



Jesus Among Us

When Dying Means Living Part 1

October 25, 2026

Leader's Guide Text: Luke 9:18–24

This week's discussion centers on the relationship between what we believe about Jesus and how we actually follow Him.

Pastor Tony emphasized that we often approach Jesus' words about denying ourselves and taking up our crosses by focusing almost exclusively on sacrifice, suffering, and what we must give up.

While those things are certainly part of discipleship, we can miss the beauty of Jesus' invitation:

Jesus isn't calling us to death for the sake of death. He's calling us to die to the life that once ruled us so that we can experience the life only He can give us.

The goal of this discussion is to help group members honestly examine what daily surrender looks like in their own lives.

Encourage vulnerability without making anyone feel pressured to share something deeply personal.

Keep the conversation centered on Jesus, His finished work, and the life He invites us to experience through following Him.

QUESTION 1 — GETTING STARTED

We all have areas of life where we like to be in control! What's one area where you find it especially difficult when things don't go according to your plans?

****Leader's Insight:****

This is an opportunity to begin with something relatable and perhaps even humorous.

Some people struggle when schedules change. Others find it difficult when their family, finances, relationships, or future don't unfold as expected.

Allow the group to recognize how naturally we want things to go our way.

****Helpful Follow-Up:****

- Why do you think we find uncertainty or losing control so uncomfortable?

****Transition:**** Our desire for control often reveals itself in our relationship with Jesus, especially when following Him requires something different from what we would have chosen.

QUESTION 2 — WHEN CONFESSION BECOMES COMMITMENT

Jesus asked His disciples, “But who do you say that I am?” (Luke 9:20). We talked about how our confession of Jesus should be reflected in our commitment to Jesus. Why do you think it's sometimes easier to say we trust Jesus than to actually live like we do?

Scripture: Luke 9:18–22

****Leader's Insight:****

Peter correctly identified Jesus as the Christ of God.

But immediately following Peter's confession, Jesus began explaining that He would suffer, be rejected, die, and rise again.

This challenged the expectations many had about the Messiah.

Pastor Tony emphasized:

“You cannot separate your confession of Jesus from your commitment to Jesus.”

It's one thing to acknowledge Jesus as Lord. It's another to surrender the direction of our lives to His lordship. Our actions don't earn our salvation, but what we believe about Jesus should increasingly influence how we live.

Helpful Follow-Ups:

What are some situations where Christians might unintentionally separate what they believe from how they live?

How can we recognize when we're doing that ourselves?

****Key Takeaway:****

Following Jesus is more than knowing the right answers about Him. It's allowing the truth of who He is to shape how we live.

QUESTION 3 — WHEN SURRENDER BECOMES DAILY

Jesus said that anyone who wants to follow Him must deny themselves and take up their cross daily (Luke 9:23). Why do you think Jesus emphasized the word “daily”? What makes daily surrender challenging, even for those of us who have followed Jesus for years?

Scripture: Luke 9:23–24

****Leader's Insight:****

In the first century, the cross represented Roman execution, humiliation, suffering, and death.

Jesus' original audience would have understood that carrying a cross meant something far more serious than enduring an inconvenient circumstance. Jesus was calling His followers to complete surrender.

However, the sermon made an important distinction:

“Jesus carried His cross to redeem us. We carry ours because we've been redeemed!”

Our surrender doesn't contribute to our salvation. It's our response to the Savior who has already accomplished it. Jesus also emphasized that surrender is daily.

We may have experienced meaningful moments of surrender at salvation, during a retreat, or through a difficult season. But yesterday's surrender doesn't eliminate today's need for obedience.

Helpful Follow-Ups:

Why is it possible to surrender something to God one day and struggle with that same thing the next?
How can we approach daily surrender without turning it into a burdensome religious obligation?

****Key Takeaway:****

Jesus isn't simply describing a significant spiritual moment. He's describing a lifestyle of following Him.

****Important Reminder for Leaders:** Not every hardship is automatically a cross.**

Pastor Tony clarified that the cross Jesus describes is specifically connected to our allegiance to Him and the surrender or sacrifice that results from following Him.

QUESTION 4 — PERSONALIZING OUR SURRENDER

We talked about how taking up our cross looks different in each of our lives. What are some everyday situations where following Jesus requires us to surrender our own desires, preferences, or attitudes?

Scripture: Luke 9:23****Leader's Insight:****

Jesus says each person must take up “his own” cross. While the call to surrender is universal, the areas where surrender is necessary can look different for each person. One person may struggle with pride. Another may struggle with selfishness, control, recognition, or insisting on having things their way.

The biblical standard doesn't change, but the ways our struggles manifest themselves can be very personal.

****Possible Examples:****

- Choosing patience when someone frustrates us.
- Responding graciously instead of defensively.
- Putting someone else's needs ahead of our preferences.
- Obeying God when doing so costs us something.
- Choosing forgiveness rather than holding on to resentment.

****Helpful Follow-Up:****

- How can we become more aware of the areas where we're resisting God's leadership?

****Key Takeaway:****

The call to surrender is the same for every follower of Jesus, but the places where that surrender becomes necessary are often deeply personal.

QUESTION 5 — WHEN MY WAY GIVES WAY TO HIS WILL

One of today's challenges was, “When My Way Gives Way to His Will.” Read Proverbs 3:5–6. Can you share a time when God's direction didn't align with what you wanted or expected? What did that experience teach you about trusting Him?

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5–6**Leader's Insight:**

Pastor Tony reminded us how naturally we like to make our plans, determine our direction, and remain in control. And sometimes, we especially like it when God agrees with what we've already

decided! But following Jesus means surrendering the right to rule our own lives. Proverbs 3:5–6 calls us to trust the Lord with all our hearts rather than relying exclusively on our own understanding.

This doesn't mean every unexpected circumstance is necessarily God's specific direction. Rather, following Jesus sometimes requires obedience even when we don't fully understand what God is doing. Sometimes it involves surrendering a reasonable preference. Sometimes it involves trusting God when the outcome remains uncertain. Sometimes it means saying yes to something we wouldn't have chosen ourselves.

****Helpful Follow-Ups:****

- How do we distinguish between simply wanting our own way and genuinely seeking God's will?
- What helps you trust God when you don't understand what He's doing?

****Key Takeaway:****

When my way gives way to His will, my life begins to reflect His leadership.

QUESTION 6 — WHEN MY PRIDE GIVES WAY TO HIS HUMILITY

We also talked about “When My Pride Gives Way to His Humility.” Pride doesn't always look like arrogance. Sometimes it shows up in needing the last word, struggling to apologize, or wanting recognition. Which of these expressions of pride do you think people most easily overlook in themselves? Why?

Scripture: Philippians 2:3–8

****Leader's Insight:****

This question has the potential to lead to some of the most meaningful conversations of the evening. Pride is often subtle. It can disguise itself as standing up for ourselves, defending our position, or simply wanting others to understand our perspective. While those things aren't necessarily wrong, our underlying motivation matters.

Pastor Tony made this observation: “Sometimes it's not righteousness we're defending... it's our pride!” Philippians 2 calls believers to humility and points us directly to the example of Jesus.

The Son of God humbled Himself, took the form of a servant, and became obedient to death on a cross. Yet we sometimes struggle to admit we were wrong or simply say, “I'm sorry.”

****Helpful Follow-Ups:****

- Why is apologizing or admitting we're wrong sometimes so difficult?
- What might change in our relationships if we were more intentional about demonstrating the humility of Jesus?

****Key Takeaway:****

When my pride gives way to His humility, people begin to see something of Jesus in me.

****Leader's Encouragement:****

Consider sharing an appropriate personal example of a time when pride affected your response to someone.

A leader's willingness to acknowledge personal struggles often creates an environment where others feel comfortable being honest.

QUESTION 7 — LIVING IT OUT

Think about your relationships, responsibilities, and circumstances this coming week. What's one specific area where you sense Jesus inviting you to surrender your way, humble yourself, or trust Him more fully? What would following Him look like in that situation?

****Leader's Insight:****

This is where the conversation becomes personal and practical.

Try to move beyond general statements such as: "I need to trust God more."

"I need to be more humble." "I need to surrender more."

Encourage members to identify one specific situation where following Jesus can be expressed through obedience.

For example:

- Having a conversation they've been avoiding.
- Apologizing to someone.
- Surrendering a decision they've been trying to control.
- Responding with humility in a difficult relationship.
- Choosing obedience even when the outcome is uncertain.

****Helpful Follow-Up:****

- What is one practical step you can take this week to respond to what God is showing you?

****Key Takeaway:****

Daily surrender isn't merely something we talk about. It's something we live out as we follow Jesus.

CLOSING ENCOURAGEMENT FOR LEADERS

As you bring the discussion to a close, remind the group that the call to take up our cross is not a call to earn God's approval. Jesus has already accomplished what we could never accomplish for ourselves. Our surrender is a response to His grace, not a means of obtaining it. And the goal isn't simply becoming better at giving things up, the goal is becoming more like Jesus. When we surrender our will, His leadership becomes increasingly evident in our lives.

When we surrender our pride, His humility becomes increasingly visible through us. And when we choose to follow Him daily, our lives begin to reflect the One we profess to believe in. We're not simply called to die to ourselves. We're invited to follow Jesus and experience the life that only He can give!

CLOSING PRAYER

Encourage members to pray specifically for the areas of surrender they identified.

Pray that God would help each person recognize where pride, control, or personal preferences may be interfering with obedience.

Thank Jesus for His finished work on the cross and for the privilege of following Him.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help each person live in such a way that others increasingly see Jesus through them.