



# Jesus Defines Discipleship

*Matthew 16:13–17, 20–27*



## LESSON GOAL

Students will understand the cost of following Christ, deny themselves and follow Him.

## BIBLE TRUTHS

- God the Father revealed to Peter that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16)
- Jesus rebuked Peter because Peter was not trusting God’s plan.
- Jesus calls disciples to deny themselves and follow Him.

## KEY VERSE

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’” —*Matthew 16:24*

## APPLICATION

- Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Christ.
- Be mindful of the things of God.
- Rejoice in Christ’s return and reward.

## NEXT WEEK

Jesus Is Transfigured  
Matthew 17:1–8

### Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group



## PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

*“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19*

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

### Bible Background

#### Introduction

Despite having seen Jesus’ amazing miracles, the disciples vacillated between believing that Jesus was the Son of God and doubting Him. After the disciples’ hard-hearted response to the feeding of the 5,000 (Mark 6:52), Jesus tested their perception of Him by walking on the water (Matt. 14:22–33). At first, the disciples thought Jesus was a ghost, but later they praised Him as the Son of God. Just when the disciples seemed to finally grasp the truth of Jesus’ identity, they again revealed their unbelief. When Jesus challenged them to feed the second great multitude, the disciples again simply admitted their own inability instead of turning to Jesus (Matt. 15:32–39). Furthermore, when Jesus warned them of the “leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees” (Matt. 16:6), the disciples thought Jesus was upset that they had brought no bread for the journey (Matt. 16:7). Jesus accused the disciples of being of “little faith” (Matt. 16:8), of having hard hearts (Mark 8:17), and of having unseeing eyes and unhearing ears (Mark 8:18). Even after seeing Jesus feed thousands of people on two separate occasions, the disciples were still worried about having enough food and missed the spiritual truth Jesus was teaching (Matt. 16:9–12; Mark 8:19–21).

Even after being with Jesus for more than two years, the disciples doubted Jesus. Not unlike the crowds and the Pharisees, the disciples did not have an unshakable confidence that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, even after seeing His miracles and hearing His teaching. If the disciples were not confident in Jesus’ identity now, how strong would their faith be when they learned that Jesus was not setting up His earthly kingdom until He first was crucified, resurrected, and returned from heaven? Would they be willing to pay the cost of following a dying Messiah? Before Jesus revealed His death and resurrection to His disciples, the Father revealed to them that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

#### Revelation of Christ, the Son of the Living God (Matt. 16:13–17)

With approximately six months of His earthly ministry left, Jesus increasingly withdrew into Gentile territory to avoid confrontations with Jewish leaders and to spend time with His disciples. While Jesus and His disciples were in the district of Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:13), located approximately 25 miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee and a few miles south of Mount Hermon, Jesus had just finished a time of solitary prayer (Luke 9:18). Alone on the road with His disciples (Mark 8:27), Jesus asked them, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matt. 16:13).

The disciples’ answer reveals exactly how much confusion there was surrounding the person of Jesus (Matt. 16:14). Similar to Herod Antipas (Matt. 14:1–2), some people thought that Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected from the dead. Others

thought that He was Elijah, the prophet whom Malachi predicted would come before the Day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5). Still others, influenced by the Jewish Apocrypha, thought that Jesus might be Jeremiah, whose return was to precede the coming of the Messiah. In addition to those ideas, the Jews thought that Jesus could be any number of Old Testament prophets risen from the dead (Luke 9:19). Remarkably, all these identifications pointed to expected predecessors of the Messiah and not the Messiah Himself. After the disciples responded to Jesus' question, Jesus followed up by asking the disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15).

In response to Jesus' question, Peter confessed to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Both John the Baptist and Jesus' disciples had previously confessed that Jesus was the Messiah (John 1:34, 41, 49), but both later expressed doubts when they compared Jesus' ministry with their expectations for the Messiah. Like the rest of Israel, the disciples found themselves confused about Jesus' identity. Despite his lack of faith and his hard heart, Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah. His assurance did not come from man ("flesh and blood"), whether from himself or other men, but from the Father Himself, who had revealed the truth about Jesus' identity (Matt. 16:17). God had chosen to bless Peter (and presumably the other disciples) with an assurance that Jesus was the Messiah, at the same time that the rest of the Jewish population was busy guessing which dead prophet had been resurrected.

### **Revelation of Death and Resurrection of Christ (Matt. 16:20–23)**

In Matthew 16:20, as well as in the parallel passages of Mark 8:30 and Luke 9:21, Jesus forbade His disciples to tell others that He was the Christ. Jesus knew that no good could be accomplished by revealing His identity to the multitudes. The crowds who had already seen Jesus do many miracles were still unwilling to follow Him. They wanted to make Him king by force (John 6:15) but did not want to submit to Him. The crowds would not have Jesus as their spiritual ruler, and now was not the time for Jesus to be their physical ruler. Instead of being made king, Jesus told His disciples that "He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day" (Matt. 16:21). The Father's revelation of Jesus as the Christ was followed by the Son's revelation of what He must suffer as the Christ.

Peter was shocked when he heard Jesus' prediction of what was going to happen. Believing that he knew better than His Lord, Peter "began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You'" (Matt. 16:22). Peter foolishly imagined that Jesus had been mistaken, so he took it upon himself to correct his Master. Peter believed in a Messiah who would establish His kingdom upon earth, not one who would be killed. After being the beneficiary of God's sovereign grace, Peter was unwilling for God to be sovereign. In many ways, Peter was like the crowds who wanted God's kingdom on man's terms. Peter did believe, but his belief was not a full-grown confidence in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Jesus' rebuke of Peter was severe. Jesus said, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt. 16:23). Peter had unwittingly participated in Satan's plan to prevent Jesus from taking the punishment for man's sin. Because he was not "mindful of the things of God," Peter was actually tempting Jesus to forsake the cross. His man-centered view of the Messiah did not include God's plan for His suffering, death, and resurrection. Satan had tempted Jesus to forsake God's plan, and now Peter was putting another stumbling block before Jesus' obedience. Instead of serving His Master, Peter was being used as Satan's pawn because of his man-centered thinking.

## Revelation of Cost and Reward of Following Christ (Matt. 16:24–27)

The Father's revelation of Jesus as the Messiah and Jesus' revelation of His future suffering, death, and resurrection challenged the disciples' expectations. The disciples had followed Jesus expecting to serve Him when He reigned as king, but now they learned their king would be rejected and killed. Suddenly, following Christ must have seemed much more costly than they had imagined and the disciples had to choose if they were going to continue following Him.

Jesus knew that being His disciple is costly, and He presented that cost to His disciples, saying, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). Being Jesus' disciple requires denying one's self (refusing to give into one's selfish desires), taking up one's cross (being willing to pay any price for the sake of Christ), and following Christ (submitting one's own will to Christ's will). Although there is a great cost in becoming Christ's disciple, there is no other way to save one's life. If someone holds on to his life and lives it for his own pleasure, he will eventually lose it and come into judgment (16:25). The only people who find life, both life in this age and in the one to come, are those who are willing to lose their life by denying themselves, taking up their cross, and following Christ. Jesus emphasized the same point by asking, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (16:26). When the disciples first followed the Messiah, they thought they were gaining the world. Jesus now challenged the disciples that only by giving up the world could they save their soul. A willingness to follow after Him is the only way to save one's soul, and no amount of passing pleasures, possessions, or pride is worth trading for one's salvation. Those who deny themselves, pick up their crosses and follow Christ will not only save their souls but will also be rewarded at the return of Christ. Jesus told His disciples that when He returned "in the glory of His Father with His angels," He would "reward each according to his works" (Matt. 16:27).

## Conclusion

The Father's revelation of the Son's identity as the Messiah was quickly followed by the Son's revelation of the Father's plan that the Messiah be rejected, suffer, and be resurrected. The disciples had been blessed with the knowledge that Jesus was the Messiah, but they needed to respond to that knowledge by faithfully following Him, regardless of the cost on earth. Following Him required that they die to themselves, pick up their crosses, and become like Christ. Although being the Messiah's disciple was more costly than the disciples had ever imagined, the only way to save their souls was by following Jesus. The cost on earth would be great, but they could rejoice and look forward to their reward at the return of Christ.

## POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth."  
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



### Review Questions

Where did Jesus go at the beginning of the story?  
*Jesus went up onto a mountain to pray.*

Where did the disciples go?  
*The disciples got into a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee.*

What had happened to the disciples while Jesus was praying?  
*The winds began to blow fiercely and the disciples were finding it impossible to cross the Sea.*

What did Jesus do after praying?  
*Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee to His disciples.*

What did Peter ask Jesus when he saw Jesus out on the water?  
*Peter asked if he could come out onto the water also.*

What happened when Peter walked out onto the water?  
*Peter was distracted by the wind and waves and sunk into the water.*

What happened when Peter sunk into the sea?  
*Jesus reached out and saved him. When Jesus got back into the boat the storm stopped.*



### Surprise Ending

In Matthew 16:25, Jesus said, "Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." The disciples must have been challenged by this surprising statement, which is the exact opposite of what the world teaches. This is a difficult concept to introduce to young children so prepare them for the lesson by playing a simple game that they are familiar. Tell the children that there will be a surprise ending. Tell them that something unexpected will happen at the end of the game. When the game ends as normal, reveal the surprise ending: the losers are actually the winners this time! No doubt, the children will be surprised, but the teacher will have an excellent opportunity to transfer to Jesus' surprising teaching that only those who lose their life will find it.



### How Did He Know?

Although the crowds should have realized who Jesus really was, they evidently could not. Peter's confession explains exactly who Jesus is. The teacher can illustrate this to the children by miming out a character, which the children would know, but may not recognize. Make sure that one student or helper in the class knows the correct answer and have them reveal it after the rest of the class has had



an opportunity to guess your identity. How did he know? The child only knew the correct answer because you revealed it to him beforehand. In today's lesson we will see that people were trying to guess who Jesus was, but they kept getting it wrong. Peter is the one who came up with the correct answer and we will find out in the lesson who gave him the answer.

### **Concealed and Revealed**

In today's lesson we see that Jesus' identity was not apparent to most of the crowd, but God makes it plain through Peter's confession. Have the teacher reveal parts of a picture of a person. As parts of the picture are revealed, ask the children who it is. In today's lesson we will see how God revealed who Jesus is.



### **Who Is He and How Should I Respond?**

Jesus' identity as the Son of God requires us to respond to Him in a certain way. Act out a number of characters for the children to guess e.g. a doctor helping a patient, a policeman directing traffic, etc.. Ask the children who you are, what you do, and how people should respond to you as a result. If we misunderstand who a person is, we may not respond to them correctly. In today's lesson we will discover who Jesus is, what He has done for us, and how we need to respond to Him.

## **PROCLAIM THE TRUTH**

*"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done." — Psalm 78:4*

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

### **Bible Lesson**

The disciples had seen Jesus perform many miracles which showed that He was the Son of God, but the disciples still could not make up their minds about who Jesus really was. Jesus told them that they had little faith, hard hearts, and were blind and deaf to the truth. Jesus was very patient with the disciples though, and took another opportunity to teach them.

The disciples were not the only ones who were confused about Jesus' identity. It seemed that everyone who had seen or heard of Jesus had a different opinion about who He was. Jesus asked His disciples this very important question. "Who do men say that I am?" He asked (16:13). The disciples told Him that some people believed that He was actually John the Baptist, back from the dead. Others believed that He was the prophet Elijah, who came from heaven like the book of Malachi had prophesied would happen. Still others said that He might be the prophet Jeremiah, who came from heaven as well.

Jesus then asked, "But who do you say that I am?" (16:15) Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (16:16) This was not the first time Peter had said that Jesus was the Christ, but he had shown doubt and weak faith many

times anyway. Jesus was pleased with Peter's response, but told him that his answer had not come from within himself, but that God the Father in heaven had revealed the answer to him. God had blessed Peter with the assurance that Jesus was indeed the Son of God.

Jesus did not stop with that lesson, though. He went on to tell them what He came to do. The disciples believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but they wanted their Messiah to be the earthly king, to make their nation great. Jesus revealed to them that this was not God's plan. He told them that instead, He must go to Jerusalem and suffer at the hands of the elders and the chief priests and scribes. He told them that he would be killed, and then be raised on the third day.

The disciples were shocked by this announcement. How could Jesus become their king if He allowed the religious rulers to kill Him? Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked Him, saying "Far be it from You, Lord, this shall not happen to You!" Peter did not want Jesus to die, and he dared to tell Jesus that He was wrong!

Jesus rebuked Peter severely. He said, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." Peter was tempting Jesus not to die for the sins of the world, just as Satan had tempted Jesus before. Peter was serving himself, not God, because he wanted Jesus to meet his own desires, not the desires of God.

Now that the disciples knew what was ahead of them, Jesus wanted them to know exactly what their continued commitment would cost them. He said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. . . For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (16:24,26) Jesus said that His followers must deny themselves, which means that they had to obey God's desires and not their own. They must take up their cross, which means that they had to be willing to suffer for Christ, and they had to follow Him, which meant that they had to submit to what God wanted rather than what they wanted. The cost for following Jesus is great, but the reward is even greater. It should be an easy decision, because compared to losing their soul to eternity in hell, the cost was nothing. Jesus also told them that when He returned, He would "reward each according to His works" (16:27).

Jesus had told the disciples that it wasn't enough just to know that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, but that they must also be willing to make sacrifices and follow Him. Though their decision might make their life difficult, they could rejoice and look forward to their great reward at the return of Christ.



## Lesson Questions

What did Jesus ask His disciples?

*Jesus asks them, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" (16:13).*

What did the disciples say that people were saying?

*Some people believed Him to be John the Baptist. Others believed that Jesus was a former prophet, like Elijah or Jeremiah that had come back to life.*

What did God reveal to Peter?

*Peter said to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matt. 16:16). God the Father had revealed to him the truth about who Jesus is.*

What did Peter say when Jesus said that He would die?

*Peter refused to listen to what Jesus had to say and instead corrected Him. Peter said, "This shall never happen to You!"*



How did Jesus answer Peter?

*Jesus said, "Get behind me Satan." Peter did not have God's plan in mind but rather his own.*

What did Jesus say that people who want to follow Him must do?

*If any one wanted to follow Jesus as His disciple, Jesus said that they would have to follow His example by denying themselves, taking up their crosses and follow Him.*

## Presentation Ideas



### A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lessons.



### Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



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### Act It Out

Act out a dramatization of the events of this story. The entire scene can be acted out or it could be broken up throughout the lesson. At the end of each section the actors can "freeze" and the teacher can explain that part of the message. The teacher could also act as a narrator throughout the story.



### What's Worth More?

Create a list of pairs of items that have similar value. Give the students the names of two objects. The objects could start out of little value and become very valuable. Ask the students which is more valuable. (eg. Which is worth more an apple or a dollar?) Eventually work up to the world or a person. (eg. Which is worth more a person or the entire world?) The teacher may even want to bring in some pictures or objects to illustrate. Next ask the students which would be harder to give up. Explain that their soul is far more valuable than anything that the world has to offer. Explain that there are some people that would and do give up their soul for things in the world. Jesus says that in order to follow Him we must deny our selves, take up our cross and follow Him. When we give up the things of this world we gain something far more valuable—our soul.

## Praise and Worship

*He Reigns*

*Fairest Lord Jesus*

*All Hail the Power of Jesus Name*

## PRACTICE THE TRUTH

*"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." —Psalm 78:7*

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



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### Deny Oneself

A big part of today's lesson is the call to deny oneself. Take this time after the lesson to talk with the children about some of the things that they could deny this morning. Some of these things should be a love for money or other material objects, a desire to please self (putting what I want over the needs of others), a love to please others, etc. All these desires are selfish in nature, and should be placed aside and replaced with a love for Christ. In denying self we no longer desire to please ourselves, but desire to please God. This should be a great opportunity to point out the selfishness that we are called to walk away from if we desire to follow Christ.



### "Costly Coin"

Materials: photocopy of coin pattern, cardboard, scissors, paste, crayons

Directions: This craft serves to emphasize counting the cost of discipleship. Pass out coin pattern to each student. Direct the students to cut around the perimeter of each circle. Use one circle to trace a third circle on cardboard. Then, cut out the cardboard circle. Paste the paper circles on each side of the cardboard circle to make a coin. Instruct the students to color in the pictures that symbolize the world and their soul. Instruct the students to write Matthew 16:26a "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" around the perimeter of the world side of the coin, and Matthew 16:26b "Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" around the soul side of the coin. Use the Costly Coin to remind the students that they must deny self to follow Christ.



### "Obstacles to Discipleship"

Materials: craft sheets, scissors, glue, crayons

Jesus calls everyone who desires to come after Him to deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow Him. There are many things in this world can be a road block to a person's salvation. People may desire to keep the world rather than following Christ.

Directions: Give each student the above materials and ask them to cut out the things that they think might be a roadblock to a person denying themselves, taking up their cross and following Christ. Explain to the students that giving up the things of the world does not make a person saved but is a requirement of a true disciple of Christ.



### Act and Apply

Design a skit of 3 or more scenes where the lesson is applied to real life situations. These skits could illustrate the students denying themselves, taking up their crosses, following Christ and sharing the gospel. When we die to self we no longer care what others think of us but only how we can serve our Lord.

### **Coloring Pages**

Give each child a copy of the coloring pages at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.

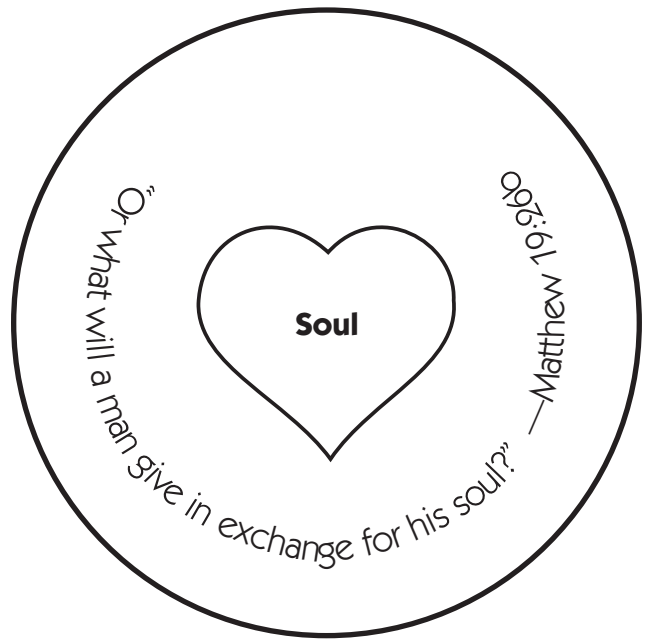


### **MEMORY VERSE**

“Then Jesus said, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’” —*Matthew 16:24*



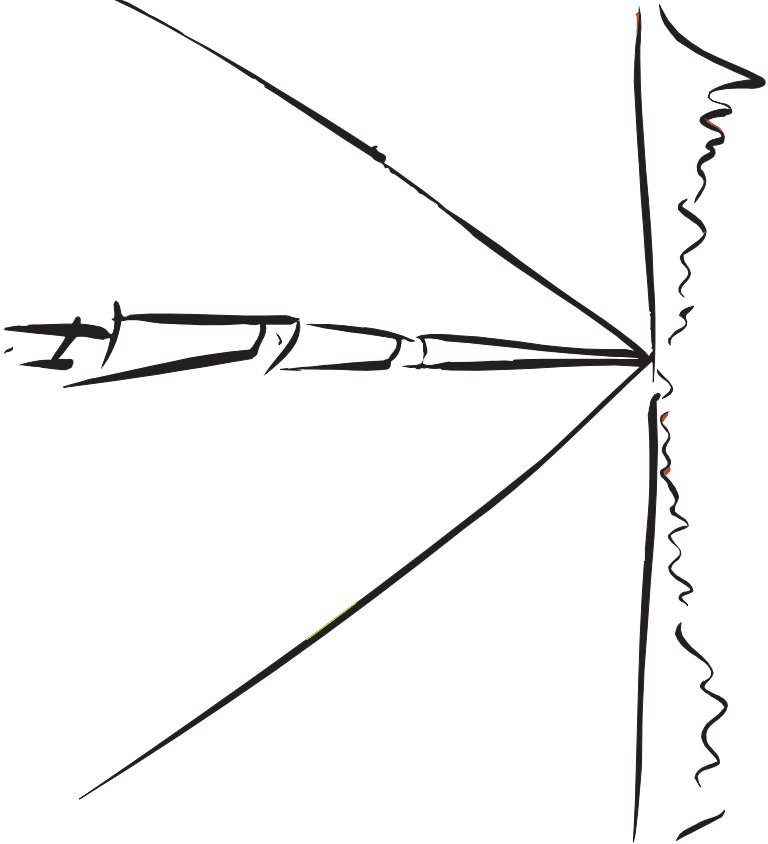
# Costly Coin





## Obstacles to Discipleship

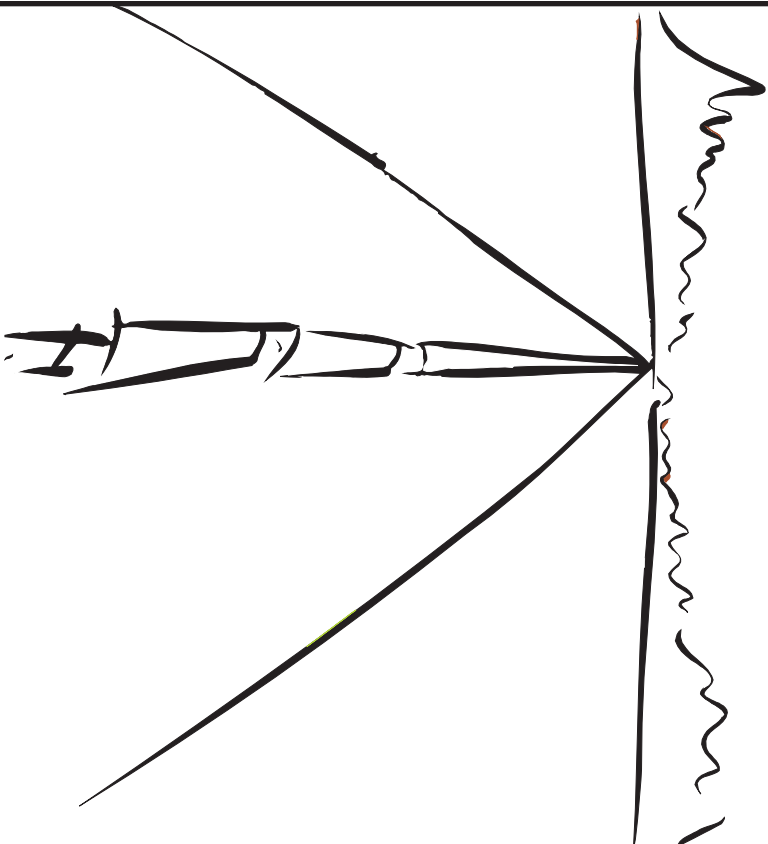
Jesus calls people who desire to follow Him to put Him first. What are some things that can become roadblocks to discipleship?



**“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’” —Matthew 16:24**

## Obstacles to Discipleship

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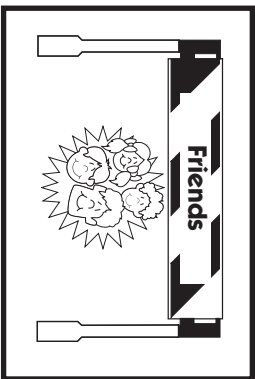
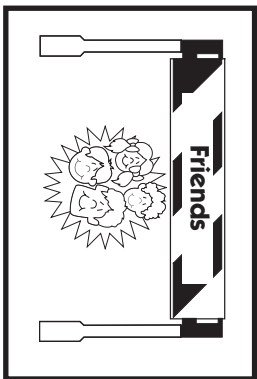
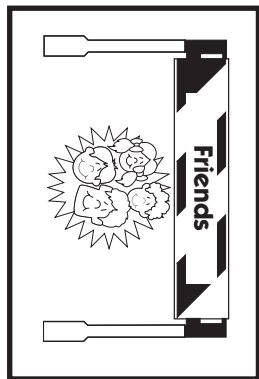
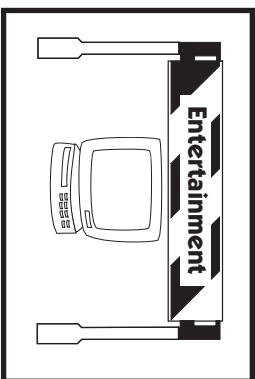
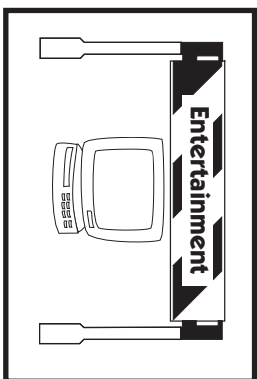
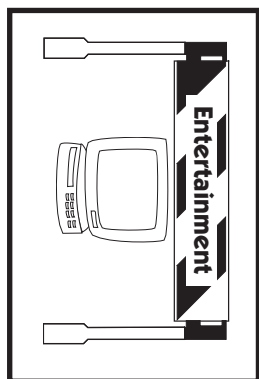
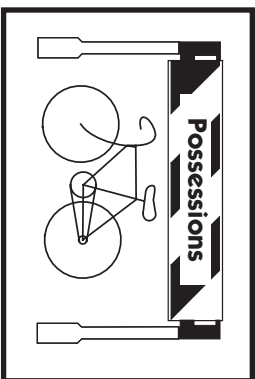
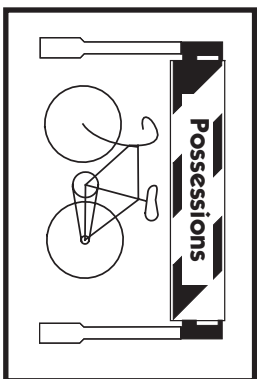
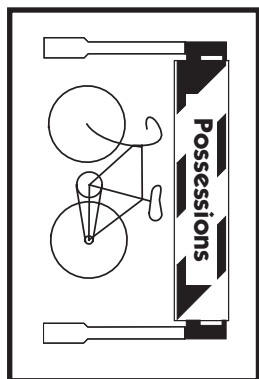
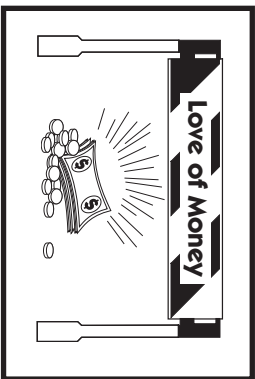
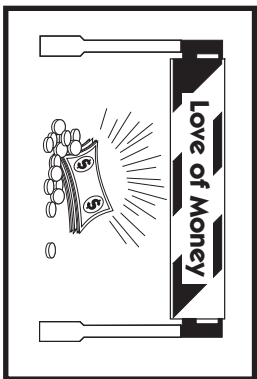
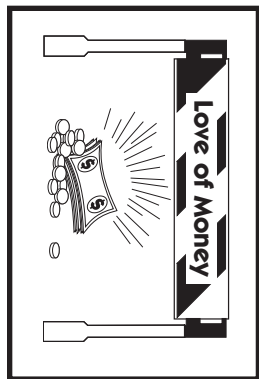


**“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’” —Matthew 16:24**

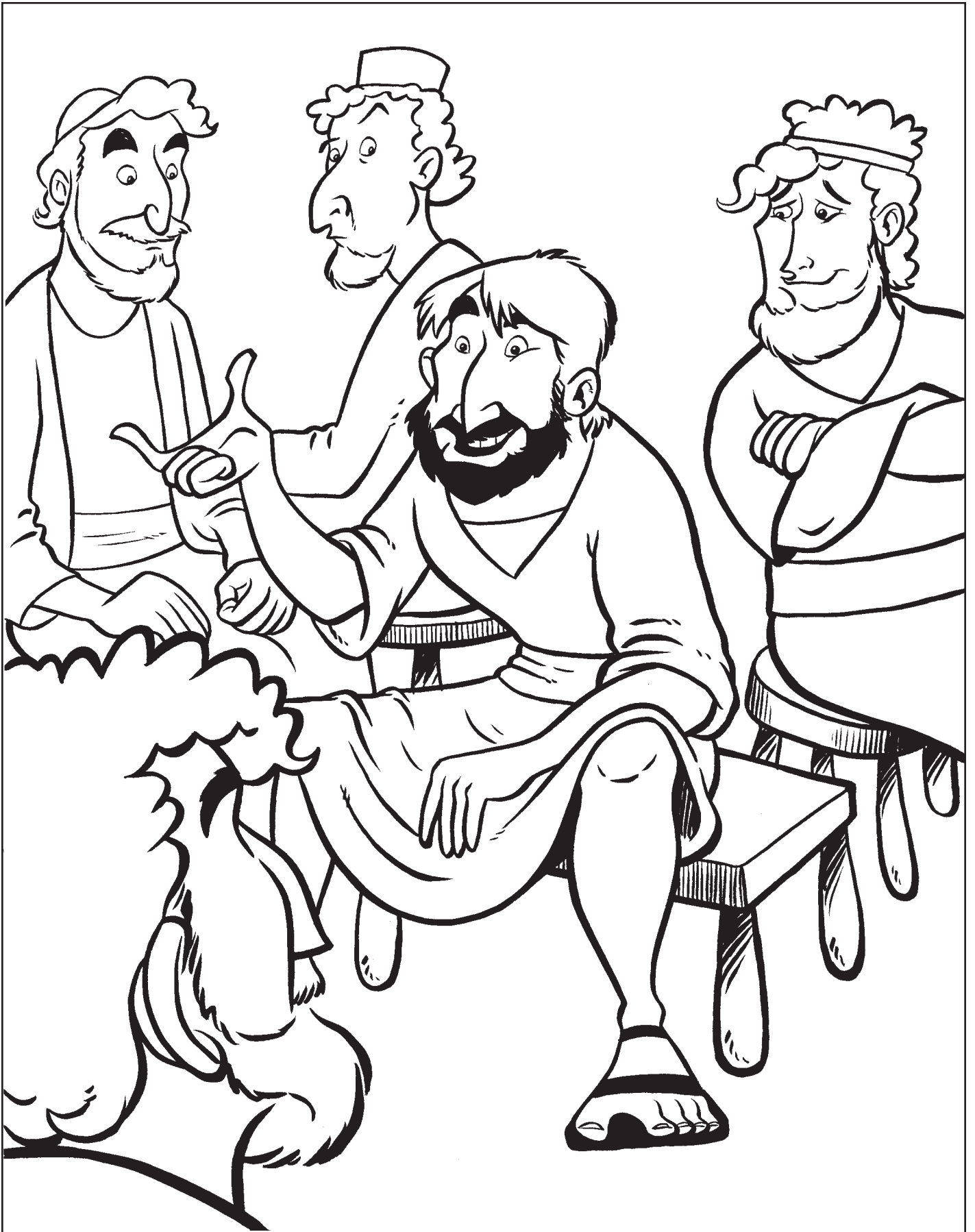




# Obstacles to Discipleship







**“He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” —Matthew 16:15–16**





**"But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'"**

**—Matthew 16:23**

