

WORDS OF JESUS

SERMON SERIES

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Take Up Your Cross

SPEAKER: Bo Stern Brady

DATE: August 2, 2026

TEXT(S): Matthew 16:13-25
with Romans 5:1-5

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE: This resource is designed to help you, and your group, step through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage(s) and the speaker's message.

Our goal is to help you and your group better understand and apply B4's teaching.

MESSAGE SUMMARY + DISCUSSION PROMPTS

In Matthew 16, Jesus contrasts two competing storylines. One narrative is shaped by human assumptions and the other by His Father's redemptive script. We then hear Peter's powerful confession that Jesus is the Christ. However, this same Peter immediately stumbles as he rejects Jesus' suffering. The Lord's response? Following Him requires us to take up our cross *and* lose our life so we may truly find it. When we look at Jesus's teaching through the lens of Romans 5, we also see that God does not promise us freedom from suffering. Instead, He offers His presence and transforming work within it. When we embrace both Christ's triumph *and* His cross, we will discover hope, character, and deeper intimacy with God as we go through hardship with Him.

LEAN IN: These are icebreakers and warm-ups, mostly to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one and talk it over for 5 minutes.

1. Share about a challenge that unexpectedly helped you grow.
2. Have you ever had expectations for your life that turned out completely differently? What was that like?
3. When you hear the word "suffering," what comes to mind?
4. What's a difficult experience that eventually became meaningful?
5. Do you tend to look for reasons why bad things happen, and why or why not?

LOOK DOWN: These are questions about the Bible passage(s) from the teaching. Spend about 10 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:

1. Why does Jesus ask the disciples who they believe He is before predicting His suffering?
2. What is the significance of Peter receiving both affirmation ("You are Peter") and correction ("Get behind me, Satan") in the same chapter?
3. Why does Jesus connect following Him with taking up a cross instead of promising comfort?
4. According to Romans 5, what is the spiritual formation that suffering produces in believers?
5. How does Romans 5 distinguish rejoicing *in* suffering from rejoicing *because* of suffering?

LOOK OUT: *These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today. Spend about 10 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:*

1. How does our culture define a good life, and how does Jesus do so?
2. Where do you see a prosperity mindset influencing modern Christianity?
3. Why are we uncomfortable with the idea that faithful people suffer?
4. How does social media shape our expectations about success, happiness, and God's blessing?
5. What would it look like for churches to become places where suffering is lamented in community?

LOOK IN: *These questions help you consider how to engage the teaching for yourself. Spend about 15-20 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:*

1. Which “script” are you most tempted to believe right now: human assumptions or God’s?
2. How have you experienced God's presence in suffering, if at all?
3. Is there an area of your life where you've been asking God only to remove hardship instead of inviting Him to transform you through it?
4. What does “taking up your cross” look like in your current season of life?
5. After this message, what is one practical way you can trust Jesus more deeply this week?

LIVE IT OUT: *These prayer practices can help you integrate this message into day-to-day life. Choose one prompt and discuss how you will embrace it this week (5 minutes):*

1. Both-And Prayer: Spend five minutes each morning during the coming week thanking God for one visible blessing and one difficult circumstance. You can pray something like, “Lord, I delight in Your goodness, but I also trust You to make me more like Jesus through today's challenges.” This will help you embrace both Christ's victory *and* His cross.
2. Romans 5 Prayer: Throughout the week, read Romans 5:1-5 slowly each day, intending to memorize it. Pause after each word in turn: suffering, endurance, character, and hope. Take time to let that progression sink in. Ask the Holy Spirit: “What do you want to produce in me today? Guide me with Your love and help me lean into Your work.”

You can find B4's [Series Resources here](#).

