

How to Use Sermon Resources

- **READ AHEAD TOGETHER** - MCG's should use the Devotional at the end of this resource as a reading plan for the week leading up to your meeting.
- **SIT UNDER THE WORD** - This resource is filled with scripture references. Read them aloud, together before you answer any questions.
- **APPLY TRUTH** - The goal is deep discussion and application, not necessarily to complete this resource. Don't squash a good discussion. If you get into something important along the way that's fine.

Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer [2 mins]

Use the Overview [5 mins]

- Cover any key points for people who missed parts or all of the sermon

Scripture Deep Dive [30-40 mins]

- Opening Question
- Read the scripture for each question then ask the question. Some have multiple scriptures.

Close in Prayer

- In this extended prayer time, ask others to pray as they feel led, pray in a circle, pray over one another, pray to your left, or pray for someone specific. Whatever seems best.

Split Time (if applicable)

- Men with men, women with women
- Share in a circle. "What's one thing you want to celebrate? What do you need prayer and accountability for?"
- After everyone shares, pray in a circle for the person to your left/right.

SERMON OVERVIEW

“Questions Jesus Asked: What Does It Profit a Man to Gain the World but Lose His Soul?”

- Luke 8:36

Sermon Summary: This text challenges believers to examine whether they are truly following Jesus or merely using Him as an "additive" to improve their lives. Drawing from Matthew 16, Pastor Matt explores Jesus's question about what it profits someone to gain the whole world yet lose their soul. The message confronts common misconceptions about Jesus—viewing Him merely as a source of power, prosperity, and position without demanding our lives. Instead, Jesus calls His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him.

Key Points:

- We must have a right view of Jesus—He is not merely a prophet like John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah, but the Messiah, the Son of God
- Different religious groups (Islam, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Hinduism) have fundamentally different and incompatible views of Jesus
- Following Jesus requires three actions: deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him
- The paradox of discipleship: saving your life leads to losing it; losing your life for Christ leads to finding it
- Three diagnostic areas reveal whether we're saving or losing our lives: relationships, finances, and entertainment

Scripture Reference:

- Matthew 16:13-28 (primary passage)
- Matthew 16:24-27 (central focus)
- Matthew 4 (referenced regarding Satan's temptation of Jesus)

Stories:

- The Ken Griffey Jr. baseball card trade: Matt shared a childhood story about trading a valuable Ken Griffey Jr. rookie card without checking his Beckett price guide.
- The Tabasco sauce analogy: People treat Jesus like Tabasco sauce—as an additive to make life a little better rather than the primary thing, sprinkling Him into their lives rather than surrendering their lives to Him.
- College acceptance to Evansville University: Matt discovered he was accepted to a university he never applied to because his mother was applying to colleges for him.
- Costa Rican real estate temptation: While preparing this sermon, the pastor found himself scrolling through luxury beachfront property listings on Facebook, confronting his own heart about what he might be willing to forfeit for earthly comfort and possessions.
- The 136 Nigerian Christians killed during Easter week: A sobering reminder that facing death for allegiance to Christ is a reality for many believers worldwide, not just a theoretical concept.

Scripture Deep Dive

Opening Question

Read Matthew 16:26. Think about one thing you really valued or chased hard in the past that later turned out to be a bad “trade.” In light of this verse, how does that experience help you understand what it means to “gain the whole world yet lose your life”?

Point 1: We must have a right view of Jesus

1. Matthew 16:13–14 - Based on the different answers people give (“John the Baptist...Elijah...Jeremiah...one of the prophets”), what were they getting right about Jesus, and what crucial thing were they still missing? (Use Hebrews 1:1–3 to help you answer.)
2. Matthew 16:18–19 - Jesus connects Peter’s confession of Him as Messiah to the building of His church and the “keys of the kingdom.” How does this show that what we believe about WHO Jesus is directly shapes the mission and authority of the church? (Consider Acts 4:10–12 for further insight.)
3. Matthew 16:20–23 - Peter rightly confesses Jesus as Messiah but then rebukes Jesus for talking about suffering and death. Using Isaiah 53:3–6, explain how Peter’s idea of “Messiah” differed from God’s plan for the Messiah.

Point 2: We must have a right response to Jesus

4. Matthew 16:24 - Jesus gives three commands: deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him. Using Galatians 2:20, explain what it practically means to “deny yourself” for someone who already believes in Jesus.
6. Matthew 16:25 - Jesus says, “Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it.” Using John 12:24–26, explain why trying to “save your life” in your own way actually leads to loss.
11. Matthew 16:25 - In Mark’s parallel, Jesus adds “because of me and the gospel” (Mark 8:35). In light of Romans 1:16, why is it not enough to be “spiritual” or “moral” without openly aligning with Jesus and His gospel?
12. Matthew 16:26] - Jesus pictures someone gaining “the whole world” but losing their life (soul). Using 1 John 2:15–17, identify one specific “worldly” thing that people commonly pursue which cannot last and cannot compensate for the loss of their soul.

13. Matthew 16:27 - Jesus says He will return with His angels and “reward each according to what he has done.” Using 2 Corinthians 5:9–10, explain how future judgment and reward should shape the way a Christian makes decisions in everyday life.

APPLICATION

Diagnostic Questions: Relationships, Finances, Entertainment

15. Relationships – [John 13:34–35] Jesus says love for one another is the mark of His disciples. Based on this and Matthew 16:24, what does self-denial look like in how you treat people who are difficult, ungrateful, or opposed to you?

17. Finances – [Matthew 6:19–21] Jesus warns against storing up treasures on earth. In light of Matthew 16:26, why is it spiritually dangerous to treat money and possessions as primarily “mine” instead of God’s?

20. Entertainment – [Philippians 4:8] Paul lists what we should “dwell on” (true, honorable, just, pure, etc.). Using this list and Matthew 6:22–23, explain how your entertainment habits can either fill your heart with light or with darkness, and how that connects to “saving” or “losing” your life.

5 Day Devotional

Day 1 – “Who Do They Say Jesus Is?”

Reading: Matthew 16:13–14, Hebrews 1:1–3

Devotional: Jesus begins by asking what *others* say about Him. The answers—John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets—are respectful but incomplete. People still do this today: they may call Jesus a great teacher, moral example, or spiritual leader, but stop short of recognizing Him as God’s Son and the final revelation of God. Hebrews 1:1–3 reminds us that in Jesus, God has spoken fully and finally. Before we can respond rightly to Jesus, we must see that He is far more than a prophet—He is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact imprint of His nature.

Reflection / Prayer: Ask God to show you where you may have picked up “popular” but incomplete ideas about Jesus. Pray: “Lord Jesus, help me see You not just as a helper or teacher, but as the full and final revelation of God.”

Day 2 – “Who Do *You* Say Jesus Is?”

Reading: Matthew 16:15–20, Romans 10:9–10

Devotional: Jesus moves from what the crowd says to what the disciples personally believe: “But who do *you* say that I am?” Peter’s confession—“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God”—becomes the rock on which Jesus will build His church. Jesus affirms that this insight comes from the Father, not from human wisdom or observation. Confessing Jesus as Messiah and Son of God is not a small religious step; it is the foundation of salvation and the life of the church. Romans 10:9–10 shows that confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in His resurrection is the heart of saving faith.

Reflection / Prayer: Quietly answer Jesus’ question in your own words: “Who do *I* say You are?” Pray: “Father, deepen my conviction that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of the living God, and let that confession shape everything in my life.”

Day 3 – “Jesus’ Mission and Our Resistance”

Reading: Matthew 16:21–23, Philippians 2:5–8

Devotional: As soon as the disciples confess Jesus as Messiah, He begins to explain that He must suffer, be killed, and be raised. Peter cannot accept a suffering Messiah and actually rebukes Jesus. Jesus responds sharply: “Get behind me, Satan,” because any plan that removes the cross is aligned with the enemy, not with God. Our natural instincts often want God’s kingdom without God’s way of the cross. Philippians 2 shows us that Jesus’ path was downward—humility, obedience, even to death—before exaltation.

Reflection / Prayer: Ask: “Where am I resisting God’s way because it includes suffering, humility, or loss?” Pray: “Lord, expose any place where I want the kingdom without the cross, and give me the mind of Christ to embrace Your will.”

Day 4 – “Deny Yourself, Take Up Your Cross, Follow Me”

Reading: Matthew 16:24–25, Galatians 2:20

Devotional: Jesus explains what following Him really involves: self-denial, cross-bearing, and obedience. To “save” your life on your own terms—clinging to comfort, reputation, and control—ultimately leads to losing it. But to “lose” your life for Jesus’ sake is the only way to truly find it. This is not about self-hatred; it is about dying to self-rule so that Christ may live in you. Galatians 2:20 describes this exchange: “I have been crucified with Christ...Christ lives in me.”

Reflection / Prayer: Ask yourself: “What specific area of my life am I currently trying to ‘save’ and control, instead of surrendering it to Jesus?” Pray: “Jesus, I surrender this area to You. Help me deny myself, take up my cross, and follow You there.”

Day 5 – “What Are You Trading Your Life For?”

Reading: Matthew 16:26–28, 2 Corinthians 5:9–10

Devotional: Jesus asks a piercing question: “What will it benefit someone if he gains the whole world yet loses his life?” No amount of success, comfort, possessions, or approval can compensate for losing your soul. Jesus reminds us that He will return in glory and “reward each according to what he has done.” Life now is not ultimate, and every choice is part of a greater story that ends before the judgment seat of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:9–10 calls us to make it our aim to please Him, knowing we will give an account.

Reflect: “If someone looked only at my calendar and my bank statement, what would they say I am trying to ‘gain’?” Pray: “Lord, reorder my desires so that I live for Your reward, not the world’s approval. Help me to gladly lose my life for Your sake, trusting that in You I truly find it.”