

September 11, 2016
Following Jesus Series
Part II: Following Jesus Requires Service, Sacrifice and Death
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1. Where were you on 9/11/01? What word best describes your emotions when you heard about the attacks?

2. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). The crucifixion and the hours before it were full of suffering and shame. Think of other ways Jesus suffered in his service to others prior to the last day.

3. Jesus sweat drops of blood as he prayed on the Mount of Olives, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me.” Scripture says he was in anguish but also prayed, “yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 42-45).

*Why do you think there was no other way for Jesus to complete his mission except to go to the cross?

*Is there any aspect of that choice that gives you comfort? **(Not only did Jesus provide our forgiveness and salvation, he entered into the violence and shame that have always characterized our world.)**

4. Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). Since we likely will never take up a literal cross, what aspects of his taking up his cross can we live out? **(Thinking of others rather than self, forgiving the unforgiveable, sacrificing, loving those who don’t deserve it, being willing to suffer for a greater good, etc.)**

5. Paul wrote that he wanted “to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his suffering, becoming like him in his death” (Phil. 3:10).

*In what way did Paul know power and suffering? How did he become like Jesus in his death?

*Could you pray Paul’s prayer?

6. Have you ever wondered how you’ll die? What would be your preference?

7. What is one of your greatest times of suffering and what did God teach you in that time?

8. James wrote, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (1:2-4).

*What are different kinds of trials?

*Have you been able to consider a trial “pure joy”?

*Have you felt more mature and complete having gone through a trial?

9. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”

*How has God comforted you in your troubles?

*Have you been able to comfort another with the comfort and compassion God has shown you?

10. What do you want to be known for in your life and death?

Excerpted from John Piper’s funeral prayer for the family of five about to leave as missionaries to Japan when a driver drove into the back of their vehicle.

O Lord, God of might and mercy and mystery, you have driven the arrows of your quiver into the breast of your people, your beloved. You have filled our throat with bitterness and gall. You have made our teeth grind on gravel, and laid us down with wounds in the ashes of dreams.

You have taken away our sleep, and replaced our gladness with groaning. You have covered us with the shadows of those we love, and we have reached out in vain to touch their bodies.

Happiness has left through the window where the rain pours in, peace has put her hand on the latch, and endurance wavers at the threshold of our soul.

O Lord, our eyes are on you. We do not look to another for hope. To you alone. To you we cry. Remember our affliction, remember the bitter wormwood and the gall! You have not made us drink this cup in vain.

This we call to mind, and therefore we have hope: Your steadfast love, O LORD, never ceases; your mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. You alone, O Lord, are our portion, therefore we will hope in you.

You are good to those who wait for you, to the soul who seeks you. You are good today. You were good last Sunday. We are waiting, we are looking for the salvation of the Lord. We are not running from the yoke of this dark providence, or throwing off the burden of your good sovereignty. But we are waiting, and looking, for the yoke to be made easy and the burden light.

You do not hide yourself forever. Though you cause grief, you will have compassion,

according to the abundance of your steadfast love; for you do not afflict from your heart, or grieve the children of men.

We know your heart, O God. For there is nothing in the world more bright, more blazing, more terrible, more beautiful, more bloody, more hopeful, than the revelation of your heart in the death and triumph of your Son, Jesus.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned — every one — to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

This is the great and glorious Rock where we stand — or lie prostrate — and on which we give thanks for the lives of Jamison and Kathryne and Ezra and Violet and Calvin, who did not count their lives to be more valuable than obedience.

We praise you that they did not snatch a few vain years of life on this earth in exchange for allegiance to their King, but set their faces, like flint, toward Japan and the finishing of their course and the ministry they had received from the Lord Jesus.

And we praise you that they did finish it — like your apostle Paul who wrote from Rome, “I have finished my course,” though he never got to Spain.

We stand on this mighty Rock of Christ, and his shed blood for our sins, and for the sins of the Pals family, and on his victorious triumph over death. And standing on this Rock we pray . . .

For these parents — grandparents, great-grandparents — who sit with pieces of thread in their hands from a fabric of life woven from the womb, and then consumed. Father, we ask that you would sustain in their hearts an unshakeable confidence that the countless hours of investment in Jamison and Kathryne and the children were not in vain.

And we pray, Father, for Tony Weekly, whose head is covered with shame and whose hands are stained with blood. The heart of this family is not a vengeful heart. We pray that Mr. Weekly will find the one and only remedy for shame and guilt, Jesus. And we ask that, in time, through Christ, he would make his way to heaven, and know the indescribable miracle of reconciliation with those already there.

And finally, we pray for Japan, that the great idols of gold and silver and material success would fall before the blood of this family — that these five, even these three little ones, who have now grown to the fullness of their glory and the perfection of beauty, not through the trials of three score and ten, but in the twinkling of an eye — that these all — all five — might be found among the champions of the victory of the gospel in Japan.

In the name of Jesus and for his glory, Amen