

# Bear Your Own Cross

-Jim Hyest-

**Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me (Mt. 10:38).**

After my baptism I was handed a booklet entitled *Now that I Am a Member of the Church of Christ*. It consisted of activities that I could participate in as my service to the Lord. These things ranged from works as mundane as helping maintain the building to as profound as ministering at the Lord’s Table. The higher services, of course, were the Table, public prayer, teaching a class, and, what seemed the most treasured of all, lead singing. The focus of the “work of the church” was baptism, correct doctrine, faithful attendance, and institutional functions, generously spiced with criticism of our religious neighbors. Not until many years later did I conclude that we were missing many important points; such as, focus on declaring the truth of God, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, equipping for the work of ministry, personal transformation, and pure discipleship. To a considerable extent I had to discover these things on my own. Early on I had encountered Paul’s words “for I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1Cor. 2:2),” an excellent expression for the heart of the true disciple, but I was far from understanding them and further from adopting them. I suspect on the whole we are still quite far from giving that measure of devotion to God and Jesus Christ to claim discipleship. You see, we have not been tested. Fulfilling the dictates of *Now that I Am a Member of the Church of Christ* cannot make a disciple; neither does it envision such a thing, much less equip for it. Diethrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian martyred by the Nazis near the end of World War II explained that we do not get to define our cross. He wrote, “The cross is there, right from the beginning, he has only got to pick it up.” The suffering we each must bear we do not get to choose. “Some God deems worthy of the highest form of suffering... martyrdom, while other he does not allow to be tempted above that which they are able to bear.” As we strive for true discipleship, we are allowed to pray for the best, but we must equip for the worst, which, ironically, is the highest.