



## Gospel Community Notes & Questions

**Title:** The Practice of Self-denial

**Text:** Luke 9:23-25, 57-62; 14:25-33

**Theme:** Self-denial is the practice of saying “no” to your natural instincts and desires in order to receive more of Jesus.

**Teaching Notes:** Jesus never told us to express ourselves or simply add him to our already-self-determined lives. He told us to deny ourselves, to lose our lives for his sake. Far from encouraging the life of an ascetic, Jesus was urging us to give up something lesser in order to receive something far greater. Simple practices like fasting remind us of this larger truth.

### Outline:

#### 1. The Path of Self-denial.

- a. Self-denial means shifting our identity.
- b. Self-denial means shifting our allegiance.
- c. Self-denial means shifting our priorities.

#### 2. The Paradox of Self-denial.

- a. The one who calls you to lose your life gave his life for you.
- b. In losing your old self you find your true self.

#### 3. The Practice of Self-denial.

- a. Form the habit of cross-bearing.
- b. Form the habit of cost-counting.
- c. Form the habit of fasting.



**Questions to explore individually and with your group:**

1. Much of Western Christianity (including otherwise Orthodox Evangelicals) preaches a gospel of self-fulfillment, rather than self-denial. Give some examples of what that sounds like that you've read or heard. (e.g. "Jesus loves you just the way you are.")
2. What are some (presumably unintended) consequences of #1 that you've observed?
3. It's natural to find your identity – your sense of validation and worth – in something you do, something you have, or something you desire. Give examples of each from your own life. What are your top three sources of identity right now?
4. Think about your loyalties and priorities. Who/what sets your agenda? Out of all the things you want to accomplish, what must you accomplish – and why?
5. How do the things you listed in #3-4 end up controlling you? How do they pull you in directions counter to how Jesus is leading you? What are some ways these things illustrate the truth of Jesus' words, "No one can serve two masters"?
6. What is the cross Jesus is asking you to carry right now? (Again, from the message, your cross isn't your frustrations, trials, or pains. It's more like the thing you have to sacrifice daily in order to be free to serve Jesus wholeheartedly.)
7. What practical benefit is there to counting the cost of following Jesus if the answer is simply, "It's going to cost you everything, and it'll be worth it"?
8. Fasting is the voluntary denial of a physical appetite in order to focus on and feed a spiritual appetite. With that in mind, what are some physical things you might choose to fast from? What might fasting from that thing accomplish in your life (think holistically!)?
9. Self-denial doesn't exist for its own sake. What would you hope to see God do in your life through the deliberate practice of self-denial?
10. What's one practical, specific thing you'll do with the message this week?