

## **Take Up Your Cross for Life**

**I want to encourage you today!**

**I want to fight for you today!**

**I want to make sure you know how to win!**

I recently was listening to a message from a pastor I enjoy listening to from time to time. This message was called “Leaving the House of Micah” by Dean Odle. It’s a great message all about how particularly the many churches are not doing well in the battle between GOD and money. (Example of customer giving to Kenneth Copeland net worth \$760 million) While listening to the message I really caught an interesting point that I honestly had never really thought about. So today I want to share with you my thoughts on this point in hopes that I can inspire you.

So in his message Dean is really driving home how important our striving needs to be in praying to the Father and letting him lead us where we should go. He starts with this verse:

### **Luke 16:13 English Standard Version**

<sup>13</sup> No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

### **Matthew 6:24 New King James Version**

#### **You Cannot Serve God and Riches**

<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and <sup>[a]</sup>mammon.

If it doesn’t hit you right away, we can’t have two masters. Jesus also tells us there are two great commandments, and the first one is “Love the LORD your GOD with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”. So how do we keep ourselves away from serving the god of riches, so that we can love him fully?

“Take up your cross”

### **Mark 8:34 King James Version**

<sup>34</sup> And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

I want to spend some time on this verse and these concepts today to really drive home how important these words are! Particularly the phrase “take up his cross”.

Main point: I believe one of the best ways for us to keep from serving riches is to take up our cross. Taking up our cross is a very powerful tool to get away from the riches that can distract us.

Have you ever really thought about what Jesus is saying here and how deep it is? I don’t know about you, but when I heard this phrase for some reason I just started envisioning what that really meant. Please let me explain further.

1. This was obviously a familiar phrase, we even use it today, but not in the same way.
  - a. As you’ll see throughout this message this phrase is used multiple times, and there isn’t much explanation of what it means with the verses. This leaves you to believe that the ones listening knew what it meant. Plus everyone would have known this phrase, because this was the worst method of killing some of the worst criminals during this time period.
2. This meant that you carried the device that was going to torture and bring death. Jesus was telling them they would have to start carrying around what would eventually kill them. Reminder: this type of death was created specifically to be the most cruel way to punish someone, and at the same time put fear in others.
3. Jesus knew specifically how he would die
  - a. This point really was what inspired me to write this message. I had never before thought how profound this was. Of course, Jesus is GOD, but also being fully man it’s still amazing to realize he knew the plan that was set before him. He not only knew he would lay down his life, but he knew it was going to be in this specific way. It blew my mind and made me rethink this whole conversation
4. This meant your life would be lost
  - a. Taking up your cross, meant you had a constant reminder of your imminent physical death. A death that isn’t peaceful or without pain.

“Taking Up Your Cross” was indeed a very powerful statement, and wasn’t something to take lightly. To take up your cross was to let go of your life, take hold of what was going to kill you, expect your death, and even expect suffering and abuse as you walk that out. It’s a wonder why we read that so many were not able to continue following him. Let’s re-read Mark 8:34 and break down the different points to get further inspiration.

## 1.] Come After Me

This message is to all those that have chosen to follow Jesus. Once you believe and have decided to follow Jesus this is what he has planned for you. That we seek him in all things.

### Hebrews 11:6 ESV

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

### Luke 9:57-62 English Standard Version

#### **The Cost of Following Jesus**

<sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” <sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” <sup>59</sup> To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” <sup>60</sup> And Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” <sup>61</sup> Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” <sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

## **2.] Let Him Deny Himself**

Another important point that Dean Odle made was that Jesus should be the “LORD” of our lives, or in other words, King of our lives. The new testament over and over mentions how Jesus is our King (Lord). More than any other description Jesus is described as our “king”.

### Romans 6:23 New King James Version

For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (King).

To show your loyalty you serve your king. So we should be giving up our lives for him, which is the ultimate loyalty. Much like men should give up their lives also for their families.

### John 15:13 New King James Version

<sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.

## **3.] Carry What Will Kill Us**

Now we get back to my main point: Take Up Your Cross. I believe that in doing this we can better avoid loving riches, and we can more closely follow our King Jesus. What does taking up our cross really mean?

1. Lose your life so that you may find it

#### Matthew 16:25-26 King James Version

<sup>25</sup> For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

<sup>26</sup> For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

#### Mark 10:21 King James Version

<sup>21</sup> Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

#### Luke 9:23-25 King James Version

<sup>23</sup> And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.<sup>24</sup> For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

<sup>25</sup> For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

#### John 12:25 King James Version

<sup>25</sup> He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

2. You will suffer through trials

#### Matthew 10:22 King James Version

<sup>22</sup> And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

## Luke 21:17 King James Version

<sup>17</sup> And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

3. Carry that which is going to kill us!

## James 1:2-4 English Standard Version

### **Testing of Your Faith**

<sup>2</sup> Count it all joy, my brothers, <sup>[a]</sup> when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. <sup>4</sup> And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

## Romans 14:8 English Standard Version

<sup>8</sup> For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

## Philippians 3:7-8

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

## Luke 14:27 King James Version

<sup>27</sup> And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

## **4.] Follow Jesus**

## Philippians 4:8 King James Version

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

### Hebrews 12:1-2 King James Version

12 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

<sup>2</sup> Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Lastly. (Share this knowledge God will give you as you fight to take up your cross).

### Matthew 16:24-25 King James Version

<sup>24</sup> Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

<sup>25</sup> For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.