

# Deny Yourself.

A six-week guided practice in laying down our lives and taking up our Christ

## Lesson 2: Trust God, Not Things.

### Introduction...

This week's lesson in denying our self speaks to the places we invest our confidence, and why we are often let down and disappointed in life. Much of **our daily lives revolve around the dependency on things**, possessions, items of convenience. We can't wake up without our coffee, we can't go to sleep without our comfy pajamas. What is the farthest you ever walk away from your phone in a given day? We rely on the things God has created in this world rather than the Creator Himself. **And this can be problematic.** Creations fail. The Creator never fails.

### Scripture Focus...

Unlike the things of this world, God will not let you down or leave you helpless. God is trustworthy; **the Author of time and Creator of all things is more reliable than the things He created.** Psalm 20:7 says,

**“Some trust in chariots and some in horses,  
but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.”**

We can remember this passage in times when our possessions fail us, and in times when we need a God that is even more reliable than our smart phone.

# Meditation...

Walking is a mundane task for many of us - something we do to get from one place to another without thinking much about the journey. The purpose of meditation, as we learned last week, is to be more intentional, allowing the process and the journey of the meditative practice to lift us above the clutter in our minds, and help us reconnect with God in a 'peaceable kingdom' of our own.

From the Greater Good Science Center, University of California, Berkeley, learn this practice adapted from Jon Kabat-Zinn, mindfulness expert, and follow it throughout the week ahead:

## Walking Meditation:

1. Find a location. Find a lane that allows you to walk back and forth for 10-15 paces—a place that is relatively peaceful, where you won't be disturbed or even observed (since a slow, formal walking meditation can look strange to people who are unfamiliar with it). You can practice walking meditation either indoors or outside in nature. The lane doesn't have to be very long since the goal is not to reach a specific destination, just to practice a very intentional form of walking where you're mostly retracing your steps.
2. Start your steps. Walk 10-15 steps along the lane you've chosen, and then pause and breathe for as long as you like. When you're ready, turn and walk back in the opposite direction to the other end of the lane, where you can pause and breathe again. Then, when you're ready, turn once more and continue with the walk.
3. The components of each step. Walking meditation involves very deliberating thinking about and doing a series of actions that you normally do automatically. Breaking these steps down in your mind may feel awkward, even ridiculous. But you should try to notice at least these four basic components of each step: a) the lifting of one foot; b) the moving of the foot a bit forward of where you're standing; c) the placing of the foot on the floor, heel first; d) the shifting of the weight of the body onto the forward leg as the back heel lifts, while the toes of that foot remain touching the floor or the ground.

Then the cycle continues, as you:

- a) lift your back foot totally off the ground;
  - b) observe the back foot as it swings forward and lowers;
  - c) observe the back foot as it makes contact with the ground, heel first;
  - d) feel the weight shift onto that foot as the body moves forward.
4. Speed. You can walk at any speed, but in Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, walking meditation is slow and involves taking small steps. Most important is that it feel natural, not exaggerated or stylized.
  5. Hands and arms. You can clasp your hands behind your back or in front of you, or you can just let them hang at your side—whatever feels most comfortable and natural.
  6. Focusing your attention. As you walk, try to focus your attention on one or more sensations that you would normally take for granted, such as your breath coming in and out of your body; the movement of your feet and legs, or their contact with the ground or floor; your head balanced on your neck and shoulders; sounds nearby or those caused by the movement of your body; or whatever your eyes take in as they focus on the world in front of you.
  7. What to do when your mind wanders. No matter how much you try to fix your attention on any of these sensations, your mind will inevitably wander. That's OK—it's perfectly natural. When you notice your mind wandering, simply try again to focus it one of those sensations.
  8. Integrating walking meditation into your daily life. For many people, slow, formal walking meditation is an acquired taste. But the more you practice, even for short periods of time, the more it is likely to grow on you. Keep in mind that you can also bring mindfulness to walking at any speed in your everyday life, and even to running, though of course the pace of your steps and breath will change. In fact, over time, you can try to bring the same degree of awareness to any everyday activity, experiencing the sense of presence that is available to us at every moment as our lives unfold.

## Prayer:

Holy God, let me be filled with the power of your presence, upheld by your strength, and set free from my own anxieties and worries. Let me be emptied of all that would stand in Your holy way. **Amen.**