

LifeGroup Study

Date: September 17, 2023

Text: Matthew 16:21-28

Theme: In Tandem

Price Check

Belong

Today's text takes us to a place of sorrow and fear, faithfulness and commitment, and joy and hope. One cannot even fathom the emotions flowing between Jesus and his disciples as Jesus predicts his death, tells of his resurrection, and further defines his teachings of how his disciples must walk in tandem with him for an eternity. Blessed are we as Jesus teaches us how to walk in tandem, to follow together, with the One true leader. Walk in tandem—stand together arm in arm with all Christians sharing the burden of the crosses we bear; united in tandem with Christ. We are called together to live in tandem, removing the feeling of randomness that often overcomes us in a world with Satan's influences. The Word you read and discuss today brings you together with Jesus as long as you place the Lord above all of the blessings and temptations of this world. As you read and discuss, do a "price check" on your priorities. Where is your allegiance? Are you aligned with the Lord for his sake, not for yours? Learn from Jesus' Word as he taught his disciples, and teaches us to take up a cross for him.

Pray... Dear Lord, we pray that you join us as we discuss your Word. Open our hearts to really hear you and to learn from each other. Be with us now as we dig deeply into our feelings. Let us see ourselves in a clear light open to our own deepest thoughts. We may wrestle with today's Word as we look into our hearts, revealing our feelings toward ourselves, others, and you. We need your mercy, grace, and love as we request forgiveness for allowing Satan's greed to control our lives. We are here to learn the true cost for giving up what we think we own for the reality of living a life in your loving grace. As we read and discuss your Word, take us by the hand and lead us to the place we belong: in tandem with you.

Believe

The Gospels (*the Books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*) tell us the amazing story of Jesus Christ—how he lived, taught, praised God, suffered for our sins, died, was resurrected, and ascended. Our reading begins at that critical point in the lives of the disciples when they hear Jesus speak the unspeakable: he predicts his death.

Read Matthew 16:21-22. Jesus' disciples know who he really is—the Messiah, longed for by the very people who desire his destruction. Why? We rebuke what we do not

want to believe. Peter reacted as I would: No, Teacher, do not let it be so! You, my Messiah, cannot suffer at the hands of man, this I cannot understand.

Read Matthew 16:23. Jesus responds to Peter's rebuke. Satan's influence is overcome when we believe the way of God versus our way. Without faith people fall prey to Satan's debilitating influence.

• *Why does God allow Satan to exist?*

• *Where can you turn (in your Bible) to better your understanding of Satan?*

Read Matthew 16:24. Take up your cross! Jesus teaches his disciples that they must follow him even if that means death.

• *If you do not feel confident in your thoughts around Jesus' command, what can you do to grow your faith?*

• *Jesus took up his cross for us; he was pure yet condemned to death for our sins. What can we do to take up our cross for Christ?*

Read Matthew 16:25. This, Jesus' most important verse, (*quoted in each of the Gospels*) emphasizes the essence of Christianity: Our love for God is so great, vast, and overpowering that it makes our love for each other, ourselves, and everything in the world seem trite. We walk in tandem, together with Jesus.

Read Matthew 16:26-28. God gives us all that is in our world yet God asks us to put this gift behind our love for God.

• *How can you ensure you keep your priorities straight?*

• *What small differences can you make in your life to ensure you are walking in tandem with Jesus?*

Become

Start today! Our past is behind us. Christ died for our sins; he carried our cross up the hill so that we could enjoy eternal life walking together with fellow Christians, in God's footprints. Jesus paid the price. What will it cost us? Examine your life, is it right? Are you aligned with God? Do not walk randomly through life, uncertain of what is ahead. Know what is in store for you as you walk through a life of eternity with Christ that begins now.

Pray... Jesus, as we commit to making changes in our lives, we need you to walk with us as you know we are weak and in need of guidance, leadership, and love. Take away our feelings of randomness that drive us away from you and other Christians. Help us to see you and to see each other standing arm in arm, strong in faith, when Satan tries to steer us in the way of man. Give us the strength we need to change. We love you and know that your love for us is unending and undying. Join us today and in all of our tomorrows. It is in your name we pray. Amen.

Daily Walk on the Rock

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Day 1: Monday—Jesus' Identity and His Purpose

Glance back over Matthew 16:13-20. Recall Peter's bold confession; notice Jesus' admonition that (temporarily) the disciples must not reveal Jesus' identity. They realize Jesus is the Messiah, but they don't yet understand the price of redemption nor do they comprehend the kind of a kingdom Jesus came to establish. So, Jesus must guide their vision of the Messiah from one who wields geo-political (albeit compassionate) power to one whose throne is a Roman cross. Read Matthew 16:21-28. What do Jesus' words mean for the disciples; what do they mean for us, for you? Like Peter, do we want Jesus to conform to our image of what he should be? Talk to him about this.

Day 2: Tuesday—"Never, Lord!" What does the title 'Lord' mean to you? Peter shouts, "Never, Lord" or "God forbid it, Lord" (*Matthew 16:22, NIV & NRSV*). Do you see a disconnect in Peter's words? Can we call Jesus, 'Lord,' yet still say, 'no!' to him? Probably Peter was moved by love, fear, and false expectations, yet a response of 'no, Lord' just doesn't work, not for Peter, not for us. Do we embrace Jesus as Savior, eager for the eternal life he offers, yet deny him Lordship in our lives? Read Matthew 16:24-26; Luke 6:46; and John 13:12-17; 14:23-24; tell Jesus you want him to be Savior and Lord in your life. Invite him to reign on the throne of your heart. What does this mean for you, today?

Day 3: Wednesday—On What Are Our Minds Focused?

Read Matthew 16:21-28 and Luke 4:1-13. Might Jesus have called Peter, 'Satan' because, like Satan, Peter was acting as an adversary to God's plans, wanting Jesus to fix his heart on temporal or human standards/ideals rather than on God's will? Do you long to have your heart and mind fixed on the things of God (*see Matthew 16:23 and Romans 12:2*)? How is this possible? Consider that as we worship, dwell in God's Word, pray (*listening and speaking*), fellowship with others who honor Jesus as Lord, and walk in love and obedience (*Mark 12:29-31; 1 John 3:16-18,23-24*), we begin to understand God's will. Talk to Jesus about your desire to fix your heart on him.

Day 4: Thursday—The Cost of Discipleship

Did Jesus promise ease, wealth, and temporal security? Consider that most, perhaps all, of the disciples died as martyrs; recall Paul's suffering and martyrdom. Pause and pray for those around the

globe who, even as you read this, are suffering or dying for their faith in Jesus. Read Matthew 16:24-26; John 16:33; 17:13-18; Romans 12:1; and 2 Corinthians 4:6-18. Our culture values self-gratification, self-fulfillment, and ease; prayerfully ponder what Jesus means in Matthew 16:24. Pray you will be bound to Jesus by cords of love that are stronger than life itself.

Day 5: Friday—Losing and Finding

Meditate on Matthew 16:25-26; John 12:23-26; 2 Corinthians 8:9; and Philippians 3:7-9. Do you believe that the richest, most abundant, purposeful, and truly joyful life is found in following, honoring, loving, and obeying Jesus, no matter the cost? What have you 'lost' for Jesus; what have you found? Allow Isaac Watts' lyrics to move your heart toward Jesus: "When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride...all the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood."

Day 6: Saturday—History Is God's Story

Read Matthew 16:26-28. History is moving forward according to God's will and plan, and we are invited to partner with God as we pray and live "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done" (*Matthew 6:10*). When we read about the kingdom of God in Scripture, we must understand that it isn't simply future; the kingdom has a present aspect to it. Jesus will come again to reign as King Eternal, but today, his desire and sovereign right is to reign in our hearts and lives. Do you live each day for, with, and through him? Do you honor him as Savior and as Lord? Do you live expectantly, knowing Jesus will return (*Acts 1:11; Revelation 22:12-14,20*)? Read 2 Corinthians 1:20-22 and pray.

Day 7: Sunday—Temporal and Eternal Treasure

Read Matthew 16:28; 28:20; John 11:25-26; and Romans 8:31-39; 14:8. Just as the kingdom is here and now and yet to come, so is our eternal life in Christ. How precious is this gift? Relate Jesus' words in Matthew 13:44-46 and Luke 17:20-21 to our week's theme text. Consider D.L. Moody's words: "The world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by (one) who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him." Do you long to be such a one? Pray more of Watts' lyrics: "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all" and also Havergal's words, "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord to Thee..." Worship Jesus, your Lord!

