

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. - Matthew 16:24

Today, we call ourselves "Christians". In the New Testament, the followers of Jesus called themselves disciples. The word "disciple" is an interesting one. It literally means a learner, though it is probably more appropriate to think of a disciple as a follower. There are many who learn, who are students, but there are not as many who follow. In school, you might have called yourself a student, but not a disciple.

It is hard to be a disciple – there is sacrifice involved. However, being a disciple doesn't mean that we force ourselves to do something that we don't want to do. If we look at it that way, we will always be looking at the greener grass on the other side. Instead we should think of being a disciple as following Jesus and doing things for him. When we think of doing things for people we love, we see it as an act of love, not a sacrifice. It doesn't change the fact that it is a sacrifice, it just doesn't feel like one!

And that's the point. If we find ourselves struggling to be disciples of Jesus, we probably don't want to start feeling forced into doing things that we think Jesus wants us to do. Feeding the hungry, giving to the poor and helping the homeless are all things that are good and that we should do as Christians, but if we do these as a sacrifice, as something we have to struggle through, then we miss the point. The first thing we need to do is follow Jesus. We need to fall in love with him. Get into his Word. Spend quiet time in prayer. Worship him with song. By doing these things, we come closer to him and the more we know him, the more we will love him. When we come to that place of love, we will not see doing things for Jesus as sacrifice, but as an act of love