

Read: Mark 8:31-38

Jesus Took Up the Cross So We Can Take Up the Cross

Mark 8:34

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Crosses are heavy. You might not think that when you see a cross hanging on your wall... and the wall is not collapsing. You might not think that when a cross hangs from a necklace around your neck... and you are not falling over under its weight. You might not think that when you see a cross on top of your church... and the roof is not caving in. Yet crosses can be heavy and even painful.

Back in Jesus' day, criminals had to carry their crosses. A cross was made of solid pieces of heavy wood. That wood would be rough and full of splinters. Even more painful was what happened as a person's hands and feet were nailed to the cross. Crosses were heavy and painful. If you lived in Jesus's day, a cross was the last thing you would ever want to carry.

Jesus told his disciples that he would soon suffer and die on a cross, but they did not want to hear that. They loved Jesus very much. They did not want him to suffer such a painful death, but Jesus knew he had to take up that cross. You see, Jesus had to suffer and die on a cross for you and me. Jesus needed to suffer and die on a cross because we love ourselves more than we love God.

"I want to do what I want! I want to get what I want! I want... I want... I want..." Every one of us is selfish, no matter how young, no matter how old. We are all *selfish*, but Jesus was *selfless* for us. He willingly took up his cross to suffer and die for our selfish sins. Why? Because he loves you. He loves every one of us with a love that cares more about us than himself.

Out of amazing love for us, Jesus took up his heavy, painful cross. Now we follow him by taking up our crosses—not made of wood, but rather the "cross" of saying "No" to our selfish desires in order to honor Jesus with our lives. That is not easy. In fact, it can be painful. Still, we follow Jesus and carry our cross, because he carried his cross, until we join him in heaven someday.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Count how many crosses you see in your home.
- How does a cross help you think about Jesus?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Explain the difference between being *selfish* and *selfless*.
- Why did Jesus have to take up his cross?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Explain this statement: *Following Jesus can be a heavy, painful cross.*
- Why is it necessary for a Christian to *deny themselves and take up their cross* if he or she is going to follow Jesus?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, following you isn't easy. Support me to carry my cross because you carried yours for me. Amen.

Hymn: CW 428:1,2 – Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me

Why should cross and trial grieve me?
Christ is near With his cheer; Never will he leave me.
Who can rob me of the heaven
That God's Son For me won When his life was given?

When life's troubles rise to meet me,
Though their weight May be great, They will not defeat me.
God, my loving Savior, sees them;
He who knows All my woes Knows how best to end them.