

# Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

## Using Our Cross To Heal The World

By Ken Woodley

*“Then Jesus told the disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”*

We each have a cross to bear.

Everybody does.

During this pandemic, it often feels like we’ve got two or three.

Our crosses are not of equal size or weight. They are unique to us, shaped by the life only we have lived. And only we, truly, know what our own life’s “hammer and nails” feel like.

But what does Jesus mean by “take up”?

We can “take up” gardening. We can “take up” meditation. And we can “take up” crossword puzzles.

But can we truly also “take up” our cross?

The cross words of Jesus tell that we can and he doesn’t tell us to do so because he enjoys a parade. Jesus is urging us to take up our cross and make something meaningful of it because he knows that our own pain helps us to understand, and so minister to, the pain of others.

When we take up our cross and use it to lighten the world of some of its darkness, then we are following Jesus in the truest way possible.

Tellingly, from a certain perspective, a cross, in its physical appearance, can resemble a key.

And that is precisely what our cross can become when we take it up.

A key waiting to unlock a particular door because our cross, like our life, is unique to us. There is no other life, and no other cross—and so no other “key”—exactly like ours.

Therefore, our cross is the one and only key that can unlock a door behind which someone in particular waits in prayer, asking God to free them from the darkness of their pain.

We can set them free if we allow God to make that miracle happen.

The choice, as always, is ours. We have the freedom to resign ourselves to the darkness of our own pain, the freedom to remain stuck to our cross, static and going nowhere. But, if we answer ‘Yes, Lord,’ then the miracle may become doubled:

God knows how and where all of us have been broken by life. God also understands how the broken places in you can fit into the broken places in me to bring us both closer to wholeness.

By having faith in Jesus’ call to take up our cross and follow him, we may find that behind the doors that we unlock with our cross “key” are those waiting to use their own crosses as the keys that also set *us* free along the way.

No, we may not—probably will not—be completely cured. Miracles can and do happen but most of us will have to wait for heaven to forever free us from the effect of every hammer and all of life’s nails.

But God knows how to fit us to each other in ways that soften the jagged edges of the broken places in each of us and bring moments of healing along the way. The most frequent miracle is God-given loving companionship at key moments in our journey. Some will last a lifetime. And beyond.

Jesus, bearing his cross and asking us to shoulder ours, beseeches us to follow him toward those softer places.

When we do, the world becomes a little softer, too.

And its light a little brighter.

The world, and all of us, need that so desperately today.