Conversely, if our heart is not invested in something, it is common that we find excuses not to do it. Let us examine Luke 9:23 to understand what Jesus says about the heart of discipleship.

### **Luke 9:23**

*And he said to all, "If **anyone** would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

#### 1. The People

Who was Jesus addressing in Luke 9:23? At first glance it seems that Jesus was addressing the disciples. However, Mark 8:34 records that Jesus gathered the crowd and the disciples saying, " *If **anyone** would come after me...*" Based on the context shared in Mark 8:34, it implies that the message was not meant solely for the disciples but for all who gather to learn from Jesus, including us. God is telling us that to follow Jesus, we need to take up our cross daily. This is a difficult truth for us to accept and live out in our daily lives. This was even more challenging for Jesus' disciples as during their time, "carrying the cross" was considered a one-way ticket to death. The Romans made criminals carry a huge wooden cross to a place where they would be punished and killed. How will we answer this tough call to follow Jesus? God calls us to radical discipleship which involves whole-hearted commitment to follow Him. This message is for every one of us.

#### 2. Our Posture

What does it mean to take up our cross daily. Taking up our cross is not just about commitment; it is about surrender.

Commitment means I am still in control. For example, I can say I am committed to come to church but if I do not come every Sunday, it is still fine. Surrender assumes that God has control over us. It is no longer about our will but His will. Surrender is about whole-hearted surrendering of our will and learning to embrace God's will in our lives. The posture we embrace in surrender is one of humility, total surrender and that

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# **Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion**

we are God's servants who cry out "You are my Lord!" This is a challenging posture, not an easy thing to embrace.

### 3. Our Purpose

The purpose of God's commandment is for us to follow Him, to learn from Him how to make fishers of men. His purpose is to equip and give us meaning in life and to do His will. Denying ourselves does not necessarily mean embracing an ascetic lifestyle, lack or suffering. Denying ourselves is about Christ-centeredness and not self-centeredness. It is about God's will and not our will, and that is why God calls us and gives us a purpose.

### **Denying ourselves**

Denying ourselves means 'dethroning self' (my will) and 'enthroning Christ' (God's will) and having our "I" step down. God has a plan worked out for us but we tend to do what we feel like doing and want to do. This was what happened with the Israelites in the wilderness when they chose to worship a golden calf and wandered an extra 40 years in the desert. Have we learnt to serve God and surrender to Him? Do we pledge our allegiance to Him because He loves us? Are we able to walk away from the pleasures of this world and turn our eyes to God? The pleasures of this world distract us from God and cause us to sin, as sin is pleasurable. We sin because it is gratifying to the flesh. We struggle as we want to feel that instant gratification, but we forget that it is only temporal. Are we willing to forsake these temporal pleasures for an eternal God?

### **Taking up our cross**

Taking up the cross is not about our burden but about our willingness to pay the price and do the will and purpose of God daily. The cross that Jesus wants us to carry involves a daily death to ourselves, temptations, and sin. We need to daily dethrone our 'self' and enthrone God in our lives. God desires us to do His will and purpose. His will is meant for our good, and not meant to torture us and make us miserable because God desires that we have life in abundance and fullness (John 10:10). The intent of God is for our good and He calls us to a life of surrendered discipleship. We follow Him as He protects and provides for us and guides us. As we follow Him, God encourages us through Matthew 11:30 – "His yoke is easy and His burden is light".

### **CONCLUSION**

As we embark on this journey with Jesus, we must learn to trust God with our whole life. This is the heart of discipleship and God will enable us to walk this journey. As we serve and obey Him, we will see miracles happen. At the wedding of Canaan, the servants experienced the miracle of water turning to wine. When Jesus fed the multitudes with five loaves and two fish, the disciples experienced the miracle of God's provision. When we answer to the call of true discipleship, we get to see God's miracles and enjoy the wonder and beauty of God's power in our time of need. This kind of

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discipleship is only experienced when we deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Him. Let us guard our heart of discipleship and God will help us to overcome as we surrender ourselves and trust Him whole-heartedly.

## **A. Review Sermon Application**

***Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.***

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
  - 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?
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2. Appoint someone to read Luke 9:23 slowly.
    - a. How does this verse speak to you personally?

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## **B. Relate Sermon Content**

***Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.***

- 3a. Is your discipleship posture in following Jesus a commitment or surrender?
- 3b. Who is on the throne/in control of your life?
- 3c. Would you still follow Jesus if this means you will be carrying a one-way ticket to death just like His early disciples?
  
- 4a. What would denying yourself, carrying your cross daily and following Jesus look like in your life.
- 4b. Identify an area/s of your life that you find difficult to deny yourself and take up your cross daily. Share why you find it difficult to deny yourself in this area of your life.
- 4c. What is one thing you can do for your life to look more like in 4a. above?
- 4d. How can your group members encourage or help you to overcome 4b. and achieve 4c. in the following week(s) until your next meeting?

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## C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

*Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.*

5. Share an experience where you have encountered God's provision and empowerment as you whole-heartedly denied your will and followed His.

OR

Give thanks to God that He protects us, provides for us and empowers us as we surrender to Him and deny ourselves, take up our cross daily to follow Him.

6. With a prayer partner, pray for the action steps/changes you have committed to in question 4 above, surrendering your fears and challenges to God. Pray that as an individual and a group, you will commit to keep each other accountable in your discipleship journey.

Pray also for the Holy Spirit to convict you and our church, if anything other than God is enthroned in our lives, so we may surrender control of our lives to God whole-heartedly to follow Him.

### Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. I Believe – Phil Wickham [https://youtu.be/d7PRGMQxNcM?si=6TJZTXzgwQsPg\\_0b](https://youtu.be/d7PRGMQxNcM?si=6TJZTXzgwQsPg_0b)
2. Worthy is The Lamb – Hillsong <https://youtu.be/p9qXEiXxQl0?si=haalfkQ5RBz0jX8G>
3. I Surrender – Hillsong <https://youtu.be/6HbpTi8dIB8?si=wgzIZoXVYEUub6Sz>

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