

Dying in Order to Live

When we look at the life and ministry of Jesus, we find he was always giving himself away.

A concise picture of his attitude is found in Paul's letter to the Philippians:

Philippians 2:3 (NET) - "Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself.

"You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature.

"He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross! As a result God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow - in heaven and on earth and under the earth - and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

But, surely Jesus was special - he had a mission to complete that we don't. That's true, but the "Way" that He walked through life, He said, is to become our own path.

Jesus told his disciples, "Unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself alone. But if it dies, it produces much fruit."

Then he proposes a paradox: "Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (**John 12:25 NIV**). To "hate" your life means in the Greek language of the New Testament to "disregard," "neglect" or "be indifferent to" your life.

We disregard our own lives in order to see and meet the needs of those around us.

Jesus calls for us to "die to self" in an imitation of his attitude of giving.

Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (**Matthew 16:24-25**)

Let's be clear - Jesus was not calling for us all to physically commit suicide. The word for "deny" yourself means to "abandon," to let go of control of your life.

New believers traditionally are immersed or baptized in water to mark their spiritual transition to a new life. It's one of the beloved rituals of the church.

Romans 6:3-4 NET - "...do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too may live a new life."

Before we live in the resurrection life of Christ, we have to die to our old way of living.

"So you too consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." (**Romans 6:11**)

The "old me" is dead. Now Christ is my life.

Galatians 2:20 - "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."

This is why the gospel or "good news" is really *bad news* for the old "me" - our old way of life - what Paul refers to as the "flesh." It doesn't want to die. It struggles against the Spirit, Paul tells us.

As long as we're physically alive in this world, we're called to "reckon our selves as dead."

We don't have the strength to do this by ourselves, but the Holy Spirit provides us with that ability, and we encourage one another.

Think about the different ways your path might change when your old Self is gone and God can direct your life.

By the way, the Greek word for being a "witness" for Christ is "martyr." That term not only describes believers who lost their lives through persecution, but it applies to all of us who consider ourselves as dead.