

1. The Call to the Cross

- **Text:** Matthew 16:24–25 – Jesus calls His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him.

2. Counting the Cost

- We often define ourselves by what we have, do, or accomplish.
- We protect those things — even from God.
- Following Jesus means surrendering even our plans and dreams to Him.

3. Personal Example

- Story: Pursuit of becoming a professional bassist → God redirected to pastoral ministry.
- The struggle: grief and depression in letting go.
- The result: finding a life more fulfilling because it was God's calling.

4. Hearing God's Voice

- **Scripture:** 2 Timothy 3:16–17 – God's Word teaches, corrects, and equips us.
- Reading the Bible is not optional for disciples; it is essential for living out God's will.
- Illustration: "Fruit inspector" — our actions reveal whether we are truly following Christ.

5. Living a Transformed Life

- **Scripture:** Colossians 3:17 – "Whatever you do... do it in the name of the Lord."
- **Psalm 1** – The blessed person delights in God's Word.
- **Deuteronomy 6** – God calls us to make His Word central in our homes and hearts.
- Faith should permeate every area of life — not just Sunday mornings.

6. Practical Challenge

- Take up your cross: Start by reading your Bible regularly.
- Join a small group for encouragement and accountability.
- Expect your life to change — but trust that God's life for you is better than the one you would have chosen.

Reflection Questions

1. Read Matthew 16:24-25. Have you ever protected a part of your life from God because you were afraid of what it would cost you? Have you ever handed over a part of your life to God and been surprised at what changed?
2. Read 2nd Timothy 3:16-17. How often do you read the Bible? What keeps you from reading it more consistently?
3. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. If someone observed your life for a week, what would they assume mattered most to you? Would they know you follow Jesus without you telling them?
4. Read Colossians 3:15-17. Are there any areas of your life that you have not let God into yet? What might change if you incorporated faith into this area?
5. What is one habit or practice you could start this week to “take up your cross” (e.g., prayer, daily Scripture reading, serving someone else)?
6. Who could you invite to walk with you (small group, mentor, friend)?
7. When has God asked you to let go of something — and how did He surprise you with something better?