Dear Open Door Family,

What does it mean to be a true follower of Jesus Christ? I was reading about a young man in Turkey who passed out literature to others after he had become a Christian. He was arrested for crimes against Islam and held for 30 days in horrible conditions before finally being released. During his time in prison God used him to touch the lives of many with the gospel. But he paid a price for being a follower of Jesus Christ. Is that what it means to be a disciple of Jesus? Is that what true commitment looks like? What does that mean for me here today? Let's look at these verses together:

Matthew 10:38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (ESV)

I have heard many descriptions of what this verse means. Many make applications of physical suffering or sickness being the "cross" a person has taken up. Yet, I think that though that may be part of it, this is much more a picture of what the Lord Jesus expects of us as His committed followers of His. Jesus expects true humility and complete submission if we are going to be true disciples. To follow Jesus is a daily moment by moment decision requiring us to focus on Him and what He expects of us. To take up our cross will require our crying out to Him for help in carrying it because we cannot do it alone. "Crucifixion is a shocking metaphor for discipleship. A disciple must deny himself (die to self-will), take up his cross (embrace God's will, no matter the cost), and follow Christ."(ESV Study Bible)

"When he bids us take up our cross, he means come and die. The cross was a place of horrible execution. ...So today the words are sobering. They mean at least that when I follow Jesus as my Savior and Lord, the old self-determining, self-absorbed me must be crucified. I must everyday reckon myself dead to sin and alive to God" (Fifty Reasons Jesus Came to Die - Piper pg. 95)

PRAYER: Lord, whatever You have in mind, please give me the ability to obey You. Increase my determination to obey and Lord help me to willingly take up the cross and die today. Help me to live in the Shadow of Your Cross Lord Jesus.

Pastor Mark Kieft
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