

Read: Matthew 16:21–26

His Pain, Your Gain

Matthew 16:21,25

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. . . . For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

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

No pain, no gain! It's a slogan used by coaches. Maybe you've heard your mom or grandma say it. It's a reminder that the only way forward in life is through hard work and pain. No pain, no gain.

Well guess what, Jesus pretty much says the same in Matthew 16. Listen: "Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he *must* go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he *must* be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Amazing, isn't it? Jesus knew all the details of this plan because he is true God! It was a plan filled with pain. Jesus was willing to go through with it. He *must* go to Jerusalem and die and rise again! Why must he? For *you*. Because he couldn't bear the thought of not having you. With you and your name in mind, he nodded his head and said, "I *must* go to Jerusalem, die, and rise—but you are so worth it." There can be no other way for our sins to be paid for. His pain is our gain.

That truth changes how we live life. So it's not about us or what we want to have or how we want things to go. If you want to hold on for dear life to this earthly life, if you want to do your own thing and think only of yourself and selfishly make things as good and comfortable for yourself as you possibly can, then the better, lasting life that Jesus died to win for you will tragically end up lost. Whoever wants to avoid any pain connected to living for Jesus' suffering will miss out on eternal life. That would be so sad! But pay attention because this will make you happy: the person who is willing to lose even his life in order to stay as close to Jesus as possible, will find that pain will end in eternal gain.

Knowing what our real life is all about means knowing that in Jesus we belong to God and we will actually share God's glory.

His pain is our gain!

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

- Are you good at handling pain? Did anything good come from the last time you felt pain? Talk about it.
- Now talk about how Jesus' pain on the cross is good news for us.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Explain what Jesus means when he says we should "deny ourselves." Can you give an example?
- What are ways that we can work on becoming stronger to resist temptations and sins?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Which do you think is more difficult about following Jesus—facing persecution and enemies, or denying yourself and facing personal temptations and sins? Why?
- In your own words, explain what Jesus meant when He said, "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it."? How do Jesus' words apply to your life?

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, remind us that everything we really need is found in you and your love for us through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.