

LIFE OR DEATH

Becoming Message Series Week 7

Matthew 16:13-28

July 20, 2025

Pastor Jeff Burkholder

If you are going to follow Jesus...

Criteria #1: Confess Jesus as the Christ. (Matthew 16:13-20)

Criteria #2: Say yes to Jesus and die to yourself.
(Matthew 16:21-28; Galatians 2:20)

“Yes, self-denial is the sum of the Christian life. Or let me put it more positively. Following Jesus as Lord—that’s the sum of the Christian life. Not following self-loves and self-rules but Jesus as your first love and his rules as the best rules for living.”

Douglas Sean O’Donnell, *Matthew*,
Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2013, p. 462.

This involves:

1. **Suffering**
2. **Sacrifice**
3. **Surrender**

Conclusion: No cross, no crown.

“The overarching or all-embodying reason is that Jesus wins and those with him win, and those not with him lose. If you choose the cross now, you get the crown then; if you choose the crown now, you get the cross then.”

Douglas Sean O'Donnell, *Matthew*,
Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2013, p. 463.

“Let me be clear—Jesus isn't just saying what weight lifters coax each other with: no pain; no gain. He's not teaching what my ex-Marine basketball coach had printed on our practice jerseys: 'Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger.' Those sayings might very well be true. But what Jesus is here saying is far more serious. It's not no pain, no gain, but no pain, much more pain. This is Heaven and Hell stuff Jesus is talking about. Discipleship is not teatime. It's not a casual coffeehouse conversation. It's life or death, eternal life or eternal death.”

Douglas Sean O'Donnell, *Matthew*,
Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2013, p. 463.

Resources:

1. *More Than a Carpenter* by Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell
2. *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel

Questions to look up at gotquestions.org:

1. What did Jesus mean by “upon this rock I will build my church” in Matthew 16:18?
2. What is the rock in Matthew 16:18 upon which Jesus will build His Church?