

## BURN THE SHIPS "COURAGEOUS DEATH" MATTHEW 16:21-28

### This Week's Core Competency

**Giving Away My Life** – I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes. Romans 12:1, *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Jesus defined what "giving away my life" means when he said to his disciples, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:26-27). "Hate" is a strong word. Fortunately, Matthew interprets Jesus' idiom, "hate . . . his own life," for us in 10:37-39: "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." (Mt 10:37-38). Clearly, by "hate" Jesus meant "love less" or "give a lower priority to."

In Matthew 16:24 the requirement to *hate one's own life* is replaced by the notion of *self-denial*. There Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." And so, one commentator concludes: "Deny oneself thus means to subordinate one's

***Refrain from gluttony and thou shalt the more easily restrain all the inclinations of the flesh.***

– Thomas a Kempis

appetites and desire to God's will for us as made know in Jesus. Self-denial does not mean asceticism and self-flagellation, as was often inferred in medieval monasticism. Such self-denial runs the risk of being centered on the self . . . Self-denial for the sake of self-denial is an expression of the self's need for control not of submission to God's thinking (v. 23)" (Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew, Interpretation*, 195). Denying one's self *to do the will of God* is what matters. In the words of one writer: "Discipleship is a doing of what is right, no matter how irksome the privations, no matter how great the dangers" (W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, ICC, rev. ed., 2:681).

This raises the practical question, "How does someone do this, that is, deny himself?" Is denying oneself something a person just does? In which case, "just do it" is the correct, complete answer to the question. Or is it something that can be learned? I rather think it's something a disciple can train to do, something a disciple can practice. While it's not something that can just be done spontaneously by trying *really* hard, it can be done consistently by *training wisely*. And a regimen of spiritual disciplines that includes fasting is one way to do it.

Dallas Willard defines fasting this way: "In fasting, we abstain in some significant way from food and possibly from drink as well. This discipline teaches us a lot about ourselves very quickly. It will certainly prove humiliating to us, as it reveals to us how much our peace depends upon the pleasures of eating. It may also bring to mind how we are using food pleasure to assuage the discomforts caused in our bodies by faithless and unwise living and

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attitudes—lack of self-worth, meaningless work, purposeless existence, or lack of rest or exercise. If nothing else, though, it will certainly demonstrate how powerful and clever our body is in getting its own way against our strongest resolves . . . Fasting is one of the more important ways of practicing that self-denial required of *everyone* who would follow Christ (Matt. 16:24). In fasting, we learn how to suffer happily as we feast on God. And it is a good lesson, because in our lives we will suffer, no matter what else happens to us. Thomas a Kempis remarks: 'Whosoever knows best how to suffer will keep the greatest peace. That man is conqueror of himself, and lord of the world, the friend of Christ, and heir of heaven.'

"Persons well used to fasting as a systematic practice will have a clear and constant sense of their resources in God. And that will help them endure deprivations of all kinds, even to the point of coping with them easily and cheerfully. Kempis again says: 'Refrain from gluttony and thou shalt the more easily restrain all the inclinations of the flesh.' Fasting teaches temperance or self-control and therefore teaches moderation and restraint with regard to all our fundamental drives" (*The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 167, 68).

If fasting from food is something you've never done and can't ever see yourself doing, consider another kind of fast. Perhaps you're a media glutton. Why not take a break from some forms or all forms of media? For example, you might choose to turn your smart phone off at lunchtime and eat in silence. You might choose to turn your TV off for a portion of the day or evening and read the Bible, memorize scripture, go for a quiet walk, or read an edifying book. The possibilities are endless—a fast from texting, from Facebook, from YouTube, from using the internet at all. You get the picture; replace media time with something spiritually beneficial that you enjoy doing. Fasting doesn't have to be painful.

## For Discussion

Talk about the kind of fast, food or other, that you might consider doing.

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Matthew 16:21-28

21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. 28 I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

\* Underline "from that time on" in v. 21.

\* Circle "must" in v. 21 (2x).

\* Bracket "the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law" in v. 21.

\* Circle "Never, Lord!" in v. 22.

\* Bracket "Get behind me, Satan!" in v. 23.

\* Circle "stumbling block" in v. 23.

\* Circle "come after" in v. 24.

\* Underline "deny," "take up," and "follow" in v. 24.

\* Circle "cross" in v. 24.

\* Insert "for" at the beginning of v. 26.

\* Underline "Son of Man" in vv. 27, 28.

\* Highlight v. 28.

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## day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Compare and contrast Matthew 10:37-39 with 16:24-25.
2. Jesus tells his disciples that *it was necessary* for him to go to Jerusalem. Explain why *it was necessary*.
3. Why in the world would Peter presume to rebuke the Lord? (Read verses 13-20.)
4. Jesus called Peter, "Satan," and referred to him as "a stumbling block." Paraphrase what Peter said to deserve such a tongue-lashing.
5. Comment on the relationship of "deny himself" to "take up his cross."
6. Explain the *contrast* in verse 25.
7. Put the point of the rhetorical questions in verse 26 in your own words.
8. Identify the third reason why a disciple should "deny himself and take up his cross."
9. **Discussion:** Discipleship is an important theme in Matthew's Gospel. Talk about what he wants his readers to learn about following Jesus from this passage.

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## day 3

# EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Matthew 16:21-28 is easily divided into three parts. The first part contains Jesus' passion prediction. Verse 21 marks a major shift in Matthew's telling of the story. He begins with the words "From that time on," a phrase that he used in 4:17 to mark the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Here it marks the beginning of his ministry to the Twelve. One commentator remarks: "In terms of the *narrative*, this first passion prediction is the watershed that divides the Galilean ministry from the passion. From this point to the triumphal entry into Jerusalem the emphasis is placed on Jesus' preparation of the disciples for his death (the announcement is formally repeated at 17:22-23 and 20:17-19 and mentioned in 17:12). In terms of the *theological message*, however, the announcement serves as the occasion for important instruction concerning what Jesus' death means for the life-style of his followers" (Hare, 193). If Jesus must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things and must be killed, then his disciples must be prepared to follow him to Jerusalem and suffer many things and perhaps even die with him (cf. v. 23). No wonder Peter reacted so strongly!

The second part contains the exchange between Peter and Jesus (vv. 22-23). Emboldened by Jesus' commendation of his declaration, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 14) and by Jesus' prediction regarding his coming kingdom authority (vv. 18-19), Peter does what is unthinkable for a disciple. He takes his Teacher aside to rebuke and correct him. Before we paint the disciples with the same brush we paint the Israelites in the wilderness, perhaps we need to remember how strange sounding the words "suffering Messiah" were to their ears. The same commentator above explains: "Peter's vigorously negative reaction to the passion announcement is historically comprehensible. Contemporary Jewish thought found no reference to a suffering Messiah in the Hebrew Scripture, and the idea is absent from the vast literature of Jewish apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. Nothing in their background prepared Jesus' disciples for the notion that Israel's eschatological champion should suffer a shameful death. The Messiah was expected to inflict suffering and death on Israel's enemies and on the wicked within Israel, not to experience it himself. The Christian message about a crucified Messiah, while merely foolishness to Greeks,

was a real stumbling block to Jews, as Paul testifies in 1 Cor. 1:23-24" (194).

Jesus responds to Peter with the same words he used to respond to Satan at the end of the temptation. The NIV translates 4:10, "Away from me, Satan!" It translates the same words here in verse 23, "Get behind me, Satan!" The sense is the same. Peter, whether he knows it or not, is trying to thwart the will of God for Jesus and thereby frustrate God's plan of salvation for the world. Satan had tried unsuccessfully to do the very same thing (4:1-11). "In taking exception to the notion that Jesus must suffer and die he is functioning as the mouthpiece not of God, but of Satan" (Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 140). The irony of it all is impossible to miss. Peter is no longer acting like the foundation block of the church (v. 18) but like a "stumbling block." Peter is preoccupied with his own plans.

The third part contains Jesus' accounting of the nonnegotiable cost of discipleship (vv. 24-28). He says, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (v. 24). To follow Jesus a disciple must subordinate his own agenda to the agenda of his Teacher. Jesus is saying neither that self-denial in and of itself is virtuous, nor that it magically makes one a disciple. Denying oneself isn't what matters. Denying oneself in the obedient pursuit of the Master's will for one's life is what matters. Not only does it matter, it makes perfect sense, and Jesus continues to explain why (vv. 25-27). He gives three good reasons why discipleship is invaluable, each beginning with the word "for." While scholars spend a good deal of time parsing these, trying to discern the precise nuance of the Greek word *psyche*, which can be translated either "soul" or "life," Jim Elliott's quote is a great paraphrase of the first one: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." The second complements the first (v. 26). Since one's soul is of inestimable value, handing it over for all the riches, power, and pleasures in the world is a fool's bargain. After all, once it's handed over, no price can be paid to get it back; it's priceless. The last reason looks to the return of Jesus and future judgment. When the Son of Man returns, he will reward his disciples in accordance with their works.

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## *The Message of the Passage*

*Deny yourself and take up your cross to follow Jesus because  
you will thereby find your life, preserve your soul,  
and obtain a reward when Jesus returns.*

### day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

- Write about how God is making himself known to you . . .

- Write about how God wants to change you . . .

- Write about how God is calling you to change your world . . .

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 21 **from that time on** "This phrase has occurred earlier only in 4:17, where it marked the initiation of Jesus' mission to Israel in Galilee. Here it marks the conclusion of his Galilean mission and the initiation of his journey to Jerusalem and the mission of the cross. The revelation of Jesus' true identity by his heavenly Father to Peter is now matched by Jesus' revelation of his true mission to the disciples" (Michael J. Wilkins, *NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 569). "From then marks the incident as of critical importance; it changed the whole thrust of Jesus' instruction of the Twelve. Now that it was clear that the little band had come to understand that Jesus was indeed the long-promised Messiah, he proceeded to teach them something go what messiahship meant" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 427).

v. 21 **must** Cf., "it was necessary" (NLT). "In this first announcement the passion is predicted not merely with a future tense, as in the second and third announcements [i.e., 17:22-23 and 20:17-19], but with the theologically significant verb *must* (lit., 'it is necessary') [Gk *dei*] . . . While the divine necessity of Jesus' suffering is stressed, no reason is given. Not until the climactic passage following the third announcement do we learn that the Messiah's death will have saving power ('a ransom for many,' 20:28)" (Hare, 193).

v. 21 **the elders . . .** "The single article that refers to three groups responsible for Jesus' suffering ('the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law') indicates the combined leadership of Jerusalem. 'Elders' is a generic title for anyone whose age, experience, and character has [*sic*] resulted in a position of leadership within groups such as the Pharisees and Sadducees. The 'chief priests' are part of the ruling aristocracy over primarily Judea during the reigns of the Hasmoneans, Herod, and the Roman governors. They came from four prominent families of chief priests who dominated Jewish affairs in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus up to A.D. 70. They alternately supplied the offices of the high priest, captain, and treasurers of the temple. The 'teachers of the law' or 'scribes' were professional interpreters of the law, especially associated with the Pharisees in the Gospels" (Wilkins, 569).

v. 22 **Never, Lord!** "Only Matthew gives Peter's actual words here, as he underlines the magnitude of his failure. 'Never, Lord,' is, more literally, *Mercy on you, Lord*. 'This shall never happen' could be rendered No way shall this happen! Together, Peter's two outbursts prove extraordinarily emphatic" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 259).

v. 23 **Get behind . . .** Cf., "Away from me, Satan!" (4:10). "Jesus is not accusing Peter of literal demon possession, but he is dramatically indicating that the perspective Peter represents, however unwittingly, is the same as Satan's . . . 'Get behind' means 'get away' (GNB), almost *out of my sight!* And uses the identical command (*hypage*) as in Jesus' rebuke of Satan in 4:10" (259).

v. 23 **stumbling block** Cf., "hindrance" (ESV); "obstacle" (GNT). Gk *skandalon*. "In secular Greek, the word normally meant 'trap,' but among Greek-speaking Jews whose primary literature consisted of the Scriptures the word meant 'stumbling block,' that is, a rock along the path that one stumbles against (see Lev. 19:14: 'You shall not . . . put a stumbling block before the blind'). Used figuratively, it referred to causes or occasions of sin (see Matt. 13:41; 18:7) or hindrances to faith (1 Cor. 1:23 and Gal. 5:11 refer to the cross as a *skandalon*). In this context the word has a particularly ironic significance: Simon the Stone has placed himself in front of Jesus and become a rock to stumble over" (Hare, 195).

v. 24 **come after** "In his narrative comment Matthew reports: 'From that time Jesus began to *show* his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised' (16:21). And the word Jesus speaks is this: 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and let him follow me' (16:24) . . . Combine these two passages and the following Matthean axiom regarding discipleship emerges: Jesus reveals to his disciples, in all he says and in all he does beginning with 16:21, that God has ordained that he should go to Jerusalem to suffer, and that his way of suffering is a summons to them also to go the way of suffering (i.e., the way of servanthood) (cf. 20:28)" (Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 139-40).

v. 24 **deny . . .** "'Deny oneself' means to subordinate one's appetites and desires to God's will for us as made known in Jesus" (Hare, 195). "The cross is for Jesus and those who follow him in discipleship a metaphor of the Father's will for a disciple's life. It involves the negative, 'denying self' (a person's own will for his or her life), and the positive, 'taking up the cross' (accepting God's will) and 'following Jesus' (putting it into practice)" (Wilkins, 572).

v. 26 **What good . . .** Cf., "For what . . ." (NET, ESV, NKJV, NRSV). Verses 25, 26, and 27 begin with "for" [Gk *gar*]. On verse 27 one commentator writes: "Jesus is following a tightly reasoned argument" (Morris, 433).

v. 28 **not taste death** "With no other hint in the passage, the immediate context suggests that the event Jesus intends as signaling his coming as Son of man in his kingdom is the Transfiguration, which immediately follows (see also Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36)" (Wilkins, 574-75; cf., Blomberg, 261).

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### Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

In 1934, John and Betty Stam, along with their newborn daughter, lived in the small brick-walled community of Tsingteh in China. They had recently begun their missionary work and were excited to see how God would use them among the Chinese people. The Stams were well loved in the community; however, it was not only their lives but their tragic deaths that drew many people to Jesus. One December day, a troop of rogue Communist soldiers surged into town and burst into the Stams' small home. Their 3-month old daughter, Helen, was sleeping as the three were dragged away. They were placed in a holding cell overnight where John wrote these words, "My wife, baby, and myself are today in the hands of Communist bandits. Whether we will be released or not, no one knows. May God be magnified in our bodies, whether by life or by death (Philippians 1:20)." The next day, John and Betty lost their lives. Little Helen was rescued by a fellow believer and raised by her aunt and uncle in the Philippines. It is unlikely that any of us will be called to pay the price the Stam family paid. But, what price will we pay to be obedient to God's call? Our time, finances, comfort, or the approval of others? Take some time to pray together and ask God how your family can daily live out our core competency - Giving Away My Life.

#### What Does The Bible Say

Read: Read 16:21-28

1. What sad news did Jesus give the disciples in verse 21?
2. What was Peter's reaction to this news?
3. Jesus said to him, "you do not have in mind the things of \_\_\_\_\_ but the things of \_\_\_\_\_."

#### What Do You Think

Discuss with your family what Jesus meant when He said we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him.

#### What R U Going To Do

Make a list of ways you can give away your life (time, money, gifts, abilities) to help with God's work. If you can think of 5 ways, write the number five on the bottom of your *Scrolls* for an extra token.

### MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Giving Away My Life - I give away my life to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

This is the week to say all your verses together! Philippians 3:8-11

### KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC \_\_\_\_\_ and Verse \_\_\_\_\_. Family completed **Say** \_\_\_\_\_ **Think** \_\_\_\_\_ **Do** \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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