

## WEEK 6

TO READ IN THE BOOK: CHAPTER 9, WELCOME TO YOUR DEATH

### BIBLE STUDY: ISAIAH 44:1-20

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What do v. 2-6 tell you about who God is? Is this the kind of God you would like to worship?

In v. 12-17, God gives a rather detailed account of a man making an idol out of wood from a tree. When you read this story, what do you find yourself thinking and feeling about the man?

Read v. 17 again. What two things in your life do you look at and say, "Save me; you are my god"? Do those two things have the power to save you?

Read v. 19-20 again. What is the thing in your right hand? What is the lie that it has spoken to you?

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM CHAPTER 9

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The biggest danger this side of eternity is *death pretending to be life*.

Essentially Jesus says this to each of us, "If you want to really live, if you want to experience the transcendent joy, meaning, and fulfillment that you were created to experience, then you must *let go of your hold on life*. You must loosen your grip."

Achievement, acceptance, appearance, and possessions may give you identity, meaning, and purpose for a while. But they will enslave you in the process and disappoint you in the end.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 14:12

On June 8, 1942, C.S. Lewis preached a sermon in Oxford, England, entitled *The Weight of Glory*. Following is the first paragraph of that sermon.

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If you asked twenty good men today what they thought the highest of the virtues, nineteen of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you asked almost any of the great Christians of old he would have replied, Love. You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive, and this is of more than philological importance. The negative ideal of Unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point. I do not think this is the Christian virtue of Love. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire. If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

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Christ calls us to deny ourselves—to take up our cross and follow him—so that we can experience the transcendent life he designed us for and experience the all-surpassing glory of knowing him.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHILE READING

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If you accomplish the plan you have for your life, what will your life look like?

Re-read the C.S. Lewis quote above. In light of these words, what does it really mean to “deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus”?

In your everyday situations and relationships, where are you finding it hard to deny yourself and take up your cross?

The author writes, “Living for the big kingdom of Christ will always require suffering and sacrifice.” Why is this so?

What are you unwilling to sacrifice for the sake of God’s Kingdom: your savings, your current lifestyle, your reputation, your house, your prestige, your friendships?

Take some time to reflect on the gods of materialism, success, popularity, and comfort. Explain how one of these gods can appear to deliver life but in reality will only lead to death.

The author writes, “To hold onto my dream of what I want to accomplish, experience, and enjoy is to guarantee that I will never experience true life.” Do you agree or disagree with this claim?