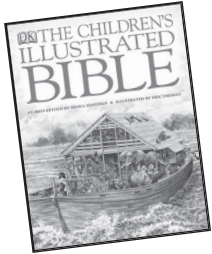


# Ordinary Time, Proper 17



The Children's Illustrated Bible page 234

Jesus showed his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer and be killed and on the third day be raised. Peter said, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." But Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, for you are not thinking as God thinks." Then Jesus told his disciples, "If you want to follow me, don't worry about yourselves but take up your cross and follow me."

—Matthew 16:21–25 adapted

## ☐ Take Your Cross and Follow

Share the story of Jesus telling his disciples about his last days on page 234 of *The Children's Illustrated Bible* (the middle paragraphs). Ask a child to read Matthew 16:21–25.

When Jesus told the disciples that he should go to Jerusalem, and would suffer and be executed, but then would rise again on the third day, Peter said, "This must never happen!" But Peter was thinking about losing his friend and his leader. He wanted to protect Jesus. Jesus knew what it meant to follow God no matter what the consequences. When he said, "If you want to follow me, take up your cross," he meant that followers had to carry their burdens, not worry about themselves, and be willing to go where God leads them. Discuss:

1. What does deny mean? (It may mean to put yourself last, choose last place in line, not fight back, or give your money to help someone else.)
2. What does "pick up your cross" mean? (It may mean to see that you have a burden or a problem, but not to focus on it and use it as a reason to not follow Jesus. It may mean to bear your burden and keep following Jesus.)

Draw a huge cross on newsprint taped to a wall. Invite kids to take turns writing something that they struggle with, that might be their cross to bear. While some are doing this, have others make cross necklaces following the directions below (or purchase cross necklace craft kits).

## ☐ Mashups

Sometimes it is hard to follow the group. We know what we are doing, and we want to go on doing it. Divide the class in half. Ask one group to sing "Jesus Loves Me." Have the second group sing a different song, such as "This Little Light of Mine." Listen to the noise! In contemporary music, this is called a "mashup." While they are both good songs, it takes a lot of work to put two different songs together, and sometimes it doesn't sound very good. Ask everyone to sing one song. Sounds much better, doesn't it? Sometimes we are asked to deny our own choices and follow—even though our choice may be quite good by itself.

## ☐ Deny Party

When kids are young, it is hard for them to deny themselves something what they want. Today, they have opportunity to have a "deny party" for the church nursery, a children's library, or a community need (like a safe house). Choose a project that provides a service to others and is in need of some improvement. Kids plan everything from the invitations to a gift wish list; the list should include things that would improve the place you are celebrating. Baby wipes for the nursery or a basketball for the parking lot may be needed in your congregation. Encourage kids to think of who would benefit from these improvements, and not choose only what they want. Plan a time for celebration with the congregational leaders. Even if there isn't an immediate need, the practice of thinking of others will prove beneficial.



Jesus told his disciples, "If you want to follow me, don't worry about yourselves but take up your cross and follow me."

—Matthew 16:21–25 adapted

## Cross Necklace

1. Before class, cut out crosses from tagboard or other heavy board. (Use the pattern on this page.)
2. Drill or punch a hole in each cross.
3. Give kids brightly colored markers. Cut paper or foam board to create a stained-glass design on the crosses.
4. Kids string yarn, leather string, or twine through the hole in the cross. Tie the yarn at the right length to fit around their necks.

