

# TAKING UP OUR CROSS

*“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” —MATTHEW 16:24*

The symbol of Christianity is a cross, an extremely brutal and cruel form of dying. Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross.” Knowing how He died is frightening and painful, so what does Jesus mean by “taking up our cross”?

There are many personal perspectives on our cross to bear. Some think it's an illness they've coped with for years; others believe it's their delinquent son, and still others think it's some kind of flaw in their character. In divine love and unerring wisdom we are who God made us to be. In our willingness to live in submission to Him, we are placed in circumstances we may not like, but that serve God's ultimate purpose for us. As a man on earth, the cross Jesus took up was His unwavering obedience to His Father. He said, “I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38). Jesus had no agenda of His own. In utter obedience to His Father, He first died personally to Himself before He died a physical death.

If we're going to be disciples of Christ and serve Him well, obedience to Him is essential. That may involve leaving a familiar environment, giving up a job or ending a relationship or activity that is pulling us away from God. Jesus said, “If anyone serves me he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also” (John 12:26). That requires everything in our lives being subject to the role of Jesus Christ as Lord.

In Galatians 2:20, Paul sums it up this way: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loves me and gave himself for me.” Paul’s agenda was far bigger than himself and the life within Him far greater than his own.

Abundant life comes out of the resurrected life of Christ. For His power to be released in us we have to reach that point of surrendering all we are and all we have to Jesus. That’s what denying ourselves is about. It’s living for Christ’s agenda, and says Paul, “you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life” (Philippians 2:15-16). Jesus is the Word of Life, and taking up our cross will prove most effective to make us perfect in every good work to the glory of God.

***PRAYER: Lord, I want to take up my cross and serve You well. Help me to be obedient to You in every way, and use me, Lord, I pray. Thank You.***

***TO REFLECT UPON: What has been my understanding of taking up my cross?***