

can i be Jesus like on my cross?

"then Jesus said to his disciples, 'whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'" matt 16:24

in the process of preparing them for His coming crucifixion, He also spoke to them about their own cross. He left no doubt what discipleship meant. the disciples were part of the "crowd" that followed Jesus, and it was to all of them that the Master spoke those words.

Jesus gave them all a word picture that they likely understood better in those ancient times than Christ-followers do today. no doubt many in the multitudes – even the disciples – believed Jesus was about to bring a glorious and powerful kingdom to earth. some in the crowds had already drifted away; they were only following Jesus for the miracles and meals anyway, and His teachings grew more puzzling. but those who remained misunderstood God's timetable for prophecy, so they were likely shocked to hear Jesus' words.

was "cross-bearing" different in Jesus day than today? why did Jesus use such a tough metaphor to describe discipleship?

two thousand years ago, romans forced convicts to carry their rugged, wooden crosses to their own place of execution. as they bore the crosses of crucifixion, crowds laughed and ridiculed them. today, except perhaps in rare cases in some third-world countries, people do not carry wooden crosses to their death; but

Jesus' meaning went beyond that tool of execution anyway. His statement to the disciples involved three actions: self-denial, surrender, and servanthood.

self-denial - Jesus said we must first deny ourselves. in today's terms, it's called "dying to self." many christians only vaguely understand the concept, but know the "self" can cause problems. some believe that simply by denying ourselves material goods, accomplishments, or meaningful things, this will make us better recruits for discipleship. maybe, but it's more than that. self-denial includes rejection of self-sufficiency and self-will. Jesus calls us to crucify - to put to death - our own plans and desires. we're to stop trying to gratify the flesh. Jesus further calls people to face the potential loss of family, friends, reputation, material goods, career, and personal dreams in following Him - perhaps to even face martyrdom.

surrender - Jesus said we must take up our cross. our taking up is really a matter of bowing down. Jesus never hid the cost of discipleship. He calls us to bow in absolute surrender to Him. this isn't a mystical deeper life activity for some spiritual super-elite; it's for all who desire to follow the Lord. it's for anyone willing to count the cost of bearing His reproach, and it's a choice to be made daily.

servanthood - Jesus said we must follow Him. He made the terms clear: if we don't deny ourselves and carry our cross and follow Jesus, we cannot be His disciple. there is no such thing as a no-cost, no-sacrifice form of discipleship. the true disciple will live like and

ultimately resemble their Master, and those who do not desire to do the will of the Father cannot rightly call Him Lord. "not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." matt 7:21

must Jesus bear the cross alone  
and all the world go free  
No, there's a cross for everyone  
and there's a cross for me

yes, there's a cross for you and there's a cross for me. fear not though. there is grace to help us carry it, but carry it we must. and so, i ask again. "can i be Jesus on my cross?" can i turn the other cheek? can i forgive the unforgivable? can i pray for the one spitefully using or even persecuting me? how will they react to how you act? will their witness of you be: "truly, this was a son of God."