

Take up your cross

- Jesus used the phrase on four occasions that are recorded (probably more in reality):
 - He who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. (Matthew 10:38, Mark 8:34, in His instructions as He sent out the 12)
 - If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me (Matthew 16:24, to the disciples just after “Get behind Me, Satan”)
 - If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me (Luke 9:23, just after Peter’s “great confession”)
 - Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:27, to the multitudes about “counting the cost”)
- All of these are before Jesus was arrested, so our religious image of the crucifixion would not be in the minds of the audience. What image would the word, cross, bring up?
 - Capital punishment was controlled by the Roman government. Their method of execution was by crucifixion. The condemned usually was required to carry his own cross to the place of execution.
 - Important people chose to be executed quickly by their own people or their own hand rather than to be captured and humiliated.
 - Crucifixion was considered humiliating (Hebrews 12:2), which Jesus met with humility (Philippians 2:8).
 - All forms of execution in those days were horribly painful. The only place agony is used refers to Jesus in prayer (Luke 22:44).
 - Following Jesus would not be heroic, but humiliating.
 - A call to arms implies glory.
 - A call to courage implies heroism.
 - A call to dedication implies perseverance.
 - Jesus’ call is a humiliating execution of self.
- In what contexts did Jesus compare discipleship and crucifixion?
 - Being sent out as the advance team for Jesus could be honorable. Jesus pointed out that this tour would more likely be humiliating.
 - Peter refused to accept that Jesus would die soon and badly. Attitude was a great temptation to Jesus, too. But, the objective was to deny self.
 - After Peter announced his conclusion that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus immediately turned the focus from honor to humiliation.
 - In teaching the multitudes, Jesus used crucifixion as part of counting the cost of following.
- Christians will suffer at this level, not at the level of inconvenience.
 - All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12)
 - To this you were called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21)
 - That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (Philippians 3:10)
 - By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us; we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16)