

**Take up his cross?  
More than worth it!**

Jesus gives us the straight talk about heaven, hell, and following him. "And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). The Lord said, "If any man desires, after me, to follow. . . ." (Mark 8:34). Discipleship involves a constant desire (present tense) — not a passing interest only. Following Jesus requires a heavy price. The Lord weighed the cost of discipleship against the consequences of self-centeredness. He balanced the sacrifice of following him against the rewards of walking in his steps (Mark 8:35-38).



Who made  
a riddle  
about a  
lion?

The cost involves three decisive actions: self-denial, cross-bearing, and the continual following of Jesus (Mark 8:34). The verbs "deny" and "take up" are both in the aorist tense (i.e., indicating completed action in this usage, not a process). One must make up his mind. A prospective follower can not legitimately pursue the Christian life without self-denial and cross-bearing.

These three commands (in the imperative mood) picture sacrifice, selflessness, and service. A cross represented punishment and disgrace (cf. Galatians 3:13), but it represents far more since Jesus "became a curse for us." His cross showed the shame and punishment for sin, but not His own (Hebrews 4:15). It displayed the love of God (Romans 5:8). It demonstrated selfless, sacrificial love, as He served the needs of fallen man by giving His life (Matthew 20:28).

For the disciple who tries to live according to the Lord's example of sacrifice and service, "it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). The Lord is the constant focus and guiding principle in life. Habitual sin is incompatible with following Christ (1 John 3:8-10). Christ-following requires fruitfulness and servitude. The apostle's declaration: "For me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). Essential to the Christian's lifestyle is "deny himself, and take up his cross daily" (Luke 9:23).

When we consider the body dead because of sin (Romans 8:10), we are prepared to follow him continually. It means to go where He leads. It involves obeying His commands, duplicating his example, and yielding to His will in every way, in every day, and in everything we say. This is no mere formalism or Sunday-only mentality. It is genuine discipleship, and with Christ, is it either all or nothing. Are you His disciple? Yes or no?

The next four verses (Mark 8:35-38) offer reasons as to why a person should die to sin and self and live as a servant of righteousness. "For whosoever would save his life..." "For what doth it profit a man..." "For what should a man give..." "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me." These statements apply to everyone (i.e., **whosoever**). Some would rather "save his life," because he has no interest in denying self and taking up his cross. He would rather "live," or as some might say, "Live it up." He would rather save his own skin and avoid the rigors of persecution. He would rather live with his own interests in mind, pursuing immediate gratifications over spiritual rewards.

Jesus defined what following involves. It is no mere emotion, and certainly not lip-service. Following Him is accomplished through the gospel. In other words, the redemptive acts of Jesus (i.e., the death, burial, and resurrection, cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-3) form the basis for the plan of God, revealed in the gospel. That revelation includes the requirements for the forgiveness of sins and Christian living and worship. One cannot separate the Lord from His teaching. If one will follow him, he must follow his teaching (cf. 2 John 9).

Jesus poses questions: "For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for his life?" (Mark 8:36-37). Is cross-bearing worth it? Nothing is as valuable as a man's life. Nothing is more precious than his soul. Faithful service is indeed a small price to pay for eternal reward. What a bargain! Let the disciple beware! Self-centeredness and self-indulgence come at a high eternal price.

Jesus adds a fourth statement in Mark 8:38: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." This applies to **everyone**, the Lord says, and all ought to consider the importance of discipleship.

Some travel the broad way to destruction, and if you don't allow yourself to be squeezed into the mold, you are sure to be ridiculed. Ashamed of Christ and His words! If a person is more concerned about what this adulterous and sinful generation thinks of him, more than what the Son of man thinks, then Jesus will be ashamed of him when he returns.

For the first time in Mark, we read of the Lord's return explicitly. He will come. And no, He has not returned already as some falsely claim. His return is asserted with certainty. He will come in the glory of his Father. His deity and exalted accomplishments will radiate unobscured. He will come with his holy angels who "shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and the gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:49-50). That is very bad for all who are not His disciples.

Follow Jesus, no matter the cost, for it is worth it — more than worth it!

**To all our visitors:** *Please feel free to participate!*

You should expect to hear singing with voices only, a few "family" announcements, prayers spoken, and see the Lord's Supper offered, then free-willed giving, and gospel preaching from the Bible.

Any response is up to you and will be kindly received.

We are glad you decided to worship God with us on this first day of the week!

**VBS "Heroes of Faith!"**  
Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup> from  
8:45am to 1:00pm  
Please register children  
who plan to attend—  
Thanks!

**Bday/Anniv Lunch:** Second Sunday!  
**Friday Bible Study:** from 7 to 8 PM!  
**VBS:** Please see the notice above.  
**Singing:** at Morton Street on  
Tuesday (5/28) 7 PM