

‘Choco’ De Jesús Explains How to Lose Your Life to Follow Jesus

Every person is born self-absorbed, but that’s because it’s our nature to be selfish. This inbred bent is inflamed by our consumer culture. The ads we see and hear promise that the next purchase will give us ultimate fulfillment—and that’s what we think is the good life: having everything we want and avoiding everything that’s annoying or painful.

But Jesus came not to be served but to serve. No one took His life; He freely gave it. The Pharisees and the Romans played only bit parts in the drama. His reason for coming to earth was to die a shameful death, so we could receive forgiveness, honor and adoption into God’s family. In one of the most powerful statements in the Gospels, Jesus said these words to those who were committed to follow Him:

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done” (Matt. 16:24-27, NIV).

Jesus gives us a cost-benefit analysis. If we organize our pursuits around our own pleasure, prestige and power, we’ll live with the nagging fear that we’ll never have enough. We’ll compare ourselves with others, and we’ll believe that we aren’t handsome enough, pretty enough, smart enough, talented enough or rich enough.

But if we say no to selfish ambition and yes to Jesus' purpose, we'll organize our lives around Him—His love, His power, His timetable and His goals. And we'll experience the joy of knowing the God of glory, the love of the one who gave everything for us and the power of the Spirit as we align our purposes with His.

Jesus doesn't force us to lay down our selfish ambitions and follow Him. It's our choice—and the results are our consequences. If we demand our own way, we'll follow our desires and emotions. And if we want to play it safe and avoid risks, we'll miss out on the blessings God has for us.

The kingdom of God is upside down: If we lose our lives for Jesus' sake, we'll find real life. But if we cling to our selfish ambitions and live to protect ourselves from risks, we'll lose the joy and impact for which God created us. This is entirely countercultural. When we follow Jesus, we choose Him and His values and purposes over everything the world promises. We're willing to lose opportunities, our reputations and our comfort, so Jesus' kingdom will be advanced. We're willing to love when it's unpopular and inconvenient.

People will post ugly comments about us on social media. They'll gossip about us, make fun of us and avoid us. When we read the accounts of Jesus' life, we get vivid reminders that His love was unpopular with the religious elite, and it proved to be far more than inconvenient—it cost Him His life.

The men and women in the Rose of Sharon ministry at New Life Covenant Church in Chicago sacrifice every Friday night to go out to the streets to meet prostitutes. They give each lady a rose and tell her, "This is what Jesus thinks of you. You're as precious as this rose." And they pray for these ladies. If you ask this team how they feel about losing their Friday nights for the sake of Christ, they'll laugh at the thought. This is what they live for! Bringing light into the darkness of these lives gives them the deepest sense of fulfillment:

They're doing what Jesus would do, with the love He has for all people, with no strings attached. Many of the women who have come to the New Life for Women farm that the church runs for recovering prostitutes are the direct result of this team's love.

When we say no to our selfish desires and yes to Jesus, we get in touch with the heart of love; we obey the command to love; and we realize the emptiness of not loving—and God uses us to give hope to the hopeless, courage to the timid and security to the fearful. {eoa}

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