

# Command #14: Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus.

Matthew 16:24-28 // Jerry Barber & Greg Singerle

*<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. <sup>26</sup> What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. <sup>28</sup> Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."*

## Condensed Version

Read Matthew 16:24-28 and discuss these questions with your disciple(s):

1. What is the link between what is said about Jesus in 16:13-23 and the call for our commitment in 16:24-28?
2. In light of verse 24, what do you think Jesus would say about modern-day Christianity in America where some people think it is enough to attend church or do a few good things or be involved in church activities but leave evangelizing unbelievers and making disciples for Christ to others?
3. What are the three reasons given for taking up your cross and following Jesus (one each in verses 25, 26 and 27)?

## Study (answers follow below)

1. Read and meditate on Matthew 16:24-28. What strikes you? Write down a few observations you have about the text.
2. Read the verses that lead into this passage, verses 13-23, and then answer this question: What is the link between what is said about Jesus in 16:13-23 and the call for our commitment in 16:24-28?
3. In light of verse 24, what do you think Jesus would say about modern-day Christianity in America where some people think it is enough to attend church or do a few good things or be involved in church activities but leave evangelizing unbelievers and making disciples for Christ to others?
4. Verses 25, 26 and 27 each give a reason for taking up your cross and following Jesus. Each verse begins with the conjunction "for" (in the original language; in verse 26 the NIV does not have it). What are these three reasons?

## Answers:

1. Many possible answers.
2. Jesus is the Messiah, but a true understanding of his Messiahship includes suffering—the way he would submit to death and resurrection. Peter wanted it another way, but that was impossible. Jesus, the one who sacrificed EVERYTHING, calls us to sacrifice in order to follow him.
3. To be his follower requires 100% commitment, not casual “discipleship.”
5. Why follow Christ 100%?
  - (1) It is how you really save your life rather than losing it (25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it).
  - (2) Your soul is far more valuable than anything you can gain in this life (26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?)
  - (3) Reward or loss is coming, based on what you have done (27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done).

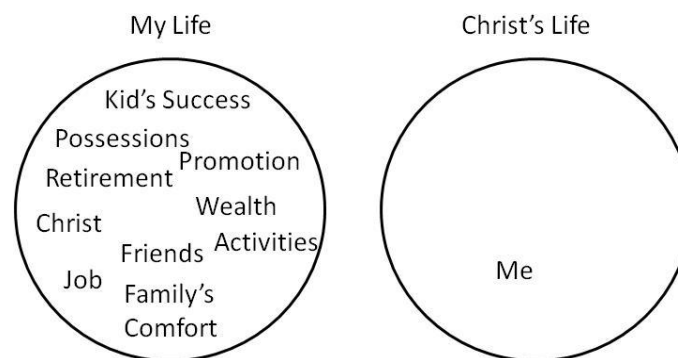
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## Worship

What has Christ required of those who follow Him? There is a question in a book that I (Greg) have been reading that I can't get off my mind. It has to do with our mindset regarding commitment and deals directly with the passage of Scripture this week. The question is this: Do I ask myself, "What can I spare?" or do I ask myself, "What will it take?"

Below is a diagram that I have often thought about during my walk with Christ as I ask myself, which one do I follow?



Have I added Christ to an ever growing list of things in "my life?" At the beginning of Colossians 3, God tells us through Paul, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. *For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God*" (Colossians 3:1-3). Further in Galatians 6:14 Paul states, "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which *the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*"

So if you want to follow Christ, what are His requirements? *Everything*. He will not be second place nor will He share your affection with *anything* else. It is clear from the passage we are studying and those above that the diagram on the left does not represent the life of one whom Christ calls "disciple." And let's remember that if I call myself His disciple, that means nothing. It only matters that He recognizes me as His disciple. Jesus demands all because He gave all for you and me and Jesus never asks anything from you or me that He does not give Himself. Let's look at a couple verses regarding how Jesus denied Himself and gave everything for you and me.

### Questions:

2 Corinthians 8:9

1. What does this verse indicate that Christ gave up?
2. Why did He give it up?

Luke 2:7

3. Where was Jesus laid and in what?
4. Why was He laid here?

Philippians 2:6-8

5. What does it state that Christ let go of in verse 6?

Matthew 26:39

6. What did Christ give up in this verse?
7. What did Jesus gain and how did He gain it?
8. What do you admire about Jesus from all these verses?

## Answers:

1. Christ gave everything. The word translated “poverty” means destitute, not just poor. We tend to think of rich/poor in monetary terms. But Christ gave up far more. He gave up all the rights He had in the manner he existed as God. We know that He gave up the independent use of His power and authority He had as God because it is only after He is resurrected that He states that all power and authority have been given to Him. And, the only things He had in this life – His clothes and His life – He gave up at the cross.
2. That we might become rich. Romans 8:17 states that we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. We have received riches beyond measure. What are those riches – eternal life with Christ. Friend, is Christ the one thing that you look forward to inheriting? Paul stated it this way, “My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” (Philippians 1:23). Which life do you treasure – this one or the one to come?
3. He was laid where animals eat and wrapped in rags or literally strips of cloth. Can you imagine being this impoverished? There is a line from one of my favorite Christmas songs, *Mary Did You Know*, that goes: “Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb? *This sleeping child you're holding is the great I Am.*” Think about all the might of God that is displayed in the Old Testament while thinking this great God is the one laying in rags in an animal's food trough. God gave everything for you and me!
4. Because there was no room for Him. Look at the left side of that diagram...if that represents your life, is there room for Him?
5. Equality with God. Christ was fully God and fully man but He gave up the independent exercise of his standing, authority, power, etc. as God. Think about a time a little piece of authority or responsibility was taken away from you and how you felt. I know that internally I don't handle those situations well. But Christ gave up all authority, power and dominion as God to save His enemies.
6. He gave His will up to the Father, which meant that He was giving up His physical life as well. So Jesus gave up His authority and riches as God, gave His earthly life through His obedience to the Father, and finally gave His physical life when the Father so willed it, as a ransom for ours. There is not one thing that Jesus had that He did not give. This gives Him the right to ask the same of you.
7. He gained an eternity with all those who love Him and are sanctified through Him. He prized us more than the glories of Heaven. He gained this by giving up everything. And He asks us to do the same – to give up everything in this world in order to gain something far greater!
8. I admire: that Jesus gave up everything so that I could have everything; grace that has absolutely no bounds; that He counts me greater riches than all that He had in Heaven; that God was wrapped in rags and laid in an animal's trough; that He does not ask for anything that He has not given Himself; that He was obedient to the point of death; that He made Himself nothing; that He came in human form, meaning that He experienced all the struggles and temptations of a fallen world yet victoriously without sin; how strong His desire was to not go to the cross while at the same time submitting that will to the Father; His honesty with the Father; His honesty with Himself; His courage; His faith in the Father; His giving His life for me.

## Obey

Review the commands of Jesus we have studied so far in this series by reading the following verses in Matthew. Based on your obedience or lack of it to these commands, to what degree are you denying yourself, taking up your cross and following Jesus?

28:19-20	Make disciples: go, baptize, train.
22:34-40	Love God first, then love your neighbor as yourself.
5:13-16	Make a difference in the world.
5:21-26	Anger is murderous, so be reconciled before you worship.
5:27-30	Lust is adulterous, so don't lust.
5:31-32 and 19:1-9	Marriage is sacred, so don't divorce.
5:33-37	Tell the truth; don't take vows.
5:38-42	Don't seek revenge or treat "tit for tat" but go the second mile.
5:43-48	Love your enemies like God does.
6:19-24	Store up treasures in heaven.
6:25-34	Don't worry about material needs but make God your highest priority.
7:1-6	Don't judge others.
7:15-23 + 16:6-12	Beware false teachers.

## Train:

### How to help disciple others:

1. Study Matthew 16:24-28 yourself, ask your disciple(s) to study it, then discuss it and pray about it together.
2. Review the chart above (in “Obey”) with them and use it to lead your discussion and prayer time.