

The Art of Self-denial

One of the most difficult things for Christian people to practice is self-denial. Yet that is exactly what God expects of His people. If we allow ourselves every pleasure of our heart's desire, we'll become spoiled to the point where we will believe that we "deserve" all these things in order to be happy and content. But the truth is, when we obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine (Rom. 6:17), we made a commitment to God to deny ourselves many of the pleasures in life in order to serve Him, the church, and other people. Jesus told His disciples, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."* (Luke 9:23). In the parallel passage in Matthew, Jesus asked, *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matt. 16:26). To put it in our own terms, Jesus is asking, "What good will it do you if you have the grandest house, the best recreational vehicles, go on the best vacations, send your kids to the finest schools, attend the best parties, go to weekend sporting events, or get the big promotion at work, if it means you'll wind up on the wrong side of judgement. Will you exchange these temporary pleasures and then spend eternity in hell?"

Wow! That's pretty heavy stuff there Jesus. But it's exactly what He means. To make it even more difficult, our friends and neighbors are going to think we're crazy because we don't take part in every social event that's happening (1 Peter 4:4). When we are totally committed to Christ, we'll make these sacrifices in order to serve our heavenly Father and in the end, it will be worth it all. Jesus also said, *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."* (Matt. 16:25)

*Jay Launius – 2021
Maud church of Christ
Maud, Texas*