

# Take Up Your Cross



**Bible references – Luke 9:23-24; 18:18-30;  
John 16:33; Luke 14:27; Matthew 16:25**



In this session the young people will explore what Jesus meant when he said, 'Take up your cross and follow me.' Building on the first step of discipleship, they will begin to see that following Jesus is not just a one-time decision, but a way of life that comes with a cost.

Through Jesus' words and the story of the rich young man, they will consider what it means to put Jesus first and why this is not always easy. As they reflect on these moments, they will begin to recognise the tension between holding on to what they value and choosing to follow Jesus.

## **You will need:**

- 'Rich Man' handout
- Paper and pens



## **Beat**

### **Ask:**

- What is the most you've ever paid for something you really wanted?
- Have you ever paid more than something was worth because you really wanted it? What was it?

### **Say:**

Sometimes the value of something isn't just about money. It's about what it means to someone.

*Antiques Roadshow* is a long-running Sunday night TV favourite for many, where people bring their antiques to be valued. Sometimes they are worth nothing, and sometimes people are surprised by the value of their prized or neglected possession.

### **Leader's notes:**

Watch the following clip with the group pausing it at 4:08 min. Ask them to submit their estimates for how much they think the Fabergé flower is worth. You may need to find a way to start the clip without them seeing its title, as it gives the game away!

### **Watch:**

Magical Fabergé flower valued at 1 million – *Antiques Roadshow* – BBC One (4:58)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhafWTKdGmk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhafWTKdGmk)

**Ask:**

What is the difference between the monetary value of the Fabergé flower and its symbolic value to the regiment?

**Say:**

Sometimes the things we value most are the hardest things to let go of. In today's Bassline we're going to explore what it means to follow Jesus, and what it might cost us.

 **Bridge****Ask:**

If you were the owner of the Fabergé flower, and you'd just discovered it was worth one million pounds, what would you do with it?

 **Amplify****Say:**

In our first session we saw how a life of discipleship starts with a decision to follow Jesus. Simon said yes to Jesus' invitation to follow him, but the story doesn't end there.

**Ask:**

What do you think comes next after someone decides to follow Jesus?

**Say:**

Following Jesus doesn't stop with one decision. It changes how we live.

Jesus is very clear that a life of discipleship comes at a cost.

**Read:**

**<sup>23</sup> If any of you wants to walk my path, you're going to have to deny yourself. You'll have to take up your cross every day and follow me. <sup>24</sup> If you try to avoid danger and risk, then you'll lose everything. If you let go of your life and risk all for my sake, then your life will be rescued, healed, made whole and full.**

– (Luke 9:23-24 VOICE)

**Ask:**

- How would you summarise the message of these verses?
- Although there is a great cost to following Jesus, what is promised in verse 24?

**Say:**

A term that is often used to describe these verses is self-denial. This isn't about thinking less of ourselves, but about choosing not to put ourselves first. It's about saying no to anything that gets in the way of saying yes to God. When Jesus calls us to follow him, he calls us to a life with him at the centre.

**Ask:**

What do you think people may find challenging about placing Jesus at the centre of their lives?

**Say:**

We're going to look at a moment when someone wanted to follow Jesus, but when it came to what it would cost they struggled to say yes.

**Leader's notes:**

Give each young person a copy of the 'Rich Man' handout. Allocate parts to members of the group and read Luke 18:18-30, taken from the dramatised *Good News Bible*.

## The Rich Man - Luke 18:18-30

<b>Narrator</b>	A Jewish leader asked Jesus:
<b>Leader</b>	Good Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?
<b>Narrator</b>	Jesus asked him:
<b>Jesus</b>	Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery; do not commit murder; do not steal; do not accuse anyone falsely; respect your father and mother'.
<b>Leader</b>	Ever since I was young, I have obeyed all these commandments.
<b>Jesus</b>	There is still one thing you need to do. Sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me.
<b>Narrator</b>	But when the man heard this, he became very sad, because he was very rich. (PAUSE) Jesus saw that he was sad.
<b>Jesus</b>	How hard it is for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God! It is much harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.
<b>Narrator</b>	The people who heard him asked:
<b>Person</b>	Who, then, can be saved?
<b>Jesus</b>	What is humanly impossible is possible for God.
<b>Narrator</b>	Then Peter said:
<b>Peter</b>	Look! We have left our homes to follow you.
<b>Jesus</b>	Yes, and I assure you that anyone who leaves home or wife or brother or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God will receive much more in this present age and eternal life in the age to come.

*Dramatised Good News Bible*: Edited by Michael Perry.

**Discuss:**

- How do we know the young man respected Jesus?
- What does his opening question tell us about the way he views a life following God?
- What is the man's response to Jesus' answer?
- Do you think this answer is arrogant, or is he sharing a genuine desire to do the right thing?
- Why do you think Jesus told the young man he needed to sell his possessions and give them to the poor before he could receive eternal life?
- Do you think Jesus expects every follower to do this, or did he choose this command specifically for the rich man? Explain your thoughts.

**Say:**

For this young man, money and possessions had become something he couldn't let go of.

It wasn't that those things were bad in themselves, but they had taken a place in his life that belonged to God. When Jesus calls people to follow him, he calls them to put him first. That means being willing to let go of anything that takes his place.

**Ask:**

Why do you think the rich man found it so difficult to follow Jesus?

**Say:**

This is the reality of discipleship. Jesus invites people to follow him, but following him comes at a cost. Sometimes that cost is letting go of things we don't want to lose. This is what Jesus means when he talks about taking up our cross.

 **Bridge****Ask:**

What do you think you would have done if you were in the rich man's position?

 **Sound Check****Say:**

We've explored what Jesus means when he says, 'Take up your cross and follow me.' For our Sound Check activity, we're going to watch a short clip that helps explain this a bit more clearly.

**Watch:**

What did Jesus mean when he said, 'Take up your cross and follow me'? – Got Questions Ministries (4:58)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbks-45i4kY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbks-45i4kY)

**Discuss:**

- How did people in the first century understand the cross?
- How is that different from how we often think about it today?
- The clip suggests that 'taking up your cross' is not just about dealing with something difficult. What does it actually mean?
- Why do you think people began to reject Jesus when he started talking about the cost of following him?

**Say:**

The clip says that they 'were not able to put to death their own ideas, plans and desires, and exchange them for his.'

**Ask:**

What do you think it means to 'die to self' in everyday life?

**Say:**

Jesus never hid the cost of discipleship.

In John 16:33, he said, 33 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'

**Ask:**

What do you think this tells us about what it means to follow Jesus?

**Say:**

The clip helps us think about what it might look like to put Jesus first in real life. In some parts of the world, people face real persecution for their faith.

**Ask:**

Why do you think some people are still willing to follow Jesus even when it costs them so much?

**Say:**

Following Jesus doesn't necessarily mean we will face loss or difficulty in the same way, but it does raise an important question.

**Ask:**

If you were faced with a choice between following Jesus or holding on to comfort, what do you think you would do?

**Say:**

Jesus doesn't ask that question without making a promise.

**Read:**

<sup>25</sup> **For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.**

– (Matthew 16:25)

**Say:**

Jesus was always honest about what following him would involve, but he also made this clear. When we choose to put him first, even when it's difficult, we don't lose life. Instead, we find it. The question is how we will respond.

 **Bridge****Ask:**

Why do you think Jesus was so honest about the cost of following him?

 **Selah****Say:**

In this session we've explored what Jesus means when he says, 'Take up your cross and follow me.' We've seen that following him can come at a cost, and that sometimes it involves letting go of things that are hard to give up.

**Ask:**

Bill Hull says, 'When God calls us, he invites us to die. And ironically, we'll never be more alive.' What do you think he means?

**Leader's notes:**

Give each young person a piece of paper. Ask them to write down anything that they feel might be standing between them and putting Jesus first. This could be an attitude, a habit, a relationship, or something they are holding on to.

Reassure them that this is private and no one else will read what they write. If appropriate for your group, invite them to tear up the paper as a simple act of letting go and choosing to put Jesus first. Make it clear that this is optional and there is no pressure to share.

**Say:**

Following Jesus isn't just about saying yes once. It's about choosing him again and again, even when it costs us something. When Jesus says, 'Take up your cross', he is inviting us to let go of anything that takes his place. The question is what we do with that invitation.

## **Coda**

**Say:**

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

**Ask:**

- As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?
- What is the one thing you have discovered about what it means to take up your cross?

**Leader's notes:**

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.



# Rich Man

- Narrator** A Jewish leader asked Jesus:
- Leader** Good Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?
- Narrator** Jesus asked him:
- Jesus** Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery; do not commit murder; do not steal; do not accuse anyone falsely; respect your father and mother'.
- Leader** Ever since I was young, I have obeyed all these commandments.
- Jesus** There is still one thing you need to do. Sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me.
- Narrator** But when the man heard this, he became very sad, because he was very rich. (PAUSE) Jesus saw that he was sad.
- Jesus** How hard it is for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God! It is much harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.
- Narrator** The people who heard him asked:
- Person** Who, then, can be saved?
- Jesus** What is humanly impossible is possible for God.
- Narrator** Then Peter said:
- Peter** Look! We have left our homes to follow you.
- Jesus** Yes, and I assure you that anyone who leaves home or wife or brother or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God will receive much more in this present age and eternal life in the age to come.