

It is important to ensure fellowship with God before the study of the Word.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Isaiah 55:11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

In review –

POD: Spiritual advance or attaining great landmarks in the spiritual life oftentimes results in arrogant presumption.

POD: Blessing follows [or accompanies] the arrival at landmarks in the spiritual life.

After great blessing, Peter began to function on arrogant skills; he tried to forbid something on earth!

“God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to You.”

Peter functioned on arrogance skills by not giving credit to Whom credit was due.

It is only through God’s grace that any believer can advance in the spiritual life!

Matthew 16:17b “. . . flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”

POD: Giving credit to Whom credit is due protects the believer amidst blessing from arrogance.

God’s grace was not withheld or lessened in the life of Peter, because of demerit.

POD: Arrogance after attaining spiritual landmarks is followed by the Lord’s discipline to enforce humility required for future advance.

“Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me.” **Matthew 16:23**

God’s discipline is always in grace!

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must **deny himself**, and take up his cross and follow Me.”

- There are two requirements for following the example of our Savior.
- **Deny** - ἀπαρνέομαι – APARNEOMAI – *To refuse; to resist or to say no*
- **Himself** - ἑαυτοῦ - HEAUTOU – *Himself*
- If we want to follow the example that Christ set as the author and perfecter of our faith we must say no to self.

Saying NO to self is tantamount to NOT DOING whatever you want to do.

We are conditioned by the world . . .
 . . . to do what we want to do!
 . . . to live where we want to live!
 . . . to be who we want to be!

How many times did you hear as a kid, “What do you want to be when you grow up?”

- The proper response is, whatever the Lord wants me to be.

We often set out to accomplish the things that WE want to do apart from even bringing that matter before the Lord to ask His opinion!

The **first** requirement to following the Lord begins in the heart and is born from genuine humility.

- Genuine humility results in submission.

The **second** requirement is actually doing something.

- **Take up his cross - αἶρω – AIRO – To lift up or to carry.**
- **ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ** - Literally *“to lift up the cross of his”*
- The definite article governing the word **cross** is monadic and when followed by the possessive genitive it indicates each believer has a unique cross specifically designed by the Lord for him to carry.

The cross represents the will of God for the believer’s life.

The will of God for YOUR life is unique!

- God is the One who must reveal that will to you.
- God does that through the Mentorship of God the Holy Spirit if you are a willing vessel.
- God does not reveal His discernable will to unwilling vessels or vessels that presume to know His will.

αἶρω is comprehensive - - you must fulfill the action of *“lifting up.”*

From beginning to end - you are the one that must lift up that cross and carry it to the finish line of your life.

God’s plan for you is UNIQUE – only you can fulfill that unique plan.

Are you a willing vessel?

Remember that you can do nothing apart from Him.

The strength to *“lift up or bear up your cross”* is not yours but comes from the power of God the Holy Spirit through His filling ministry.

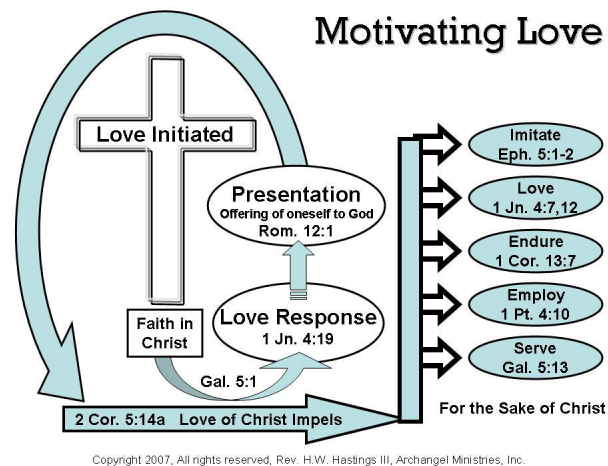
We maintain the filling of the Spirit by relying upon Him – *“Walking by means of the Spirit.”*

Matthew 16:25 “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

- ✚ The man who “*saves his life*” is the one who does whatever he wants to do.
 - The one who “*saves his life*” is not willing to deny self.
 - The one who “*saves his life*” lacks contentment.
- ✚ The man who “*loses his life*” is the one who seeks the unique life God has planned for him.
 - The one who “*loses his life*” is the one who denies self and begins fulfilling God’s plan for his life.
 - The one who “*loses his life*” lifts up that cross the Lord designed him to bear.
 - The one who “*loses his life*” does it for the sake of Christ.

... but whoever loses his life **for My sake.**

- ἕνεκα ἐγὼ – **HENEKA plus EGO** – *Because of or on account of Christ*
- The motivation to pick up your cross and carry it is your love for Jesus Christ *because* of what He accomplished for you IN GRACE!



1 Corinthians 16:14 *Let all that you do be done in love.*

Matthew 16:26-28 “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Stonewall Jackson said, “The most important thing in the world is to know the will of God and then do it!”

There is nothing more important than going where God wants us to go, doing what He wants us to do, and being who He wants us to be!

There is nothing more important than each of us lifting up our cross and carrying it to the finish line of life!

²⁷ “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. ²⁸ Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

That is exactly what Peter, James, and John saw six days later!

Matthew 17:1 Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. . . .

All Scriptures quoted are from New American Standard unless otherwise noted.