



WEEK 2:

The cross we must bear

Matthew 16:13-26

Introduction

“Our faith begins at the point where atheists suppose that it must be at an end. Our faith begins with the bleakness and power which is the night of the cross, abandonment, temptation, and doubt about everything that exists!”

(Jürgen Moltmann, in *The Crucified God*, p 31)

How do you think Jesus' crucifixion could have made people stop believing in Him?

Where in your life have you felt God-forsaken? What impact did it have on your faith?

Background

Jesus' challenge is very clear that if we want to follow Him, we will need to be prepared to carry our cross. And this is not a comfortable command, because Jesus carries his cross to Calvary where He is mocked, humiliated, experienced what it is to be forsaken by God and people and ultimately being killed.

Perhaps we are too comfortable dealing with Jesus' cross, or in other words we may have become so used to the fact that the violence and abomination and pain and God-forsakenness of it no longer touch us.

Luke 9:23 "If anyone wants to come after Me (follow Me), he must leave himself, take up his cross every day, and follow Me ..."

Why do you think it is very difficult for us to carry our crosses?

What crosses do you carry?

Scripture reading: MATTHEW 16:13-26

- ❖ Who says Peter is Jesus in v 16? And why do you think it is so important to make this confession?
 - Explain who Jesus is to you? Or in other words: What is your confession?
- ❖ But **this confession is not enough**, because in **v 23** Jesus reprimands Peter and calls him "Satan". Why do you think it's not just enough to have the right answers, confession, knowledge? Why can it be dangerous and a stumbling block in our faith? What do you think has bearing your cross to do with it?

*We need to start living out our faith, confessions and knowledge.
And to carry our crosses forces us to become more dependent on God*

❖ **We sometimes understand the crosses we carry as:**

1. **Heavy stuff in our lives** (remember the cross was heavy!) - matters that eg stand between me and God, which keep me from growing or obeying, with which I will have to trust God. What heavy stuff are in your life?
2. **Daily responsibilities and duties.** Sometimes I hear people say, "It's just my cross to clean the house." Why can we say with reasonable certainty that this is not what Jesus' command to bear cross refers to?
3. **Results of stupid, wrong choices we've made.** These results sometimes have a huge impact on us, but they were usually our own making.
4. Our **usual daily challenges** - at work, with our children, finances, relationships.

❖ **This call to carry a cross, always take us back to the meaning of Jesus' cross.** List all that you think Jesus has gone through with His crucifixion, what it cost Him, what He suffered, what price He paid. See if you can think of 6 (of course there is much more!).

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.

❖ **Now go through your list again. If Jesus calls us to bear our cross, how should these same things that Jesus went through, be true in our lives?**

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.

Our challenge: (works)

- i. *What do you need to be like Jesus on the cross? Read 1 Corinthians 1:18*
- ii. *What challenge do you have this week? What are you going to do that will really cost you something?*
- iii. *What promise from this passage will you hold onto this week?*

Worship

1. *Name one thing from this study that you have learned, and which will challenge you. Ask the group to pray for it.*
2. *Give thanks to the Lord for His example on the cross and the challenge it holds for us, as well as His promise of dying for us!*