

“From the Cross to the Empty Tomb”

Day 1: The Weight of the Cross

Scripture: *Luke 9:23* — “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

There’s something powerful about the image of the cross—but let’s be honest, we’ve made it comfortable.

We wear it. We decorate with it. We hang it on walls.

But Jesus didn’t say *admire* the cross—He said *carry* it.

And carrying a cross was never symbolic in His day. It meant one thing: surrender. It meant laying down your rights, your comfort, your plans, and trusting God even when the road ahead looked painful or uncertain.

That’s where this journey to Easter begins—not at the empty tomb, but at a place of decision.

Because before resurrection comes surrender.

What Does “Taking Up Your Cross” Really Look Like?

It’s not always dramatic. Most days, it’s deeply practical.

- It’s choosing forgiveness when your flesh wants revenge
- It’s letting go of control when anxiety tries to take over

- It's saying no to something that pulls you away from God
- It's saying yes to something God is calling you into—even when it stretches you

Sometimes your cross is invisible to everyone else—but God sees every ounce of obedience.

Why This Matters

We often want the victory of Easter Sunday without walking through the surrender of the cross.

But the truth is—**the depth of your surrender determines the depth of your transformation.**

Jesus didn't avoid the cross... and because He didn't, we now have life.

And when we follow Him—really follow Him—it will cost us something.

But what we gain is always greater than what we give up.

Real-Life Reflection

Think about your “gas tank.”

When your spiritual tank is empty, everything feels heavier—decisions, relationships, stress.

Sometimes it's not that life is harder... it's that we're carrying things God never asked us to carry.

And at the same time, we're holding onto things He's asking us to lay down.

Reflection Question

What is God asking you to lay down this week?

(Be specific. Name it. Don't generalize it.)

Prayer

Lord, I don't want a surface-level faith. I don't want to just admire the cross—I want to follow You fully. Show me what I've been holding onto that's keeping me from deeper surrender. Give me the courage to lay it down, and the strength to carry what You've called me to carry. I trust that what You have for me is greater than anything I let go of. In Jesus' name, Amen.