

Connecting Messiah to Me:
Requirement #1: Self-denial
Luke 9:23

Nutshell: Jesus connects His first, full-bodied definition of Messiah to what that means for His followers. Just as fulfilling the duties of Messiah would be no walk in the park for Him, so His followers would be sharing in His absolutely demanding road.

I. Context: Jesus defining Messiah.

II. Text

Luke 9:23 Also He was saying to all *of them*, "If anyone desires to come behind Me, he must deny himself and he must take up his cross, and he must keep on following Me."

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

A. An outline of Luke to this point

I. About this Letter: So you'll know about this Jesus, 1:1-4

II. Testimonies to Messiah's coming. A boyhood turning point, 1:5-2:52

III. John proclaims repentance for Christ's coming, 3:1 - 20

IV. Messiah's Entry Credentials: Baptism and Genealogy, 3:21-38

V. His Initiation: Fasting and Temptation, 4:1 - 13

VI. His Self-Introduction and Hometown Rejection, 4:14 - 30

VII. Jesus: The FIRST MAN with all authority over demons, sickness, and nature, 4:31 - 5:11

VIII. Turning-Point Healings, 5:12 - 32

A. Repatriating a leper, 5:12 - 16, touching the unclean outcast to preview His taking of our exile/ disease into Himself

B. Forgiving sin, 5:17 - 26, thus declaring His Deity

C. Healing/ renewal of a man's (Matthew's) soul, 5:27 - 32

IX. New and Old Covenants:

A. NC = OC *replacement*, ~~patch-up~~, 5:33-39. NC: Law in ♥.

B. 6:1-11, OC Sabbath *strict*, but intended as a *help*.

X. Picking The 12, 6:12-16; teaching / etc., incl. Tyrites, 6:17-19

XI. Jesus' manifesto: the **SERMON ON THE PLAIN**, 6:20-49

- A. Literal poor vs. rich. Love haters. Give. Be piteous.
- B. Only right teaching creates right living. Convict *self* 1st. Only building on Christ will survive life's floodplains.

XII. Messiah's **MISSION** Portrayed in His Interactions

- A. Forecast: A **Gentile** seeks Jesus for a healing, Lk 7:1-10
- B. Forecast: Hope still held out to **Israel**: Nain widow, 11-17
- C. John's Q. A.: 2 diverse comings & an interval, 7:24-30
- D. John & Jesus differently wise. Both rejected, 7:31-35
- E. Love for Jesus is tied to forgiveness. The sinful woman had both; Simon the Pharisee lacked both, 7:36-50.
- F. 8:1-15, 4 Soils = 4 kinds of "hearing" of the **Word**. Only a "virtuous and sound heart" is living and fruit-bearing
 - 1. Hence, take care HOW you hear that Word, 8:16-18
 - 2. Mary as mom not an insider; Word-doers only, 8:19-21
- G. It is a Word of **power** over nature (8:22-25), demons (8:26-39), sickness (8:40-48), and death (8:49-56)

XIII. Messiah's **COMMISSION**, the first

- A. You 12 preach, heal, and exorcise as I have. Live on what you're given. Where unwelcome, disassociate, 9:1-6
- B. Guesses given to Herod about Jesus' identity, 9:7-9
- C. New ministry lesson: *You* 12 feed the crowd, 9:10-17
- D. Popular opinion: Jesus = a previous prophet, 9:18-20
 - 1. "But who do ya'll say I am?" Peter: "God's Anointed"
 - ★ 2. "Don't spread that. Messiah's work is not a completed one until His death and resurrection," 21-22

Kid-speak: Last time, Jesus told His helpers not to tell who He was. Why was that? Because He still needed to finish the work of Messiah.

B. 9:23a, What does Jesus as Messiah mean for His followers? Just as His own road was blocked off from self-indulgence, so ours will be in following Him.

Outline:

- i. There is Instruction to Us Connected to Jesus Being Messiah
 - A. Messiah is a work of suffering, being hated, and dying

- B. Following Messiah entails the same
- II. A Word to All Would-be Followers
- III. There are Requirements
- IV. Requirement #1: Deny Yourself
 - A. Self-Denial in the Old Testament
 - B. Self-Denial Peculiar to Messiah as God's Finality
 - C. Deny Yourself Compared to Hating Yourself
- V. Self-Denial How-to

- C. Last time, Jesus "strictly warned them" not to tell that He was Messiah
 - 1. *Since* He was now filling in the definition of Messiah for them:
 - (a. Now that they understood THAT He was Messiah- not someone else, per Peter's confession,
 - b. they could learn the *fuller definition* of Messiah,
 - c. which was there in the OT the whole time, but even John the baptist hadn't put the whole deal together yet;
 - d. or maybe John only missed the eschatological aspect, since He already knew Messiah to be God's Lamb)

Kid-speak: Where did Jesus learn who He was as the Messiah? In the Old Testament.

- 2. New, fuller definition of Messiah: one who must suffer, be mistreated by the Jewish leaders, be killed, and be raised the third day
 - 3. Zhoop! Right over their heads all that goes!
 - a. But the Spirit will bring it back to mind
 - b. Along with today's **CONNECTED INSTRUCTION**:
 - 4. **YOU MUST SUFFER and DIE AS WELL**
 - a. That is, if you still want to follow me,
 - b. especially after you see where I go (the Cross)
 - 5. The earthly state of Christ's disciples, then, is linked to that of their Master
 - a. Specifically as to: self-denial,
 - b. putting the sinful self to death (for Messiah, refusing all suggestions *to sin*),
 - c. and marching on in Christ's pattern
- D. "Also He was saying to all *of them*"

1. “All of them, because the previous word about Messiah’s definition was to the Apostles specifically,
 2. since the Apostles were the ones entrusted with guarding and disseminating that definition
- E. “And He was saying to all *of them*”
1. This can also be, “and He began saying to all *of them*”
 2. Meaning that now that they had the real definition of Messiah, He would *from now on* be emphasizing more specifically HOW THAT RELATED TO ALL HIS FOLLOWERS
- F. “If anyone wants to come behind Me”
1. Usually translated “after Me”
 - a. “Behind Me” to avoid possibly mistaking “after” as a *time* reference
 - b. It is a *spatial* reference: us entering the space behind Jesus, where He is walking ahead of us
 - c. What space is that? Telling the truth about the world, Jn 7:7; orienting ourselves to God’s will and ways, Jn 4:34
 2. “If anyone wishes”
 - a. “Wishes/ wants/ desires/ wills”
 - ◇ b. The requirements listed tell us that not everyone who first *wants* to follow Jesus will be able to carry through
 - c. That is daunting info, Lk 13:24
 - d. But Jesus lays out the requirement clearly
 - e. It obviously isn’t impossible, or Heaven wouldn’t be massively populated, Rev 7:9
 3. Success in following Christ includes ‘substantial’ Divine help, Philip 1:6 ☺
 4. But we recognize its beginning with a desire within us
 - a. We see that Jesus is good, right, and that He loves us
 - b. We feel that He’s beckoning us to follow
 - c. We want to be where He is
 - d. Following is the only course

Kid-speak: Jesus said, “If anybody wants to follow Me...” Do you want to follow Jesus?

The Requirements

- G. “Requirements” may be an intimidating word
1. But it’s not an obstacle course; it’s simply a reality:

- ❖2. that is, because of *where we're starting from*, nothing short of these drastic measures will see us beyond the self-seeking characters we had before meeting Jesus
- 3. *That* obstacle is something real disciples see
 - a. They see the hindrance to the Gospel Way in their very souls
 - b. They appreciate the necessity of ongoing, discouraging self-war: my new self with my old, Gal 5:17
 - c. The outcome is not guaranteed for a particular soul. There *are* those who suffer shipwreck, 1 Tim 1:19
- 4. So the 'requirements' move way beyond 'checking boxes' to a plan of attack/ a plan for success/ a defense model
- H. All 3 requirements Jesus lists are in the *imperative*
 - 1. The first two are *aorist*: settled actions
 - 2. The last one is *present*: ongoing action
 - 3. I have translated all 3 as clear imperatives by using "he must" (following several good translations)
 - a. "He must" as opposed to "let him," which is also grammatically good for an imperative
 - b. I translated the present with "keep on"

Kid-speak: If we want to follow Jesus, are there things we HAVE TO do? Yes.

- I. Requirement #1: "He must deny himself"
 - 1. We saw the word "deny" in 8:45 (Luke, 4x)
 - a. The English word means the same as its Greek counterpart: to contradict; refuse to grant; disown; reject
 - b. The *opposite* of self-denial will appear in 12:9, denying Christ
 - c. Then Peter will deny Christ in 22:57
 - 2. The word "self" comes from the verb being in middle voice
 - 3. Easy translation, Just say no to yourself (nearly Williams)
- J. Is this demand peculiar to Jesus' disciples?
 - 1. A first-time procedure in redemptive history? Or was there an **OT** precedence?
 - 2. The first OT figure who might come to mind is Abram
 - a. Asked to leave his land and his old ways to follow the true God
 - b. And who eventually was asked to impose an extreme

- self-denial in offering Isaac
- c. But *until* offering Isaac, Abe had a hard time denying his self-seeking ways
- 3. But even going back to Abel, we are presented with someone who wanted to give his *best* to God, Gen 4:4
 - a. Thereby relegating the *next best* for himself
 - b. That seems to qualify as self-denial on some level, maybe a basic level
 - ✓ c. Hence, not all self-denial is a struggle: much of it may be a natural result of loving and admiring God
 - d. Of course, Abel would have had temptation to normal, human selfishness, even in that good offering
- 4. So we are probably looking at *all* the men of faith in the OT as deniers of self
 - ✧ a. It's implicit in embracing God's way as the better/best way
 - b. I'm saying, "No more of doing things my way."

Kid-speak: Did God tell His people in the Old Testament to **say no** to themselves? Yes. Are *we* supposed to do that? Yes.

- K. Denying ourselves with particular respect to Christ
1. Jesus is God's final answer
 - a. Now the OT hopes were finally realized
 - b. Jesus clarifies all of mankind's questions (which is why "Who is He?" has been central in this chapter)
 2. There were now only three choices for the disciples
 - a. Keep looking for Messiah; Stick with the Old Covenant and redefine Messiah.
 - b. Embrace Jesus as Messiah
 - c. Find an answer (or no answer) *outside* God's revelation in Scripture
 - d. (And these 3 can be pared down to 2, since redefining Messiah is going outside of Scripture by redefining *them*)
 3. Since Christ represents *finality* in God's work, choosing Him as master represents a special kind of finality in our lives
 - a. Giving up interests that compete with Christ's lordship is crucial
 - b. Offers from the competition, in their infinitely varied forms, will be *lifelong*
 - c. Considering Jesus' relation to the Father, there is now an

especially *personal* aspect to man's treatment of the Son, Heb 6:4-6. Denying Jesus has definite consequences, sometimes immediate, always eternal.

- L. What's the relation between *denying* oneself and *hating* oneself?
1. As Jesus says we also need to do, Lk 14:26; Jn 12:25
 - a. Self-hatred itself is shocking news to many Christians. They've been taught that self-love is the basis for morality: to love neighbor, we must love ourselves.
 - b. Rather, we are to love our neighbor as we *already* love ourselves, not as we *should* love ourselves. 2 Tim 3:2 corroborates self-love as a sin.)
 2. One Scriptural definition or aspect of **hatred** is '*choosing against*', based on a definition of love being to *choose* (since "chosen" in Isa 42:1 becomes "beloved" in Lk 3:22)
 3. Therefore, self-denial and self-hatred seem closely related
 - a. Hating ourselves is 'choosing against' our own preferences,
 - b. which will always come down to life-defining choices (not merely laying off the second piece of cake, etc.)

Kid-speak: OK kids, let's practice denying ourselves. First, say your name: "____." Then say, "No." "____." OK, now put them together, "____, no!" Or you can do it the other way around. OK adults, your turn: "____, no!" Keep that in your mental tool bag.

4. Denying ourselves and hating ourselves seem largely synonymous-
 - a. **denying** ourselves perhaps emphasizing the *suppression* of our natural urges or survival instincts;
 - b. **hating** ourselves putting our *wills* in the spotlight, as we make *choices* against our personal interests in light of the Gospel's claims upon us
 - c. With, no doubt, plenty of overlap between the two

- M. How can I deny myself? (Word study) [Mostly bad guys!]
1. Don't believe stuff without Scriptural verification, 2 Pet 2:1; 1 Jn 2:22-23
 2. Don't cave to the flesh, **Titus 2:12**; Jude 1:4, or ↓
 3. Don't be a religious hollow man, 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:16

4. Be good to family members, 1 Tim 5:8

5. Exercise self-discipline, 1 Cor 9:25-27;

a. Including it in our chain of virtues, Gal 5:23 & 2 Pet 1:6
(self-mastery);

b. Specifying fasting, Matt 9:15

IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, “Uphold the strengthless”)
If ‘self’ is already hobbled, you’re actually at an *advantage* in denying it.

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V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong?  
How have I lost righteousness?**

How much of self do I embrace rather than deny? How much of that = sinful self? How much = regular humanity but mindless of God?

VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):  
**How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?**

I will figure out what in me needs denying, starting with the Bible listing and moving on to my personal specifics.

VIII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How do I take this on the road?**

Jesus, You denied *Yourself* for *me*. You are all that is good and benevolent. Returning the favor should be no chore by comparison.

Vision: Can there be self-indulgent forms of the Gospel?

Salvation is by grace apart from works, but isn’t it wonderful that Gospel grace enrolls us in non-optional rigors?

If they were optional, who’d do them? If they were optional, how would they address our sin nature?

No, this is HOW God’s grace is specifically manifested in our lives. It’s a comfort and an assurance, but a hard one.

But it has the feel of reality about it, no? Versus self-indulgent forms of the Gospel.