

Self-Denial vs. Self-Neglect

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’” (Matt. 16:24, ESV).

Part of following Jesus is daily denying our flesh. It’s essential to fulfilling everything God has called us to. But don’t confuse self-denial with self-neglect.

“‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her’” (Luke 10:41-42 NIV).

Self-denial is not about sacrificing your sleep, exercise, quality time with loved ones or relationship with God. That is self-neglect. Self-denial is laying down your will to pursue God’s purpose. It is pressing into the presence of God, the One who loves you and cares for your best interests. He knows what He has called you to, and He knows what you need to keep going. The one thing you need above all else is His presence.

On that note, your time of prayer and praise need not be seen as another demand the Lord places on you. It is something He provides for your refreshing, guidance and growth. You may want to give God hours of focused time and may worry when you have only a few minutes for Him in your day. But if you are living by the guidance of God’s Spirit, He isn’t surprised when you don’t have hours available. He knows how He has directed you to live.

God is a faithful guide. He will never lead you to neglect His presence. He will direct you through your day, providing exactly the amount of time alone with Him that you need.

By living in communion with God’s Spirit, you can experience the same refreshment and peace you receive alone in His

presence while you spend time with your family, go about your work or run weekly errands. With His guidance, you can learn to practice the denial of your will—not the neglect of your self, your family or your calling.

Which do you practice: self-denial or self-neglect? How do you know? How can you grow in sensitivity to God's Spirit and learn to prioritize His purposes?

*Adapted from Out of Control and Loving It! **Lisa Bevere** is a best-selling author of Fight Like a Girl, Kissed the Girls and Made them Cry, Out of Control and Loving It! and Be Angry and Don't Blow It! In addition to speaking at national and international conferences, she is a frequent guest on Christian television and radio shows. She and her husband, best-selling author John Bevere, make their home in Colorado.*