



Matthew 16:21-28

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING: FOLLOWING JESUS

The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. —Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In Matthew 16:13-20, Jesus takes His disciples to Caesarea Philippi, twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee, into a Gentile region that was filled with pagan worship. Overlooking the city, the disciples would have seen a temple to Caesar, a temple to Zeus, and multiple shrines to Pan, a god associated with nature and sexual immorality. Here also was the Cave of Pan with a flowing stream that many believed descended into the underworld (i.e., the “gates of hell”).

Thus, in a place where the gods of political power, paganism, nature-worship, and sexual immorality ruled, Christ’s identity was revealed.

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God! (16:16)

Jesus is the owner, architect, builder, and foundation of the church.

- God is the only true Rock (Deut. 32:3-4; Ps. 62:6; Is. 44:8).
- Jesus is the only true Rock (Matt. 7:24-25; 1 Cor. 3:11; 10:4).
- The apostles and prophets are only foundational as they are tied to Christ, the cornerstone, and proclaim Him (Eph. 2:20).

Peter is the first stone in the church.

- Peter’s confession is the confession of the church (Rom. 10:9).
- Peter is the first proclaimer of the gospel, opening the door of the kingdom to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles (Acts 1-15).

All those who trust in Jesus are living stones in His church.

- Believers are built upon Christ the cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:4-7).
- Believers are being built into a holy temple (Eph. 2:1-22).

Death (and the forces of Satan) will not conquer the church.

- Christ alone has defeated sin and death (1 Cor. 15:20-28).
- Christ will reign on the earth with His church (Rev. 21-22).

Few verses in Scripture have generated more controversy or divisiveness than Matthew 16:18.

—Brittany C. Burnette

These verses [16:16-19] are loaded with interpretive conundrums.

—Craig L. Blomberg

“Thou art Peter; and upon this Rock” which thou hast confessed, upon this rock which thou hast acknowledged, saying, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, will I build My Church,” that is upon Myself... I will build thee upon Myself not Myself upon thee.

—Augustine (354-430)

Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ at “this rock.” Why? This place was considered the “gates of hell” ...

—Michael S. Heiser

16:19 is expressed in the unusual syntax of future perfect passive verbs, “will have been tied up,” “will have been untied.” The construction is sufficiently unusual and awkward in Greek to draw attention... When Peter makes his decision it will be found to have been already made in heaven, making him not the initiator of new directions for the church, but the faithful steward of God’s prior decisions.

—R. T. France

JESUS' ROAD LEADS TO THE CROSS (16:21-23)

For the first time Jesus begins to “show” (*deiknuo*, “expose to the eyes”) His disciples the path that He must take as the Messiah.

- **The _____ of the Cross**

*He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)*

- **The _____ of the Cross**

“Heaven be merciful, Lord! By no means will this happen to you!”

When we put our will above God’s will we do _____ will.

THE DISCIPLES' ROAD FOLLOWS JESUS (16:24-28)

- **The Essentials of Discipleship**

*If anyone desires to come after Me,
let him deny himself,
and take up his cross,
and follow Me.*

- **The Reasons for Discipleship**

My _____ is found in the opposite direction than I think.

My _____ is worth more than anything in the world.

My _____ is greater than anything I go through on earth.

Had Jesus chosen any road but the one to Jerusalem, He could not have become the Savior of mankind, no matter how many more people He healed or how much more truth He taught. He had to go to the city of sacrifices and become the Passover Lamb, offering Himself “once for all.”
—John MacArthur, Jr.

We deny self when we surrender ourselves to Christ and determine to obey His will. This once-for-all dedication is followed by a daily “dying to self” as we take up the cross and follow Him. From a human point of view, we are losing ourselves, but from the divine perspective, we are finding ourselves. Living for Christ, we become more like Him, and this brings out our own unique individuality.
—Warren Wiersbe

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.
—Jim Elliot

“May God be merciful to you in sparing you...!” An English equivalent is “God forbid!” —NET Bible

There are no crown-wearers in Heaven that were not cross-bearers here below.
—Charles H. Spurgeon

The whole world cannot make up to a man the loss of his soul. The possession of all the treasures that the world contains would not compensate for eternal ruin.
—J. C. Ryle

16:27 *“What he has done” is more literally “his practice” (a singular noun) and refers to an individual life viewed in its entirety.*
—Craig L. Blomberg