

Matthew: Who Do You Say

Discussion Guide for April 25 and 26, 2026

Summary

In Matthew 16:24-27, Jesus challenges His disciples — and us — with what it truly means to follow Him. Using three commands (deny yourself, take up your cross, follow me), Jesus calls His people to a radical reordering of authority, priority, and guide. People routinely sacrifice everything for personal dreams, careers, and ambitions. Jesus calls for that same level of commitment in following Him — and gives us two compelling reasons why: because it is the path to real, abundant life, and because our faithful choices have eternal impact that will be rewarded when He returns.

Ice Breaker

Has there ever been a time you sacrificed something significant to chase a dream? What did you give up — and was it worth it?

Key Verses

1. Matthew 16:24-27
2. Matthew 6:33
3. Titus 2:11-12
4. Philippians 3:7-8

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus calls His followers to deny themselves — to say no to self so they can say yes to Him. What is one area of your life right now where your inner voice is working against your faith? What would it look like to deny that voice this week?
2. To "take up your cross" meant something shocking to people in Jesus' day — dying to whatever competes with God for your primary attention and affection. What idol or competing priority in your life most needs to be surrendered to make Jesus your top priority?
3. Mac Powell of Third Day gave up his lifelong dream of being in a rock band when he felt God calling him to surrender it — only to have God give it back in a better form. Has there been a moment in your life when surrendering something to God led to something greater? What makes it hard to trust God with our dreams?
4. Jesus says that whoever tries to "save" their life — keep it safe and comfortable — will lose it, but whoever loses their life for His sake will find it. Where are you still trying to keep your faith in safe little boxes? What would it look like to fully let go of that?

5. Pastor John Mark Comer describes a disciple as someone who is with Jesus, becomes like Jesus, and does what Jesus did. Which of those three is your greatest challenge right now – and what is one practical step you could take this week to grow in that area?

Life Application

This week, spend time with Jesus' three commands personally: deny yourself, take up your cross, follow me. Ask God to show you one specific area in each category:

Deny yourself – What is one thing you need to say no to this week so you can say yes to Jesus?

Take up your cross – What is one priority or idol competing with God that you need to surrender?

Follow Jesus – Make a list of things you see Jesus doing in the Gospels (serving, forgiving, loving, speaking truth). Choose one and go do likewise.

"It is a great thing to be a gold medalist, but it is a greater thing to be a child of God." - Eric Liddell

Key Takeaways

1. Following Jesus requires a shift in authority – from "I want" to "Jesus wants."
2. Following Jesus requires a shift in priority – He must be first: above career, family, hobbies, and dreams.
3. Following Jesus requires a shift in our guide – we are apprentices of Jesus, called to be with Him, become like Him, and do what He did.
4. The path to real, abundant life runs through surrender – not self-preservation.
5. Our faithfulness has eternal impact. Jesus is coming back, and He will reward those who fully lived out their faith.