



UNDENIABLE (Part 1) - "The Reward of Self-Denial"

Matthew 16:13-20

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. **18** And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. **19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be[e] loosed in heaven." **20** Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Matthew 16:21-26

21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **25** For whoever wants to save their life[f] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. **26** What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"

Key Points

- *The invitation of Jesus to embrace the cross is counter-cultural.*
- *Demanding distorts perspective. You can't demand your way to understanding.*
- *When you are fixated on yourself, you can't see what matters most and miss the God-given opportunity in front of you.*
- *Justification leads to living a life rooted in superiority. Pursuing superiority may fill your appetite, but it will always empty your soul.*
- *Embracing "Jesus = Life" is a blessing. However, your blessing comes with a calling.*
- *Human concerns will keep you from the life God has for you.*
- *Denying yourself is the only way to become and remain available.*
- *According to Jesus, in a world living in denial, self-denial is the only way to live truly.*

READ

Open your time together by reading the Scripture passages on Page 1. Then, take a moment to consider what you just read:

- **Read Matthew 16:13-20.** Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" How do you interpret the significance of this question?
- **Read Matthew 16:21-26.** Jesus emphasizes losing one's life for His sake as a paradoxical path to finding true life. How does this idea challenge conventional notions of success and fulfillment in today's society?

REFLECT

- **In what ways do you find it challenging to carry the weight of your own self? How does this relate to the message of embracing self-denial?**
- **Why do you think embracing the cross is considered counter-cultural?**
- **How does demanding distort perspective, and why is it impossible to demand your way to understanding? How can we guard against pursuing superiority in our lives?**

RESPOND

- **Reflect on past experiences of seeking fulfillment in the wrong places. What patterns or behaviors do you notice, and how can you redirect your focus?**
- **Are there areas where you struggle to let go and embrace self-denial?**
- **Reflect on your current concerns and anxieties. Are there areas where these concerns might be overshadowing the life God desires for you? How can you surrender them to Him?**

PRAY

Close your time together with prayer requests. Ask how you can pray, support, and lift one another up. Pray over these requests collectively or by breaking into prayer partners.