

“Following Jesus with a Brave Heart”

Today Jesus tells His friends something very important — and a little surprising. He says that following Him will sometimes be hard. It will sometimes mean doing the right thing even when it feels uncomfortable. And He tells them that real love, real courage, and real life come from choosing God’s way, not just the easy way.

A Moment Kids Understand

Have you ever had a moment when you knew the right thing to do... but you didn’t really *want* to do it?

Maybe:

- telling the truth even though you might get in trouble,
- sharing a toy you really wanted to keep for yourself,
- standing up for someone who is being picked on,
- or helping at home when you’d rather be playing.

Those moments feel like tiny battles inside our hearts. We want to follow Jesus... but we also want things to be easy.

Peter felt that way too.

Peter’s Big Reaction

When Jesus told His friends that He would suffer and give His life for us, Peter jumped in and said, “No, Lord! That must never happen!” He loved Jesus so much that he didn’t want anything difficult or painful to happen to Him.

But Jesus knew something Peter didn’t: **Real love sometimes means sacrifice.** Real courage sometimes means choosing the harder path. Real life comes from giving ourselves, not protecting ourselves.

So Jesus tells His friends — and us — something very simple and very brave:

“If you want to follow Me, take up your cross.”

What Does That Mean for Kids?

Jesus isn’t asking children to carry a heavy wooden cross. He’s asking them to carry love, kindness, and courage — even when it costs something.

For kids, “taking up your cross” looks like:

- choosing kindness when others choose meanness,
- forgiving someone instead of staying angry,
- doing what is right even when friends don’t,
- praying when you feel worried or afraid,
- helping someone who needs you, even if it’s inconvenient.

These are small crosses — but they make big saints.

The Surprise in Jesus’ Words

Jesus says something that sounds upside-down but is actually the greatest truth:

When you give your life away in love, you find the life you were made for.

Children understand this more than adults sometimes. When they help, when they share, when they forgive — they feel lighter, happier, more peaceful. That is Jesus’ promise coming true.

A Simple Invitation

So today Jesus is asking each of us — children and adults — to follow Him with a brave heart.

To say:

- “Jesus, I want to choose Your way.”
- “Jesus, help me be strong when it’s hard.”
- “Jesus, teach me how to love like You.”

And He promises that when we walk behind Him, even when the path is steep, He will lead us into a life full of joy, courage, and love.

Closing

Let’s ask Jesus to help us carry our little crosses today — with love, with courage, and with hearts that trust Him. Because when we walk with Him, we never walk alone.