

SUNDAY HANDOUT FOR DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION

Taking Up Your Cross (Matthew 16:24-28)

Taking up your cross isn't just one big scary sacrifice and then you're done with it - it's meant to be the choice of every moment; a lifestyle of glad surrender and joyful obedience to Jesus. In Matthew 16:24-28, Jesus describes it as a non-negotiable way of life for anyone who wants to be his apprentice – and goes on to explain the life-giving promise that comes with it. What does it look like to take up your cross, and how does the promise connected to it encourage us along the way?

1. A non-negotiable way of life (Matthew 16:24)

2. A life-giving promise (Matthew 16:25-26)

3. The choice of every moment (Matthew 16:27-28)

QUESTIONS (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Read Matthew 16:24-28. Now read it again but start in Matthew 16:13. What does Jesus mean by “deny yourself,” “take up your cross,” and “follow me”? What do these commands reveal about the nature of apprenticeship to Jesus?

2. Why do you think Jesus connects following him with self-denial and a cross? What does this challenge about the way we normally think about a fulfilling life?

Jesus says, “Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (V25). What is the paradox Jesus is describing? Where are you tempted to “hold on” to your life rather than entrust it to him?

3. In verses 25-26, Jesus asks what good it is to gain the world but forfeit your soul. What are some things our culture tells us will give us identity, security, or fulfillment? How can those things subtly take Jesus' place?

4. Jesus' cross was unique - it accomplished our salvation - but he calls his apprentices to take up their own cross. How are those two crosses different, and how does Jesus' sacrifice change the way we understand our own sacrifice and obedience?

5. What might taking up your cross look like in the ordinary, unseen moments of your week? Where might Jesus be asking you to say “no” to yourself and “yes” to him?

6. Jesus reminds his apprentices that he is both returning in glory and already reigning (VV27-28). How should those realities shape the choices you make today?

7. How does knowing that we follow a crucified and risen King change the way we think about surrender, suffering, and obedience? How does Jesus' promise that “whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” give you hope?

Ask Jesus to show you what taking up your cross looks like in the ordinary moments of your life this week. Ask him to help you recognize the moments when you need to say “no” to yourself and “yes” to him, trusting that his way leads to true life.