



the visual **faith** project

A Visual Faith Experience **It's Not Easy to Be Faithful**

By Dr. Dick Hardel

Theme: It's Not Easy to Be Faithful (Luke 9:21-27)

Intended Audience

Small group of participants from 3 or 4 different generations would work very well. Ethnic diversity is a blessing that broadens the scope of faith and life in any small group. One could facilitate this Visual Faith Experience with any small group of youth, young adults, adults, or senior adults.

Outcome of Experience

Through wholehearted discussions participants will explore the difficulties of being faithful to God and practice our faith when values and customs are changing so rapidly. Participants will learn that in the midst of those difficulties it is God who always has and continues to remain faithful to God's people. Taking up the cross is a way of life!

Introduce Experience

Over the last few decades it has become increasingly fashionable to wear a cross, display a cross in rural areas or urban areas, put them on our cars, make the sign of the cross during special moments of sport events, as a blessing or, perhaps, even for good luck. In this experience we will focus on what Jesus means denying oneself and taking up the cross and follow Jesus.

Image Selection

Choose at least two images that connect to a time when it was easy for you to faithfully take up the cross and another time when it was very difficult or dangerous to faithfully take up the cross.

Facilitators Questions To Guide Group Discussion

1. As you look at the image and recall the easy time to take up the cross, what emotions did you feel at the time? How long did those feelings remain with you? What are you feeling as you tell us of this event in your life?
2. As you view the image of the difficult or dangerous time of faithfully taking up the cross, what is your story of that experience?
3. Was there ever a time when you chose not to witness to your faith? What emotions were behind your decision?
4. What might be the most difficult circumstance/situation for you to faithfully give witness to the cross of Christ?
5. (To the others in the small group) What questions do you have concerning this experience or images used?



the visual **faith** project

It's Not Easy to Be Faithful continued...

Scripture - Luke 9:21-27 (Included on page 3)

Image Selection

Invite two people from the small group to choose two or three images that connect to this story in Scripture. While the two people search for their images ask the others remaining in the group to think of questions they would like to ask of either of the two people after they have shared their images and the connection to this lesson in Scripture.

Questions to Connect Chosen Image with Scripture

1. Do any of you have similar connections of the images with this lesson in Scripture?
2. Do any of you have additional connections of the images to the story?
3. What emotions might Jesus have been feeling to choose to use this illustration about faithful following?
4. How does this story of Jesus communicate something about the first two images you selected?

Application

- What does the feeling of “being ashamed” mean to you?
- Have you ever experienced disapproval of your witness to the faith?
- Do you wear a symbol of the cross occasionally? Why?
- How might someone misuse the symbol of the cross?
- How might God bring healing to the shame we might feel?

Prayer

As the facilitator create a holy space for the individuals and group to engage in prayer. Arrange the chairs of the small group in a circle. In the middle of the circle place a free- standing cross and several lighted candles. Invite the members of the group to focus on the cross, think about the images that they had chosen, the discussions, and this Scripture about taking up the cross and following Jesus. Instruct the participants to pray in silence for a brief time of reflection. Following the reflection time ask one of the group to read verse two of John Bowring’s hymn “In The Cross of Christ I Glory.”

*When the woes of life o'er-take me, Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the cross forsake me; Lo, it glows with peace and joy.*





the visual **faith** project

It's Not Easy to Be Faithful continued...

Scripture - Luke 9:21-27

21 He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, 22 saying, "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

23 Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

24 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.

25 What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?

26 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

27 But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."



Image Packs

We recommend the Kid's Pack 2 (set of 100 printed images) for use with this experience or other images that you may already have. You can find the Kid's Pack 2 at: <https://vibrantfaith.org/shop/visualfaithcards>