

THE COST AND CROWN OF FOLLOWING CHRIST

September 27th, 2026

Guest Speaker // Matthew 16:24-26

Message Context

Jesus does not hide the cost of following Him. He calls His disciples to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow Him—a life of surrender in which our desires, plans, comfort, and even our lives are placed under His lordship. Yet the cost of discipleship is not the end of the story. Jesus promises that the one who loses his life for Christ will ultimately find it. The cross leads to the crown, and the greatest reward of following Jesus is Christ Himself.”

CONNECT – Announcements (page 2) & Building Relationships

1. What is something you have willingly sacrificed because you believed what you would gain was worth the cost?
2. When you hear the word discipleship, what comes to mind?

REFLECT - Out of the Word and Into Our Lives

3. **Read Matthew 16:24-26.** What stands out to you most from a fresh reading of the passage, and is there anything from the message that you want to be sure we don't miss as a group?
4. What three commands does Jesus give to those who want to come after Him?
5. Bruce pointed out that Jesus had large crowds following Him, but many were interested in what Jesus could do for them rather than truly following Him. What are some reasons people may be attracted to Jesus without actually wanting to submit their lives to Him? Why do you think our culture has such a difficult time with Jesus' call to deny ourselves?
6. Bruce distinguished between self-denial and denying self. What is the difference? Why is that distinction important?
7. What does Jesus mean when He tells His disciples to “take up his cross”? How is that different from simply enduring an inconvenience or difficult circumstance?
8. **Read Luke 9:23.** What does Luke's addition of the word daily teach us about the nature of discipleship?
9. Bruce used Peter as an example of someone who confessed Christ, stumbled badly, was restored, and continued following. What encouragement does Peter's story give to believers who have failed?
10. What does it practically mean to follow Jesus rather than simply believe certain things about Him?
11. Jesus asks, “What good will it do a person if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul?” What kinds of things are people tempted to gain at the expense of faithful obedience to Christ?
12. Bruce said, “The cross always leads to the crown.” What does Matthew 16:25–26 teach us about what is ultimately gained by those who surrender their lives to Christ?

13. Why do you think Jesus is so explicit about the cost of following Him instead of making discipleship sound easier or more appealing?
14. Bruce said that following Jesus means being willing to leave behind old ways and habits in order to become more like our Master. What is one area where you can see Christ changing the way you think or live?
15. How does Jesus' promise that "whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" challenge the way the world defines a successful or meaningful life? What does it reveal about the value of Christ that faithful disciples throughout history have been willing to suffer, sacrifice, and even die rather than turn away from Him?

♡ PROTECT – Care for one another (divided, gender-specific groups)

16. Where are you most tempted right now to say, "My will" instead of, "Your will be done"? Where do you most need Christ to reshape your desires, attitudes, or habits?
17. Is there an area of your life—your time, money, relationships, ambitions, comfort, reputation, or future—that you have difficulty placing fully under Christ's lordship?
18. What does taking up your cross daily look like in your present season of life? Are there comforts or securities you have begun treating as necessities that could keep you from obeying Christ?
19. Is there something you know Jesus is calling you to do that you have been delaying because of what it might cost you?

Announcements

Sportsman's Banquet: October 17th @ 4:00 pm – More information found at nvf.life/sportsman

Parents Night Out: October 2nd @ 6:00 – 9:00 pm – We're excited to invite you to our exclusive Parents' Night Out event! Leave the kids with us for a fun-filled evening while you enjoy a well-deserved break. More information and sign-up at <https://my.nvf.life/hub>

Soup & Game Night: October 4th @ 5:00 pm – Come enjoy some soup and games with us. More information at <https://my.nvf.life/hub>

Resources for Going Deeper

- **Further Bible Reading:** Luke 9:18-27; 14:25-35, Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:7-14
- **Movie Recommendation from Bruce Boggs:** *The End of the Spear* – The Story of Jim Elliot
- **Book Recommendation from Bruce Boggs:** *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* by Eugene H. Peterson (Recommend the older 1980 Edition)