

David the King

David was ancient Israel's second king. He started out as the youngest son of a sheep farmer. He wrote poems and put them to music on his harp. David became a dedicated shepherd defending his flock from bears and lions. Then he became a giant slayer, a great warrior surrounded by over thirty mighty men of fearlessness.

Benaiah in a Pit

2 Samuel 23:20-23 NLT

There was also Benaiah son of Jehoiada, a valiant warrior from Kabzeel. He did many heroic deeds, which included killing two champions of Moab. Another time, on a snowy day, he chased a lion down into a pit and killed it. Once, armed only with a club, he killed a great Egyptian warrior who was armed with a spear. Benaiah wrenched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with it. Deeds like these made Benaiah as famous as the Three mightiest warriors. He was more honored than the other members of the Thirty, though he was not one of the Three. And David made him captain of his bodyguard.

Paul in a Prison Cell and More

2 Corinthians 11:23-27 NLT

Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

Jim in a Movie

Jim Caviezel played Jesus in the movie *The Passion of the Christ*. Jim Caviezel was thirty-three when he played Jesus.... Before casting Caviezel to play Jesus, Mel Gibson (the film's producer and director) told the up-and-coming actor that the role might cost him his career.

Martyrs

This last Wednesday nine of our brothers and sisters in Christ died at the hands of an evil man. One of the women worked at Southern Wesleyan University, a school belonging to our denomination. I hope you will continue to pray for their congregation as well as their families. They are only the latest in a long list of Christians martyred recently. Danger for those who follow Jesus grows nearly every day, all around the world.

Carry Your Cross

Luke 9:23-24 NLT

Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.

What would Jesus say to us?

“Take up your cross daily, and follow me.” To us Jesus might say, “Pick up your electric chair daily and follow me.” Or maybe he’d say, “Make sure to carry lethal injection syringes for your execution with you every day as you follow me.”

Questions to Ponder

Why would a man chase a lion into a pit on a snowy day?

What drive a person to tackle huge hazards for their king?

What pushes a person to surrender comfort and security like the Apostle Paul?

Why would Jim Caveizel put his career on the line to do a movie about Jesus?

What compels a follower of Jesus to refuse to renounce him when he faces the possibility of death?

What motivates a woman to stay true to Jesus when she knows she may be raped and sold into slavery?

Why should you think about giving up all your dreams, desires, hopes and plans to follow Jesus?

Sermon in a Sentence:

A person saved by Jesus’ Cross carries their cross daily.

New Point of View

Our default setting in life is to seek comfort and security. We stay in our comfort zones and avoid risk. But Jesus calls us to pick up our crosses and follow him. Crosses offer no comfort and no security – only God’s promise that we will “have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance – to the full, until it overflows.” (John 10:10)

First Step

Determine whether or not you have started carrying your cross. If you want to know you are carrying your cross, you’ve got to surrender control of your life to God totally.

Prayer of Commitment

Dear Father, you know how I have resented the problems in my life, and you know how I have resisted the things that have caused me pain that I can’t change. You know that I’ve asked you many times for an explanation that has never come. Today, I want to stop fighting you over things I don’t understand. Forgive me. I want to begin the path of personal peace. So I ask you for help. Help me to change the things that I can, and help me to accept the things that cannot be changed. Help me, Jesus, to trust in your loving care when things don’t make sense. Help me to trust that you are a good God and that you have my best interest at heart. Today, I make an unconditional surrender of all my life to your loving care and control. Please give me your strength and wisdom and peace and purpose. I want to make peace with God by faith so that I can have the peace of God through you, Jesus Christ. Amen.