



*Walk as Jesus Walked, part **THREE***, May 2-5 Ray VanderLaan, Volume 7

WHY LEARNING COMMUNITIES? **Circle Two Opportunity...**

To become better and better disciples of Christ **TOGETHER** so we can face **anything** through...

1. Deeper learning of Biblical truth,
2. Stronger “iron sharpening iron” relationships

Ephesians 4:12–16

IRON SHARPENING IRON STUFF:

➤ Herb sensing...

1. HIGH PRIORITY – paying attention and living in step for the Unseen
2. Truth and Trust from Sunday... going from unbroken to transformed. Thoughts?
Inability/God’s ability, failures/restoration, our plans/God’s future/ comparing to others or Christ
3. Irony: the cross is the symbol of Christianity and is now at part of antisemitism accusations.
4. Superficial Christianity results when we don’t have a lifestyle of doing hard things consistently. That which feels bad at the time is so often God’s opportunity in many ways.

WHY CHRISTIANS SUFFER — THE WEIGHT OF GETHSEMANE

Ray Vander Laan. *Walk as Jesus Walked Discovery Guide Book 7*, Kindle (p. 111). HarperChristian Resources

This session focuses on Jesus’ suffering and His words that we will suffer, too, if we truly follow Him.

We are familiar with the cross. We see it in jewelry, art, stained glass, etc. We stand with the community of Jesus from ancient times in honoring the cross, and we profess a crucified Messiah in song and creed. We love that old rugged cross, the symbol of our relationship with God and the sign of our entrance into heaven.

But how closely does what the cross symbolizes for us resemble what it meant to Jesus and his disciples?

Jesus must have shocked His disciples with the words, “*If anyone would come [walk] after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*” (Matthew 16:24). They knew all too well what the cross and crucifixion meant. The Romans had honed their skills in torture and brutality. After soldiers sadistically flogged the condemned person and paraded him or her through the streets where passersby mocked, pitied, or wept, the person was hung on a cross. Those who were best at crucifixion could ensure three days of excruciating pain for their victims before they would succumb to the relief of death.

If Jesus’ invitation to His disciples was not frightening enough, He demonstrated by His own example what “take up His cross” meant. He spent hours in anguished prayer, pressed to the breaking point with knowledge of what He would have to bear. Then, in complete obedience to the Father, He willingly took up His cross and poured out His life as a sacrifice for us. **So where do we stand two thousand years later?** We may desire to be His disciples, but do we really want to “take up our cross”? Do we prefer a theology that keeps crosses far away. Does the idea offend us? It’s more comfortable to believe in a Jesus who went to the cross **so we would not have to**. After all, we think, He was Messiah, the promised Savior. He had to suffer so we could receive eternal life.

By the grace of God this is true. Our “cross” will never have the meaning of Jesus’ cross. He “took up His cross” as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Yet His call to discipleship **demands** that we imitate Him and that means we also must take up our cross. This is an unpopular message in a culture that glorifies comfort and leisure and leaves no stone, or pill, unturned to avoid pain. Yet God calls us to be disciples — talmidim, who passionately and obediently seek to imitate our Rabbi in every way. If we desire to be disciples who make disciples, we **must** take up the cross. We must be willing to sacrifice and suffer in His name for what we believe... to identify with those He came to love — the unlovable...to be unpopular because our walk with Jesus will indict our cross-free culture.

Peter, one of Jesus’ disciples, wrote,

1 Peter 2:21 (ESV) For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

Peter chose to follow in Jesus’ steps. He died, tradition tells us, on a cross. Many of our ancient brothers and sisters in the faith followed in those same steps. They took the words of Jesus seriously and willingly took up the cross even when they knew that following in the steps of the Rabbi would lead to death. Let’s see how their faithful example encourages us to follow **Jesus’ ancient command, “Take up your cross and follow me!”**

Think About It...

Jesus said that that anyone who comes after Him “must deny himself and take up his cross (daily) and follow Me”

- What are the common understandings of that phrase in our culture?
- What do you think Jesus’ disciples understood them to mean?
- What do you think Jesus meant when He said them?

VIDEO Content

1 John 2:6 (ESV) whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

→ Cappadocia

→ Images of a gethsemane

The word gethsemane is the English transliteration of a Greek word derived from two Hebrew (or Aramaic) words: gat or gath, “a place for pressing oil or wine,” and shemanim, “oils.” So, a **gethsemane is an olive (or oil) press**. The press near the Mount of Olives where Jesus often went was so large that the surrounding area became known as “Gethsemane.” The press would have been idle at the time Jesus was arrested because Passover is in the springtime.

THE question: why does a disciple who is passionate to follow the Rabbi have to suffer?

→ The call of a Rabbi who suffered

Matthew 16:24 (ESV) Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

→ Echoes of those who followed the Rabbi into suffering

Matthew 5:10–12 (ESV)

John 15:18–20 (ESV)

Colossians 1:24 (ESV) Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

If we are the Body of Jesus, we WILL continue to suffer for others as Jesus did

RAY VANDER LAAN APPLICATION THOUGHTS:

The descriptions of Jesus in prayer, His actions and demeanor, and His interaction with His disciples help portray His human nature and the staggering weight He carried the night before His crucifixion. Read Matthew 26:39 – 41, 53 – 54 and Luke 22:39 – 46, then discuss the following questions.

Matthew 26:39–41 (ESV)

Luke 22:39–46 (ESV)

Thinking of Jesus’ suffering as our possible future, not just His work...

- What temptation(s) might Jesus have faced during this time of suffering?
- How intensely did Jesus feel the pressure?
- How do we know from these that Jesus completely submitted Himself to the will of God the Father and poured Himself out as an offering for the sins of the world? How did God respond to Him?
- In what ways was the mind-set of the disciples in Gethsemane so different from that of Jesus?
Were they being talmidim, true disciples of the Rabbi, that night? Why or why not?
In what ways might the events of that night have affected their future walk with Jesus?
- In what ways do the images of a gethsemane — the crushing and pressing of the olives and the precious, golden oil that results — help you appreciate what Jesus endured for you?
- How do the hours Jesus spent in prayer and the anguish and sorrow He felt in Gethsemane shape your understanding of God’s love for you?
- What does the example Jesus set in Gethsemane mean to you as you seek to be His disciple and walk as He walked? In what ways does His example better prepare you to face suffering?

Takeaways...



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