

we get for what we are giving up? It sounds deep and serious, but giving your life up for Christ isn't as terminal as it sounds. You're not giving up anything worth keeping. And in return you're gaining your real life (the one you have in Christ), even if just for a little while. Jesus also said, "What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" Don't forfeit your soul. Feed it. Feed it with a little light from the grace that Christ pours out for you. What do you invest your soul in? Are you investing wisely?

Saturday — He Comes in His Father's Glory

Read Matthew 21:27-28. The big picture is often difficult to see. Being born on earth, living on earth, being raised by other people who were born on earth; we're so separated from God that we can hardly fathom His greatness. It is alien to us to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Christ. We are taught that our humanity is good. And not just good, but so good, that we justify our destructive behaviors with "YOLO" (You Only Live Once). But we do only live once. And so does everyone else. And when we follow Christ, we will be serving others. We can rebuild shattered lives. We can bring joy to children. We can teach. We can be that hand that reaches out and opens a door for Christ in someone else's life. There are so many ways to take up that cross. And in the long run it always pays off. The market on Christ never crashes. He never runs out of capital. Christ never needs a bail out. He bails us out. And that's why we deny ourselves, take up that cross and follow Him.

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This week's *Bring it Home* devotions were written by James Courtney.
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*Devotions for
the week of
September 3, 2017*

Begin each devotion with a reminder of your baptism by making the sign of the cross (put your fingers together and place them first on your forehead, then down to your stomach, then to your right shoulder, and end up at your left shoulder over your heart). As you do that, say the words, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen" Mark yourself with Jesus and remind yourself that you are His!

*If you would like to receive daily *Bring It Home* devotions by email, please contact the church office: churchoffice@immanuelloveland.org*

Monday — Denial of Self: Counterintuitive

Yesterday we heard Missionary Brent Smith share some encouraging and challenging thoughts from Jesus' call to us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. Throughout this week, we're going to dig a little deeper into those directions from Jesus to bring them home for each of us. Matthew 16:21 says, "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." What does it mean to follow God's plan? Jesus spoke to the disciples and told them what it meant for Him. To suffer at the hands of many and to be put to death by the enemy of the Jews. Sounds terrible! Luckily, most of the time, Christians don't have to be put to death. But we have found our old selves being put to death in our baptisms – our Lord did it for us! And we, on a daily basis, are called to put our old selves to death as well – with God's grace. Everything of our old selves that we lose while following Christ, is no real loss at all. What else did Jesus say? That He would conquer death itself and be raised on the third day. So shall we. And everything we thought we lost will seem foolish when standing in the Lord's presence. And all the things we gained on this earth will be for naught. For all things belong to God, not us. So, as Paul said to the Philippians, "Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ." Are there things in our lives that we cling to? Maybe things that we shouldn't? Do we really need them? Is it really so much of a sacrifice to give them up? Compare the things we give up, to the things that we gain in Christ. There is no comparison. Give thanks to God for His loss and our gain.

Tuesday — Earthly Concerns or Eternal Ones?

Read Matthew 16:22-23. Here Peter yells out that he would never let anyone harm Jesus. But it was Jesus who rebuked Peter – "Get behind me Satan!" Do you think Jesus was touched by Peter's love for Him? Of course! Jesus was human as well as Lord, but Jesus had to allow Himself to be captured and suffer. Peter was caught up in the moment with earthly concerns. Jesus was focused on His mission and the will of His Father. In Peter's rash judgment, he was ready to deny Christ already. He was willing to stop God's will, in order to preserve the life of his friend, Jesus. Peter infamously denies Christ three times during that fateful Thursday night/ Friday morning; but isn't this an even worse denial? Can you imagine if Jesus had not been captured? If He had not suffered and died for us? Imagine if Peter had gotten his way. How disastrous it would have been for us all. Peter's concern focused on temporary pain. Jesus was focused on eternal salvation. How protected can we be when we wear the armor of man, instead of the Armor of God? What chance do we have of saving ourselves? Only by receiving Christ can we be saved. As you face matters in your life in the days to come, ask for the Lord's help in discerning what will be best for the bigger picture of His desires and will for us and our lives.

Wednesday — The Eye of the Needle

Read Matthew 19:16-22. "What good thing must I do to have eternal life?" asked the young man of Jesus. Chances are that he had not heard all that Jesus had to say. Especially that whole, "No one comes to the Father but by Me," stuff. Why is taking up the cross so difficult? For the same reason it is easier for a camel to walk through the eye of the needle. We have so much stuff. We have so much baggage. Our sins, mistakes, and pain make us who we are (terrestrially speaking of course). So in a weird way, it is difficult to let go of the things that hurt us. Think of our love for this world as a form of Stockholm Syndrome – we are so used to it, that we began to like it. Then we joined it, and started fighting to keep it. It's not good for us; but we don't know how awesome God is. So we can't compare. There is no comparison. And there is nothing worth holding on to, if it prevents you from picking up that cross. What are some things that you hold on to that perhaps prevent you from picking up that cross? Pray for the Lord's help with the crosses in this life and our following of Him.

Thursday — YOLO (You Only Live Once)

Read Matthew 21:24. "YOLO!" Sometimes I think that this is just the young people's way of saying, "Carpe Diem" ("seize the day"). But when I examine the implied meaning of each phrase, they are very different. "YOLO" has a hedonistic undertone to it – almost like one should never deny themselves, because you only live once; denying yourself isn't worth it. You deserve more. But Carpe Diem seems to have a more rational undertone – make the most of your day. Do something positive, or constructive. We can seize the day when it comes to service. Don't shy away from it. Take advantage of it. I guarantee you that serving Christ will pay off in the long run. Jesus told us that whoever wished to be His disciple would need to deny himself and follow Jesus. Can we? Even for just a little bit? Is denying ourselves worth it? In Ephesians 4 we are told that there are many ways to serve. We are also told that Christ gave us the apostles, and the teachers, and pastors, and the evangelists, and the prophets... all for one reason: "To equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." There are things that each of us can do to serve. Every little bit helps. Ever wonder what you could do?

Friday — The Big Payoff

Read Matthew 21:25-26. Think of your soul as a spiritual portfolio. You want to invest wisely. And what we invest our soul in, helps determine our lives in Christ. "For whoever saves their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." That is the big payoff. It seems counterintuitive, but losing your life for Christ is no loss. It is no sacrifice. A lot of times we want to say, "This is MY life. I want to do what I want." Which is fine... sometimes. Who could blame you, right? It is human nature to want to go our own way. Ever wonder what you're giving up for what you are getting? If we go our own way and do our own thing, sure, we might be happy in life, but where does that leave us in Christ? And if we lived for Christ, what do