

A most direct and clear statement Jesus made is:

John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Obviously, Jesus clearly declared that He is the only door to God.

Therefore, the command given in Matthew 16:24 about denying ourselves is not simply an option, but rather it is a dominant spiritual principle of life and death.

Why?

In verse 25 Jesus added: "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

In essence, our core duty towards God and Christ boils down to this: We either choose to follow Christ or we don't. It is, in other words, a clear and eternal decision.

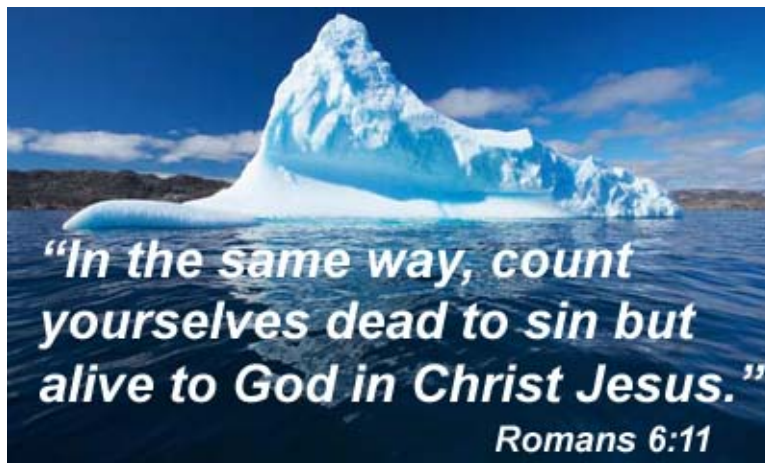
In the story of the rich young man of Mark 10:17-21, who wanted to know how to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to obey the commandments. The young man answered that he had done this all his life.

Jesus then added: "One thing you lack," He said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me."

Verse 22 then states, "At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth."

Do I understand the seriousness about taking my cross to follow Christ?

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What does it mean to carry our cross as believers and followers of Christ?

1John 2:15-17: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

1Cor. 1:18: “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

Gal. 6:14: “God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

2Cor. 10:4-5: “The weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

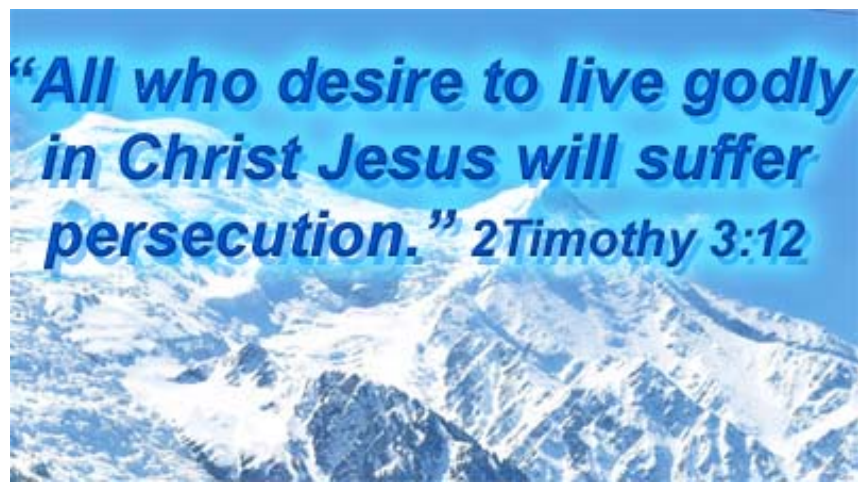
Why?

Romans 5:8: “God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.”

2Tim. 2:12: “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.”

Am I alive to God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ?

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In John 16:33, Jesus said: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

The truth is that the enemy of our faith seeks to attract us to the kingdoms of this world, to the flesh, rather than following Christ. The reason we must expect trials and challenges from truly abiding in Christ?

How so?

Eph. 6:12: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

What then must we do?

1Peter 2:21: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps."

1Peter 4:1-2: "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God."

2Tim. 2:3-4: "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier."

Am I up to the challenge?

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***“He who does not take his
cross and follow after Me
is not worthy of Me.”***



Why must we carry our cross and reject the world's attractions to the flesh?

James 4:4: "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Romans 8:7: "Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."

How must we therefore live to carry our cross and follow Christ?

1Peter 2:23-24: "When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to Him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness."

Jesus' words:

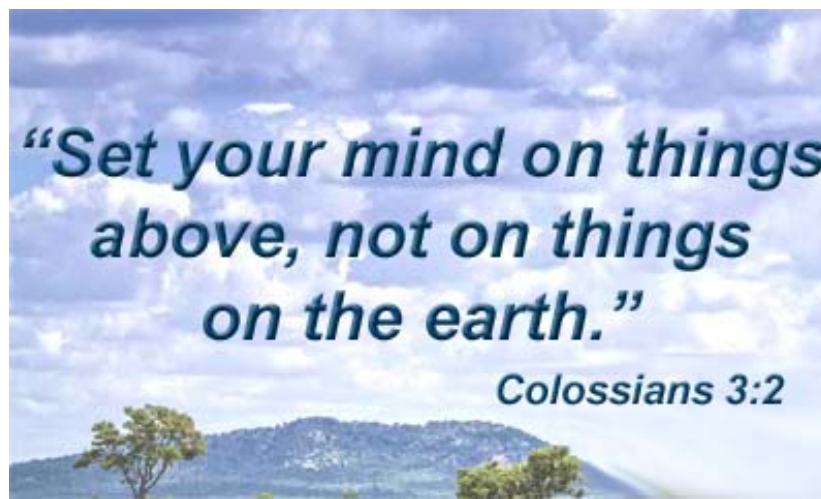
John 14:21: "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Luke 9:24: "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it."

We must remember that the world hates Christ, and as a result hates anyone who follows Christ.

Do I steadfastly carry my cross in following Christ openly, or have I become a friend of the world drawn by the pleasures of the flesh?

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What is the path of the cross, as described in the Word of God?

Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Romans 12:1-2: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

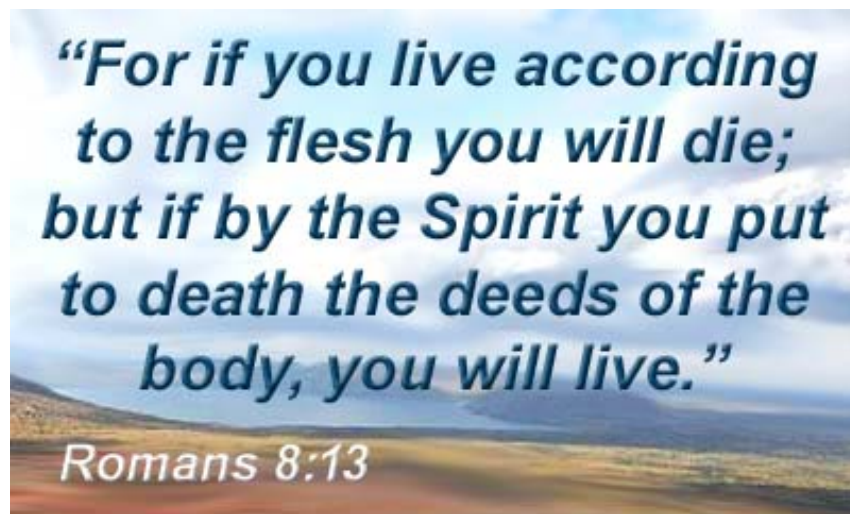
Matthew 6:19-21: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Ephesians 5:1-2: "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us."

Philippians 2:5: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Am I walking the righteous path of the cross, in following the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

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Every decision and choice we make in life always bring a corresponding outcome. The Word of God also clearly teaches that we are either alive in Christ or spiritually dead without Him. How so?

John 3:36: "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John 15:6: "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned."

Luke 9:24-25: "Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?"

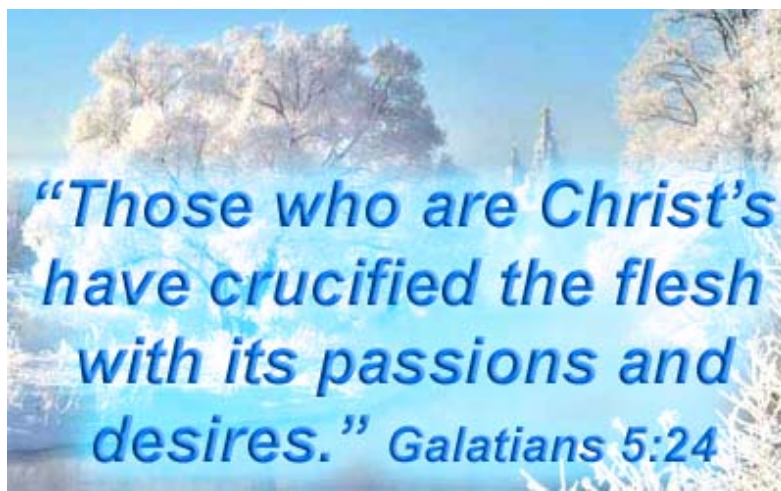
Romans 6:16: "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?"

Why?

Matthew 10:38: "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me."

Am I spiritually alive in Christ, abiding in Him, and rejecting the bondage of world's temptations of the flesh?

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From God's perspective, who we are in Christ is found in the disposition of our heart, and how we live our life in obedience to His Word. In essence, if we believe in Him as Savior, we must also place Him at the forefront of our lives as Lord. Otherwise, we are simply fooling ourselves, but we sure can't fool God.

The reason Jesus said:

Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other."

John 14:21: "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

John 10:27: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

Jesus' words exemplifies that the love we must have for God must take precedence over anything else and everyone else in our life, including ourselves.

Therefore:

2Timothy 2:12: "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us."

A strong proof of our love for God must be achieved by:

Philippians 2:5: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Does my life bring evidence of following Christ and carrying my cross?

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