

Is the Christian life an easy life?

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it." - Luke 9:23-24

Clarence Jordan, the author of the *Cotton Patch New Testament* translation, was getting a red-carpet tour of a brand-new church. With pride, the pastor pointed out the beautiful pews, the luxurious decorations, and the beautiful, handcrafted pulpit in the front.

The two walked outside as darkness was falling, and the pastor pointed up at a huge cross atop the structure, illuminated by several bright spotlights. "That cross alone cost us ten thousand dollars," the pastor boasted proudly.

"It looks like you got cheated," said Jordan. "Times were when Christians could get those for free."

When we look at the cross, it's crucial we remember what that symbol is really all about. During the time of Jesus, the cross was the ultimate sign of shame—a torture and execution device for the lowliest of criminals.

When Jesus said that a follower of His should "take up their cross daily and follow me," He wasn't talking about a glorious life. He meant that a disciple would encounter hardship, persecution, and even death for His sake. He did promise, however, that it would all be worth it.

Don't let the spiritual freedoms you enjoy today cause you to forget the price of following Christ. Be willing to do whatever it takes to stay faithful. And even if the Lord allows you to suffer for the sake of Christ, remember it will all be worth it!

Prayer Challenge

Pray that God would give you a commitment to follow Christ not because it's easy, but because it's worth any suffering you encounter.

Questions for Thought

In the parts of the world where we enjoy religious freedom, why do you think it's easy to forget what the cross really means?

How might your life look different if you truly committed yourself to following Christ no matter the consequences?

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