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1. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Take up your cross and follow Me"?

(Matthew 16:24) Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

- Jesus told His disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

2. What Jesus didn't mean in this verse?

- Many people interpret the "**cross**" to be taken up as some burden they must carry in their lives: **a strained relationship, a thankless job, a physical illness**. With self-pitying pride, they look at their difficulty and say, "That's my cross I have to carry." This is not what Jesus meant when He said, "Take up your cross and follow Me."

3. What's the meaning of the Cross?

- When a person carried a cross in Jesus' day, no one thought of it as a persistent annoyance or symbolic burden. To a person in the first century, the cross meant one thing and one thing only: death by **crucifixion**. To carry a cross was to face the most painful and humiliating means of death human beings could develop.

4. How is the Cross viewed today?

Two thousand years later, Christians view the cross as a cherished symbol of atonement, forgiveness, grace, and love. But in Jesus' day the cross represented a torturous death. The Romans forced convicted criminals to carry their own crosses to the place of crucifixion. Bearing a cross meant one was about to die, and that one would face ridicule and disgrace along the way.

(John 19:17) Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

5. Are we commanded to carry a cross?

- Yes. Jesus' command to "take up your cross and follow Me" is a call to self-sacrifice. One must be willing to die in order to follow Jesus. Dying to self is an absolute surrender to God.

6. What's the reward for carrying our cross?

- After Jesus commanded cross-bearing, He said, "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? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?" **(Matthew 16:25–26)**. Although the call to take up our cross is tough, the reward is matchless. Nothing in this world is worth passing up eternal life.

7. When Jesus Made this statement, how did the people react?

- Wherever Jesus went, He drew crowds. Their view of who the Messiah really was and what He would do was often distorted. They thought the Christ would immediately usher in the restored kingdom.

(Luke 19:11) While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.

- They believed He would free them from the oppressive rule of their Roman occupiers. Some hoped He would continue to provide free lunches for everyone.

(John 6:26) Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

- Jesus’ statement that following Him requires taking up a cross made people think twice about their motivations and level of commitment.

8. Have you counted the cost to follow Jesus?

In **(Luke 9:57–62)**, three people seemed willing to follow Jesus. When Jesus pressed them, however, their commitment was shown to be half-hearted at best. They failed to count the cost of following Him. None were willing to take up their cross and crucify upon it their own interests.

The Cost of Following Jesus

(Luke 9:57–62) ⁵⁷ As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

⁵⁸ Jesus replied, “**Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.**”

⁵⁹ He said to another man, “**Follow me.**” But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, “**Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.**”

⁶¹ Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”

⁶² Jesus replied, “**No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.**”

9. Did Jesus Dissuade people from following him?

Jesus’ apparent attempts to dissuade people from following Him surely limited the number of false converts and insincere disciples **(John 6:66)**. But God seeks “true worshipers [who] will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth” **(John 4:23)**. Jesus’ call to “take up your cross and follow Me” serves to screen out the disingenuous and double-minded.

(John 6:66) From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

(John 4:23) Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

10. What are some questions you must answer before saying yes to Jesus?

Are you ready to take up your cross and follow Jesus? *Consider these questions:*

- Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing your closest friends?
- Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means alienation from your family?
- Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing your reputation?
- Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing your job?
- Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing your life?

11. Do you know this is a reality for some people in the world?

In some places of the world, these consequences are a reality. But notice the phrasing of the questions: “Are you willing?” Following Jesus doesn’t necessarily mean all these things will happen to you, but the disciple of Christ must be willing to suffer loss. Are you willing to take up your cross? If faced with a choice, Jesus or the comforts of this life which will you choose?

Conclusion:

Commitment to Christ means taking up your cross daily, giving up your hopes, dreams, possessions, and even your very life, if need be, for the cause of Christ. Only if you willingly take up your cross may you be called His disciple **(Luke 14:27)**. The reward is worth the price. Remember that, as Jesus called His disciples to “take up your cross and follow Me,” He, too, bore a cross. Our Lord led the way.

(Luke 14:27) And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.