

National Junior High Sunday  
November 4, 2007

**Bible Study on  
Luke 9:23**

*"If any want to follow me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me."*

*Jesus*

Background on this Scripture:

Following the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus telling the disciples for the first time his prediction of his suffering and death, he says to them (as paraphrased in *The Message*: "Then he told them what they could expect for themselves: "Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat-I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how." (Luke 9:23 *The Message*)

There are similar kinds of statements from Jesus recorded in Luke 14:27 and Matthew 10:38 in which Jesus calls his hearers to a path of self-giving and self-forgetting. This is not just a call to make sacrifices or give up some things; it is a demand for a radical re-orientation of our lives. No longer can "self" be at the center of our lives. Jesus is challenging us to keep God at the very center of our lives...day after day.

His challenge reminds us that it is not just about denying ourselves and bearing the cross—none of that matters if we are not following Jesus. Reading the gospels and studying Jesus' life becomes critical then to those of us today who want to follow Him. What would Jesus do? I have to study his life and teachings to know. And then, the hardest part...I have to try to do what I believe Jesus would do if He were in my place at that moment. That's what it means to "follow Jesus."

Theme:

## The Amazing Race: Continuing the Work of Jesus

You may have seen the reality show on television entitled "The Amazing Race." By following the lead of trivia questions placed at each destination, teams of two compete to travel from city to city, country to country and even continent to continent. As the teams face challenges along the way the winning team eventually covers roughly 72,000 miles around the globe!

The identity line for the Church of the Brethren is "Continuing the Work of Jesus: Peacefully, Simply, Together." That's how Brethren have understood our calling as disciples in the world today: we are asked to continue Jesus' work on earth, in the way we believe that Jesus would be doing it today if He were here. Early followers were given the name "Christians" which means "little Christy," because they sought to be like Christ after his death and resurrection. That calling continues today to you and me: to continue the work of Jesus. That's the race that we run today!

### Questions to Ponder:

1. What are some of the things that you believe Jesus would be doing today in our world if He lived here now?
2. What would you do to "continue the work of Jesus" if you had more courage?
3. What do you think it means to "follow Jesus?"
4. In what ways is following Jesus similar to the Amazing Race?

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