

Living in Denial – Part 1

Small Group Discussion Guide

Introduction

This week Darren Youngstrom introduced the series Living in Denial by highlighting an interesting tension: the Bible tells us not to live in denial about our sin, but Jesus calls us to live in denial of ourselves.

When we deny our selfish desires and follow Jesus, we experience the freedom and purpose God intended for us.

“The greatest life you could ever imagine is on the other side of your dead selfishness.”

Tonight we’ll explore what it means to follow Jesus more intentionally and why bringing our struggles into the light leads to freedom.

1. The Call to Deny Yourself

Read Matthew 16:24–26

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”

1. Darren mentioned funny examples of the ways people live in denial (driving skills, coffee habits, phone use, etc.). What’s a harmless thing people sometimes live in denial about?
2. Jesus says that anyone who wants to follow him must deny themselves and take up their cross. What do you think Jesus meant by that?
3. Why do you think Jesus says that losing our life for him is how we actually find life?

2. Bringing Sin Into the Light

Read 1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

4. Why do people often try to hide or minimize struggles or sin in their lives?

5. Darren talked about how hidden sin has to live somewhere—in our minds and hearts. How have you seen secrets or hidden struggles affect people’s peace or relationships?

3. The Power of Honest Community

Read James 5:16

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.”

6. Why do you think Scripture encourages believers to confess sins to one another, not just privately to God?
7. Many Christians find that spiritual growth requires at least one trusted person who knows the real story of their life and struggles. Why might that kind of honest relationship be important?

Closing Challenge

Jesus invites us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him.

This week, ask God to show you one area where you may need to follow Jesus more intentionally, even if it means saying no to something you want.

Also consider whether you have a trusted person in your life with whom you can be fully honest about your struggles.

Real freedom begins when we stop hiding and start walking in the light.

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for loving us enough to invite us into real life through Jesus. Give us courage to deny ourselves, follow you more closely, and live honestly before you and others. Help us experience the freedom that comes from walking in the light. Amen.