

Following Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Matthew chapter number 16, verses number 24. And while you're turning there, I'd like to tell you a brief story. And yet again, if this is going to work well, I need crowd engagement.

So I'm going to ask a few of you guys to read verses and so on and so forth, maybe even for a few answers. But a few years ago, there was a man, his daughter was turning 15, her quinceanera. They lived in Mexico, northeastern state.

And one day, this man decides to put out a video. He recruits a local promoting agency, and he gathers this man together. And millions of people have responded to an invitation of a coming-to-age party for a girl in rural northern Mexico.

This is what Wall Street Journal says about it. After a parent's video, he instantly asked everybody to attend. A local event photographer posted the video describing a down-home 15-year-old birthday party complete with food, horse races, local bands on his Facebook page.

So he thought he was posting this on the community page, but he wasn't. This usually was dedicated to announcing things like weddings, baptisms, other events in this rural corner of the northern state of San Luis. But the video was picked up dozens of times on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, with each version getting hundreds of thousands of views.

[1 : 1 1] It was then seen by millions, which sparked tributes by musical stars. It became the butt of jokes and memes. It drew sponsorships for different companies. You had United Airlines offering discounted flights to this region of Mexico.

It gets so bad that after millions and hundreds and thousands of people show their interests, his wife sums it up like this. She tells a local TV station, My husband made the invitation public to the, he made the invitation, but to people who live in the neighboring region and areas.

I don't know who copied it, but they posted and blew it up as if it were an invitation to the entire world. So, supposed to be a small invitation, but it becomes an invitation to the entire world. As you can imagine, this event went terribly.

They get there, people died, people were trampled to death. It was a fiasco. The results were horrific. Sometimes an open invitation may just seem too good to be true, but I can tell you something.

When Jesus makes an invitation, it is not too good to be true, and it is an invitation to the whole world. It is an invitation that is actually good with the real promise in the end, and as opposed to death, there's real life on the other end.

[2 : 0 9] And let's turn our Bibles to Matthew chapter number 16. Jesus advised people to follow him, and I tell you that he's worth following. There is an open invitation to follow Jesus with some real benefits.

Let's turn to Matthew 16 and look at what the Bible has to say about that. And while we turn there with somebody of mine reading John chapter 2 verse number 19, we can do the sword drill style so the first person there can stand up and read it.

John chapter 2 verse number 19, while the rest of us turn to Matthew 16. And if not, it's right behind me, so you can even read it there too. Jesus answered and said unto them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

That is some excellent reading there, Mr. Dillon. In Jesus' ministry, he's alluded to his death a lot of times, you know, like in his ministry and life as he taught. Early in his ministry, he alluded to his death. John 3 verse 14, would somebody mind reading that when it pops up there?

There it is. All right, somebody mind reading John 3 verse 14. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be. So time after time, he's alluded to his death.

[3 : 09] He says, just like the temples will be destroyed and raised up, serpent must be lifted up as well. But now he's not alluding to his death, or he's not speaking in parable or metaphor. He's now being quite candid in what he's saying.

Look at what he says in Matthew chapter 16 verse number 21. Would somebody mind reading that for me? Yes, sir. From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go into Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders, the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

So if you thought he was kind of beating around the bush earlier with, you know, saying the serpent must be lifted up or the temple must be destroyed, I think we could agree here. He says it pretty outright. You know, he doesn't even just say he says it. It says he shows it to him. So he's like, I'm probably going to go down there.

That's what's going to kill me. I mean, he shows it to them. He says it outright. What's going to happen to them? And look at what Peter's reaction is in verse number 22. It says, then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.

So, I mean, if you can imagine if you were a follower of Jesus, then Peter was somebody who claimed he loved Jesus. But he hears this and his response is, Lord, be it far from you. Don't do it. That's not a good idea. No, they're not going to kill you.

[4 : 15] So on and so forth. And Peter interjects and tries to stop Jesus from dying in Jerusalem. And look at Peter, who repeated Satan's temptation, actually, by trying to deter Christ from the cross. That's why it warrants the rebuke that Jesus is going to give him in verse number 23.

He's turned and said unto Peter, get thee behind me, Satan. Thou art an offense unto me, for thou savest not the things that be of God, but those things. And that's kind of the context we're in in this story is Jesus talks about his death outright.

Peter tries to stop him offering the same temptation the devil gave Jesus in Matthew chapter four. Hey, don't go down on the cross. Hey, don't go. Don't go lay your life down. You don't have to do that. Jesus issues a seemingly harsh but appropriate rebuke of get thee behind me, Satan.

Stop trying to stop me from dying on the cross to do what I've come here to do. And it's after that Jesus states his mission, what he's there for, he then is going to state the mission of those who follow him.

He's still going to state what the mission is of those who want to be Jesus followers or those who want to help people find and follow Jesus. He then states what the mission is. The mission is going to be this. It's discipleship. Our purpose, our existence, what we should aim to do is to sit at the feet of King Jesus, is to sit with him, to follow him, to go where he goes to go.

[5 : 21] And in this story and in this account, he's going to give us some real practical instructions and invitation to follow him. Let's go. Let's look what the Bible says. Matthew 16, 24. Then said Jesus to his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

Verse 25. For whosoever shall save his life and whosoever will lose his life from my sake shall find it. We'll stop. We'll stop right there. Have you noticed in these first few verses the terminology used?

Is this like inclusive or is this exclusive language? Survey says it's inclusive. It welcomes a lot of people. Whosoever shows up twice. If any man. We see different times over and over again.

This is an open invitation. He's not just saying if you specific guys or if you specific people. He's saying if any man. Whosoever. He's using very general, large terms to show us that everybody's welcome to follow Jesus.

This is just going to bring us to our first point is there's an invitation to follow Jesus. Did you guys know that Jesus really wants us to follow him? I don't know if that's pretty neat. Most college professors and most teachers, they don't go recruit students.

[6 : 22] I don't know if you guys, you know, that's not very common. Like a good professor, a good PhD guy won't go and say, hey, come take my classes. That's just not how it goes. But Jesus is the only teacher or disciple or rabbi or whatever you want to call him, instructor, who goes and he finds his, he finds his disciples and finds his pupils and he invites them to follow him.

He's different. But there was an invitation. He says, any man, the gift and opportunity of discipleship, good news is available to every person. It's not just available to a few or not just available to the good or not just available to the wealthy.

It's available to everybody. That ought to give us hope because you got to remember who is in this mixed bag of people. He was talking about. There was everyone, race, history, location. Everybody is invited.

We got to remember his closest followers, they were quite the hodgepodge group. You had Simon the Zealot. You could think terrorists. You know, that was kind of what Simon did for a living. You had people that they would call sinners.

It's kind of crazy that when they talk about Jesus and who he associated with, they say he sat with sinners and publicans. Like you got to think being a tax collector back then was so bad. They separated you from sinners. You know, like there's sinners and then there's publicans.

[7 : 26] So that's how bad of a career you had. You're almost like if the IRS and the mob got together, that'd be like a tax collector back then. And that's that's those are the people that Jesus called to follow him.

So it's pretty cool that anybody is can participate in this invitation to follow Jesus. The good in society, the bad in society, the high, the low, the rich, the poor. Anybody from any location can follow Jesus.

What's really cool is that we in the in the Bible, we see some of the some of the first people to sit at the feet of Jesus is actually a woman. That's pretty cool. We see in the story of Mary and Martha. Jesus lets anybody, any person follow him, any person be his disciple.

Look what the Bible says in Matthew chapter 28, verses 18 through 20. Some of you guys may know it by heart. But let's let's read that if somebody wouldn't mind taking those verses for me. It's behind me.

I know it is. Somebody can read it. Verse 19, please. OK, so.

[8 : 31] And 22. Thank you so much. I don't know about y'all, but that sounds a lot like making disciples to me.

That sounds a lot like discipleship. Go. You're going to teach. You're going to teach them to observe all things I've commanded you. So the whole the whole the whole scriptures, everything that I've that everything I've commanded you.

You're going to teach them to that. You're going to lead them that in the baptism or salvation and baptism. You're going to teach them the whole Bible. That is what is known as discipleship. That's pretty neat. But notice that notice who Jesus extends this invitation to.

It's to the whole world. That's great. There's an open invitation. He wants you. He wants me. He wants your friends, your neighbors, the world to become followers of him. He's not he's not exclusive in that sense.

Jesus wants every person to follow him. Every person to have a relationship with him. Everybody. He wants everybody to be a disciple. He wants you. He wants your friends, your family. He wants the world.

[9 : 25] That's some great news. Sometimes in here, maybe we don't feel like we're worthy to attend the Jesus educational institution, you know, or we don't feel like we're good enough to follow Jesus. Can I tell you? He wants you just as you are. He wants us to really follow him and to seek him and to seek that relationship with him.

Jesus invites everybody. Every person is invited to follow Jesus. But not just that real and true disciples. The real disciples, they've received his gift of salvation. Many people follow Jesus then nominally.

So, I mean, if you were around back then, you saw Jesus do a miracle. Like, I'm going to go follow that guy. Like, literally follow him. Go to walk where he goes. Many people follow him because of what they thought he'd do for them. Look what the Bible says about those kind of followers in John chapter 6, verse number 2.

Somebody won't mind taking that for me. John 6, 2. So, it's pretty neat.

You know, they're there. They see Jesus. Whoa, he just healed that person. I'm going to go follow that guy. So, some people follow Jesus because of that. What's neat is at the very end of this chapter, those same people that follow Jesus end up leaving him because they don't like what he had to say. But Jesus tells us what a real follower of him looks like.

[10 : 27] Look what the Bible says in John chapter 8, verse number 31 and 32. I'll read, I'll read, I'll read these. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed on him, If you continue my word, then you are my disciples indeed.

Notice there's two things here that qualified these guys as disciples. They believed on him and they continued in his word. Look what he says in verse 32. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free to really follow Jesus.

We must receive him. We must believe him and his word. I'd like to remind you of this. There was a guy who was following Jesus then too. His name was Judas Iscariot and he was not a real disciple of Jesus. There is one thing to follow him in name, but Jesus tells us what it's like to really follow him, to be a real follower of him.

And notice that in following him, look at what the Bible says happens. But as many as received him, to them he gave the power to become the sons of God, even them that believe in his name. That's John chapter 1, verse number 12.

To accept God's gift of salvation is to initiate this following relationship of Jesus in the real way. Accept the invitation by accepting God's gift of salvation and the blessings associated with it.

[11 : 26] It's the first and most important step in following Jesus. But not just that. There's an invitation to follow Jesus. So everybody's welcome to do so. Everybody's welcome on this ship of following Jesus, no matter where they come from. But also following Jesus has some real implications or some real changes on what it does in our life.

Would somebody mind reading Mark chapter 16, verse number 24? Any takers on Mark 16, 24?

It doesn't exist. Mark 16, 24? Matthew 16, 24. Oh man, Mark's neighbor Matthew. There it is.

Matthew 16, 24. Brother John, I'm not going to write that one. I'll go ahead and read that one. Hey, please read that one for me. Thank you. Matthew 16, 24. Yes, sir. So there's a little bit of instruction there.

He says, if any man come after me, let him deny himself. Let him take up his cross. There are some things that have to happen there. The first thing is the implication of it. He says, take up your cross. He says, hey, pick up your electric chair or pick up your lethal injection and follow me.

[12 : 37] That's a big deal. It's different. You don't hear that kind of thing very often. But to say that, there really was, there was some surrender that went on there. Jesus insisted upon the necessity of the way of the cross, not only for himself, but also for his followers.

The cross could prove to be literal for some of the disciples, in which it would. But it also proved to be metaphorical as well. Whether literal or not, it represents a real way of life through death to self for each disciple. See, to follow Jesus is this.

Lord, you are in charge no matter what it costs me, no matter what it brings me. I would do what you tell me to do, where it takes me, where it leads me, where it guides me. Jesus, you are in charge. You call the shots. As we follow him, got to think, he determines where we go.

Take your cross does not just mean to carry burdens or have problems. I don't know if you've ever met somebody like this, but I went to school with a guy. And every bad problem that happened to him, he would just say, yeah, that's my cross to bear.

Like, no, that's not your cross to bear. Just make better decisions. But Jesus teaches that his yoke is light. It means that we have to identify with Jesus in his life, his teaching, his death, no matter what the cost is.

[13 : 35] I think Paul describes this pretty well for us in Romans chapter 12, verse 1 and 2. Can somebody read Romans 12, 1 and 2 for me? This is how the apostle Paul describes taking up your cross. Excellent job, Karis.

A million points for you. And she just started middle school today. So she did absolutely great on that. Thank you so much. He says, present your body as a living sacrifice to God. So put your life on the altar. Pick up your cross and follow me.

Give Jesus what rightfully belongs to him. Look what the apostle Paul says in Philippians chapter 3, verses 7 through 10, if somebody don't mind reading those for me. Philippians 3, verses 7 through 10. I'm also confident this one's behind me too.

Let's look at verse number 8 as well. So that's what the apostle Paul says about picking up his cross.

Everything good I had in life. Everything I had in life. All those things I used to be proud of and brag about my accolades. I'm from the tribe of Benjamin. This, this, this. Whatever it is. I count those things as dung for Christ.

[15 : 01] I lay them down and I go where Christ has me to go. Writing that from prison. The apostle Paul gave it all up to follow Jesus because Jesus led him to do so. Look at the Bible reads in Galatians chapter 2, verse 20.

I'll read this. I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. In the life I live, I now live in the flesh. By the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Jesus calls the shots. He's in charge. He owns me. He decides what I do. I picked up my cross and I'm following him. Essentially, picking up your cross just means unconditional surrender. Lord, what you would have me to do, I'm going to do.

But not just that. The disciples of Jesus are, are to forsake self-concern and embrace, embrace that in their actions of following Jesus. Knowing that it may result in their own demise. Which is, it's pretty incredible. These apostles, these disciples follow Jesus into their death.

Right? I mean, I like to think Peter and James and Andrew, they could have had a pretty successful fishing firm. But no, they gave all that up to follow Jesus, although it cost them their life. It's how Paul could say in 2 Timothy 1.8, but be not therefore ashamed of the testament of our Lord, nor of me as prisoner, but be thou partake of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.

[16 : 03] And I tell you, sometimes following Jesus is going to cost us. Because there may be times in which the world is going this way, but Jesus says go this way. And if we're going to follow him, we got to go where he says go. More practically, going to school or even going to work.

Look, there's times which everyone and all the crowds are doing this, but we as Jesus followers have to decide to do this. Or it's easier to go to work on a Sunday than it is on a Monday, right? And there's time and a half on the weekends, whatever it might be.

We have to decide to follow Jesus wherever he tells us to go. Or maybe his word tells us we need to do something hard, right? Maybe it's deleting an app or we need to have a conversation with somebody. We need to go forgive somebody. We need to put a few things down or get some things right, whatever that might be.

Following Jesus means we're going to do what he says do, even if it makes us uncomfortable. Even if it means we don't necessarily want to do it in and of ourselves. If his word says do it, Jesus tells us to do it. Picking up our cross and following him means we're going to do it.

Jesus, who was perfect, also noticed this. He had to endure a cross, which is great because as people who follow his example, people who say we want to be like him, people who say call ourselves Christians, little Christ, that means that a cross most likely awaits us as well.

[17 : 06] And yes, maybe not a literal cross, but in the sense of there are going to be times you have to make decisions that God would have us do, that Jesus wants us to do, that may be contrary to what we necessarily deem best for ourselves.

Look at what the Bible says in John 15, 20. If somebody want my reading that for me. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. So Jesus makes this statement here. He says, remember, you're not, you're not above your master. If it happened to King Jesus, who was perfect, if he had to take up his cross as his followers and as the guy who says is the one as the Lord who sets the example is people are going to follow him.

We have to take up our cross as well. Jesus also says, he says, take him across. But in the same verse, he also says this, he says, deny yourself, which does not mean like put yourself down or go, you know, go put ashes on your head and be super sad all the time.

[18 : 06] Don't like, don't go starve yourself. That's not what he's saying when he says, deny yourself. But the instruction of dying oneself, notice it's also, it's not optional. Let's look at what the Bible says. Matthew chapter 16, verse 24, come after he let him deny himself.

There's no, there's no, there's no option that it's not optional. We must deny ourselves, not self-denial. Rather, it's saying no to oneself. I think this is best, best seen in the case of Adam, right?

He was in the garden. God gave Adam one rule. He gave Eve one rule. Don't eat of this tree. And Adam had the option. I can say no to self or yes to God, or I can say yes to God and no to self. And what he did was he said no to God and yes to self.

All man sin and destruction centers in self-love and self-trust and self-assertation. The cross means the opposite. It means to trust to God, to love God and commitment to God and not to self. See, when we sin or we do our own thing, it's essentially this.

I'm putting me at the center of it and I'm taking God and I'm removing him from the equation. I'm putting myself under the throne where he belongs. But notice, as we become Christ followers, do what he says, do we take up our cross, we follow him, we deny ourselves.

[19 : 05] We're doing what he would have us to do. Not less, less of us and more of him. But not just that, there's the invitation to follow Jesus, which is to send it to all people. Everybody gets to participate. That's pretty neat. There's the, there's the, uh, there are the things that change when we follow Jesus.

There's the implications of it. But then there's also notice there's, there's some real importance of it in life as well, because following Jesus isn't just this. It's not sad. We're not giving anything up. If we were to stop it, take up your cross and deny yourself, it might seem like, man, being a follower of Jesus seems quite difficult, right?

It is. What do we gain from this? Let me tell you, we gain a whole lot when we become dedicated Jesus followers. Everything changes. Look what the Bible says. Would somebody mind reading Matthew chapter six, uh, 16, verse number 25.

Matthew 16, 25. Thank you, brother.

Chuck Isaiah, would you mind reading Matthew 16, 26? For what profit is it to the man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? You know, there's some benefits in following Jesus.

[20 : 09] First thing is we get life. Is that not so neat? In two ways, essentially. It's used here in two senses, temporal and eternal. One, spiritually, without Jesus, if we are not following Jesus, we have not accepted this gift of salvation.

Biblically, we are dead. Dead in our trespasses and sins. We are, we are not, we're on our way to hell. Sin has wrecked and ruined everything. Let me tell you, sin simply kills. Romans 6, 23 reads this. The wages of sin is death.

Sin kills everything it touches. Spiritually, physically, sin is terrible. James 1, 15 is going to tell us this. When, when lust is conceived, it brings forth sin. And when sin is finished, it's going to bring forth death.

Everything sin touches, it kills. So without Jesus, without accepting his gift of salvation and justification, sin and all the, and the wages of it, it's going to kill us. Sin will bring forth death. But also, uh, physically as well, Romans 5, 12 says, wherefore, as by one man, sin came into the world, death passed by sin.

And so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned. Sin is going to kill everything it touches. What's incredible about following Jesus though, is he promises to bring life. That's, that's pretty neat. He says, and following me, you will have life, which is also kind of paradoxical as well, because he says, take up your cross and follow me, which the cross, is that something that brings life?

[21 : 18] You can nod your head yes or no. Does the cross normally bring life? No, it was, it was like a death instrument. But he says, take up your cross and follow me. And in doing so, you will find life. It almost seems paradoxical.

What's incredible is because Jesus went on that cross, he died and rose again. Let me tell you, when we take up our cross and we really follow him and we accept and give us salvation, there really is life. It's incredible. And look at what the Bible says about this life we get with Jesus in John chapter eight, verse number 12.

If somebody wouldn't mind reading that for me. John 8, 12. John 8, 12. So we find out that when we follow Jesus, we accept his gift of salvation.

We're no longer in darkness and death. We have the light of life. That is pretty neat. And that is a promise. And following Jesus, there is real life. What's incredible is he makes this statement and he uses, he uses almost a question or contrast to, to, to, uh, to teach it.

He says, what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? As we find out in things like the book of Job or Ecclesiastes, we can't take anything on the other side with this. Once we die, we, we don't, you know, your bank account doesn't transfer into heaven and the stuff you have doesn't go with you.

[22 : 32] Naked we enter into this world, naked shall we leave it. We don't bring anything with us when we, when we come into this world and we leave this world. What does it profit us if we live this whole life, not following Jesus, we get everything in the world we want, all the money, all the stuff, everything.

I don't know, whatever it might be, all the friends and houses or whatever it is. And we die spiritually bankrupt. You don't, we, we don't have the relationship with Jesus. What does it profit us? There's nothing to show for it. But what's amazing is Jesus brings life and it's in a life of following him and taking up our cross and doing what he'd have us to do.

We find life. And I think we see that very practically in the life of Christians and believers. We may not go, uh, sin and go within that do, but I can tell you our lives are so much better when we follow Jesus.

His word brings life. The lack of sin in our lives makes our lives much better, much sweeter and way more fun. As the Bible teaches us, sin is like a mouthful of gravel. It may seem, it says like it's sweet at first, but it becomes like a mouthful of gravel.

It's salt water. It doesn't do anything. It just leaves us wanting more hurt, broken. But in following Jesus and doing what he says do, life is much better. Jesus came to bring life. Look at the Bible reading in John chapter 10, verse number 10.

[23 : 36] I think it's something, this sums it up pretty well. This is what Jesus says about the life he's going to bring. So Jesus says, I'm come, I'm here to do my mission so they can have life.

Not just a little bit of life. He's like a whole bunch of life, abundant life. When Jesus, when we live a life submitted to him, doing what he'd have us do, a life of following him, less of us, more of him taking up our cross and eyeing ourselves, what he would have us to do, let me tell you, life gets so much better.

He makes life better. That's incredible. He gives us abundant life, real life, not the facade of life, not the facade of what it means to live, not something that's here today and gone tomorrow. Jesus gives us life and it is abundant.

He brings life across the board and we accept and we follow him. That is incredible. There are real benefits to following Jesus. Let me tell you, this life affects everything in trials and temptations and persecutions, whatever it is.

Let me tell you, there's life in it. That's incredible. I think maybe we've seen it before as a Christian suffers, it's a different kind of suffering because you know that there's life. Whether it be Jesus making life on this side of eternity better or we know that it's eternal life with Jesus and the Lord in heaven forever, Jesus really brings life.

[24 : 47] And this promise of life should affect everything because it's a change of desires and our motives. If we know that following Jesus and taking up his cross, knew what he'd have us to do to bring his life, it ought to affect the way we live.

It ought to affect the way we think. It ought to affect our motivations. It ought to affect our work ethics in every aspect of our life, following Jesus because he really brings life. There's a promise there. That's not a, that's not, that's not, that's not a bait and switch.

He really does do it. The promise of life should affect everything. Jesus supports this promise from the previous verse with two rhetorical questions. The first asserts that there is no benefit in gaining every desire, yet losing one's life.

The second question reminds the disciples that no exchange can be made to purchase one's life. Look at what Jesus says in Matthew chapter 16, verse number 24. For what does a man profit again in the whole world and lose his own soul?

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? So what good does it do us? We get everything. We have everything. And we don't have that relationship with Jesus. Or what, what can we give? We live a whole life and we, we die, we die separate from Jesus.

[25 : 46] What can we pay to have a relationship with him? There's nothing we can give. Let me tell you, we accept, we accept God's gift of salvation, begin to follow him, to live for him, to seek him, to do what he'd have us to do here, to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him.

There's life. There's life more abundantly. And this life affects every aspect of our life. What's so cool about this passage is Jesus says it in lieu of his death. I mean, he's going to die in the chapters to come.

He's going to be going to Jerusalem. They're going to lay down the palm branches or the, the palm branches, palm leaves, all those great things. But he will be subsequently beaten and killed. And, and, and there he'll resurrect.

And then he'll ascend. He's given his disciples instructions for life without him presently there. Which is Christian to believers. Our Lord is on the right hand of the father right now. How are we going to live lives that he'd have us live as disciples? These are the instructions to have us to give.

Lay down your cross, follow him according to his word, what he'd have us to do. And in doing so, life is much better. Let me tell you, the invitation extended to, extended to us by Jesus is truly wonderful. We can follow him.

[26 : 43] And in doing so, there's some real benefits. Life is better. There's, there's real, true, abundant life in following him. There's blessings in doing so. So, are we willing to say no to self and yes to him?

Are we willing to follow him entirely? And I think that looks different for all of us. Each, each of those yeses looks different. Are we willing to submit to his word? Are we willing to do what his word would have us to do? Are we willing to wake up and read his word?

Are we willing, are we willing to take up that cross and follow him? Whatever it is, it's pretty awesome. And it's invitation in which the blessings really are worth doing it. Let's make sure we live lives in which we do what we have to do to be the better, be the best followers of him.

And, um, that's only found in his word. Lord, let's go, Lord, in prayer and we'll dismiss here. Father, thank you for your goodness and your mercy. Thank you for the opportunity you give us to follow you. Thank you for the invitation you give us to follow you, Lord.

I pray for each of my friends in this room. I pray that you'd help us as we go out into our lives and into our day-to-day, Lord. I pray that you'd help us be the best followers of you. Jesus, thank you for the promise of life you give us in association with following you.

[27 : 43] I pray that you give us life and life more abundantly. Lord, I pray for those of us near as we go into our separate ways, Lord, that you would, uh, give us the wisdom and clarity to make the decisions necessary to follow you, Lord. God, I pray that you'd help us teach this truth through our friends and through our families.

Help us be the best disciples and followers of you we can be, Father. Thank you for this time of worship. Thank you for this time in your word. We love you, God. In your name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.