

# (Through the Bible) Matthew 16

by Chuck Smith

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*Jesus teaches his disciples about the importance of discerning the supernatural and the need for self-denial and the cross in order to follow Him.*

**Duration:** 36:16

**Scripture:** Daniel 9:25, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 8:1-2, Matthew 16:24-28

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "The Cross"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of finding true life in Jesus Christ. He questions the value of gaining the whole world if it means losing one's soul. The preacher then introduces the concept of having three wishes and asks the audience what they would desire if they had a magic genie. He highlights the need to be free from the bondage of the flesh and discusses the significance of the cross in denying oneself and following Jesus. The preacher also mentions the importance of understanding the signs of the times and being knowledgeable about the scriptures. The sermon concludes with an encouragement for spiritual growth and development in the life of the Spirit.

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## Transcript

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and now they are seeking to trap him. And they desired that he would show them a sign from heaven. And he answered and said unto them, When it is evening, you say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red.

And in the morning, you say it's going to be foul weather today, for the sky is red and luring. Oh, you hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. Now, the Lord is rebuking them for their inability to discern the signs of the times.

They said, Show us a sign from heaven. And he said, You're able to look at the sky in the evening, and when it's all red, you say, Oh, it's going to be a good day tomorrow. Wherever you get up in the morning, and the sky is all red, you say, Oh, oh, we're going to have a windy one today.

It's going to be a bad day. He said, You have enough sense to be able to tell the weather from looking at the sky, but you don't have enough sense to know the signs of the times. They should have known.

Had they been up in their scriptures, they would have known that this was the time for the coming of their Messiah. For in the book of Daniel, he promised that 483 years after the commandment had gone forth to

restore and rebuild Jerusalem, the Messiah, the Prince, would be coming. And they did not know the signs of the times because they weren't really up in the scriptures.

And I wonder how many times Jesus might say to people today who are so blind to the fact that he's returning soon, You fools! You know how to give weather reports? By studying the atmosphere, the atmospheric pressures, the direction of the wind and so forth. But you don't know time of the coming. And then he said, A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of the prophet Jonah.

And again, he repeats this as he did before. And he left them and he departed. You've asked for a sign before.

I told you the sign of the prophet Jonah. That's the only sign you're going to get. And when his disciples were come together on the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

And Jesus said unto them, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Now, we told you that whenever leaven was referred to, it was referred to in an evil sense. It was that agent, actually the starter that they would use to leaven their loaves of bread.

It caused the rising by deterioration and decay. And so it's been a type of sin or hypocrisy. And in this case, he said, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, according to another gospel.

And they reasoned among themselves saying, Oh, he knows we forgot to bring the bread. And when Jesus perceived what they were thinking, he said unto them, Oh, you have little faith. Why do you reason among yourselves? Because you forgot to bring the bread.

Don't you yet understand? Don't you remember the five loaves and the 5,000? How many baskets did you take up? Don't you remember the seven loaves and the 4,000? And how many baskets you took up? Do you forget? Do you think that I'm worried because you don't have bread? Don't you realize that we're able to provide the bread? I'm not talking about you're forgetting to bring bread. How is it that you do not understand? That I speak it not to you concerning bread, that you should be aware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Then they understood how that he was bidding them not to be aware of the leaven that is in bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

And now they leave the Sea of Galilee and they come to the upper part of what is known as Upper Galilee, the area that is today called Banias. In those days, it was Caesarea Philippi. There are the headwaters of the Jordan River springing out from the base of Mount Hermon.

And when Jesus came into the area of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples saying, whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said unto him, some say that you are John the Baptist. Some say that you're Elijah. Others think you're Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.

And he said unto them, who do you say that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, or Simon Bar is son, the son of Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Now, we have one of two choices. The church is built upon Peter or the church is built upon Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now, the Catholics assert that the church was built on Peter.

There are problems with this. Number one, Jesus said unto him, thou art Petros, which in the Greek is a little stone. And then he declared upon this Petra, which is a giant stone, I will build my church.

And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The church was not built upon the little stone, but upon the giant rock. Thou art Petros, a little stone, upon this Petra.

Paul the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 3.11 tells us, for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is not Simon Peter, but Jesus Christ. No other foundation can man lay but that which is laid. Now, men have tried to lay another foundation, Peter, but it seems quite obvious that Peter is not the foundation of the church and it's not built upon him, but it is built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and Peter's declaration that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

And that is the true foundation of the church. The church is built upon the fact. Well, it's built upon Jesus Christ.

He is the foundation upon which the church stands. Now, the interesting thing to me is that Peter had here, and I'm sure he did not realize it. He had here a spiritual revelation when he said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Jesus said, all right, Peter. Flesh and blood did not reveal this unto you, but my father, which is in heaven. Peter, you've had a spiritual revelation.

This didn't come out of your own chemical juices that, you know, flash the little electronic impulse across your brain. This came from God. And I'm certain that Peter didn't realize that this had come from God because it just came to him, I'm sure, as just a flash.

Peter, as we said, was impulsive. And I'm sure that when Jesus said, who do you say that I am? He just said, well, you're the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus said, all right, blessed are you.

You've had a revelation from God. Flesh and blood didn't reveal this unto you, but my father, which is in heaven. God speaks to us in such natural ways that usually we're not aware that God is speaking to us.

We expect God to speak in some supernatural way. We expect to go into a trance and hear the prelude of the angelic choir and feel all of these tingling sensations and our hair is standing out, you know, on end. And then we hear, my child, you know, God's talking to me.

But God speaks to us in such natural ways and God leads us in such natural ways. There is the beautiful supernatural within the natural. But because we are so dull in our spiritual sensibilities, we are usually not even attuned or aware to the fact that it is God speaking to us or God leading us.

And that's just put down to our spiritual dullness. And there are a lot of times you say, well, God's never spoken to me or I've never heard the voice of God or I've never had any experience. And it's because you're looking for some kind of, you know, super kind of, uh, hocus pocus, uh, you know, and the vibrations that come and everything else.

But God works in such beautiful, natural ways. And the real ability is discovering the supernatural in the natural. And more important than that and more difficult than that is to be able to discern the supernatural from the natural.

Now that's the hardest part. Did this come from God or did this come from me? God, are you speaking to me or is this just something I'm dreaming up, you know? And that is difficult. There's no, there's no easy way.

That is extremely difficult because the supernatural comes in such a natural way. If the supernatural came in a supernatural way, I'd have no problem with discernment, you see. But because the supernatural God, you see, is a superior Trinity, father, son, and spirit.

I'm an inferior Trinity of spirit, soul, and body. I meet God in the realm of the spirit. And so God's spirit bears witness with my spirit that I'm a son of God.

Now my spirit has to bear witness to my consciousness. And when my spirit bears witness to my consciousness, it comes just like a thought from within, an awareness, an inspiration from within. Now I have my own inspirations too at times.

Now how do I know if this inspiration is coming from God or coming from me? Because they flash into my consciousness from this same level as the spirit comes from the area of the subconscious. So does my imagination come from the area of the subconscious? And because it comes to me consciously, the difficulty is to discern. Did this come from my own imagination or did this originate? Did this thought actually come from God? Is he the one planting the thought in my mind? And so here's Peter.

He just expresses the thought that flashes in his head and Jesus says, hey, all right. Spiritual revelation, Peter. My father revealed that to you.

So Peter's got a roll going. Jesus said, and I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

We have power as the children of God to bind the forces of darkness and to loose the work of God. God has given us that authority over these spirit forces, these spiritual entities that as children of God, we do have authority over them. We can bind these spirit forces and we can loose the work of God.

Then he charged his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus, the Messiah. The reason being, he did not want a premature attempt to acclaim him. There was a day in which the Messiah was to be revealed.

That day came when Jesus made his triumphant entry. At this point, he is saying, now, look, don't tell anybody. This is a revelation that came to you from God, but don't tell anybody.

Now, later on, he set the stage. He said, go in the city and you'll find the donkey. Bring him to me.

And he sat on the donkey fulfilling the prophecy of Zachariah. Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, but he is lowly. He's sitting upon a donkey, but now was not the time for the revelation.

The perfect time of God had not yet come. So he's saying, look, don't tell anybody yet. No premature kind of forcing of the people or trying, the people trying to set up the kingdom prematurely.

Now, from that time on, Jesus began to show to his disciples. At this point, now he reveals himself. I'm, I am the Messiah.

Peter, you're right. Now, the Jewish people have been looking for the Messiah to come and establish the kingdom of God and overthrow the Roman yoke and bondage. And when Jesus acknowledged, yes, I am the Messiah, don't tell anybody.

He then began to tell them, now, look, I must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and be raised again the third day. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him saying, be it far from thee, Lord, or Lord, spare yourself. This shall not happen to you.

Peter, the rock. And Jesus turned and said unto Peter, get thee behind me, Satan. You are an offense unto me because you cannot tell the difference between those things that are of God and those things that are of men.

Move over, Peter. I want to sit down. A problem that I have.

The inability to always be able to tell what is of God and what is of my own heart. Notice that Peter in one moment has a divine revelation and in the next moment is expressing Satan's philosophy. The philosophy of hell.

Spare yourself. Be that far from thee. Literally spare thyself.

It shall not be to you. The philosophy of hell. Take the easy way.

Take the easy path. Escape the cross. The philosophy of hell is to encourage you to escape the cross.

But the cross was important for our salvation. Without the cross, we could not be redeemed. And the cross is also important for us, for our spiritual development.

And Satan is saying to us, escape the cross. Live the easy path. Indulge yourself.

Escape the cross. You don't want the cross. But it is important that I recognize that I was crucified with Christ.

And that old man, the old nature, was there crucified with him that I should no longer live unto the flesh, but now live unto the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. But Satan is still saying, spare yourself. You don't want to come to the cross in your own life.

Live after your flesh. Go ahead, indulge yourself. And Jesus is just pointing to the cross and saying there's no answer except the cross.

You must reckon your old nature to be dead, crucified with Christ. You can't live after the flesh anymore. Paul the apostle said, how can we who have been dead, who are dead to the flesh, how can we then be living any longer therein? So, Peter, having a divine revelation, then the inspiration of his own heart, inspired by Satan as he expresses the philosophy of hell, shows what is a common problem with us.

The ability to know the difference between when God is speaking and my own heart is speaking to me. God help me, I don't have any easy answers for you. This is a question that I'm faced with so many times.

People say, how can I tell if it's God or me? And God help me, I don't know. In my own life, I seek to measure it by the scripture. Does it keep with the word of God? If it doesn't keep with the word of God, then I know it's not of God, because God's consistent, always consistent, and whatever he says will be in perfect harmony and in keeping with what he has said.

Then said Jesus, you see, Peter had just said, spare thyself. And Jesus is saying, Peter, that's the philosophy of hell. If any man's going to come after me, he can't spare himself.

He must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. The path of discipleship is the path of self-denial. The path of discipleship is the path of the cross.

I must come to the cross in my own life. I must come to the end of my own ambitions, my own goals, my own desires, my own self way. And I must just reckon that old life of the flesh to be dead, crucified with Christ, that I might live a new life after the Spirit in Christ Jesus.

I cannot live the life that Christ would have me to live apart from the power of his Holy Spirit. And I cannot be living after the flesh and living after the Spirit at the same time. I've got to reckon that old man to be dead.

And that is a process that I have to do day after day because the old man is still trying to get on the throne. Paul said that there is a war that is going on within us. The flesh is lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit is against the flesh.

And these two are contrary and we don't always do even the things we want to do. And Paul expressing his own conflict in Romans 7 said, and that which I do, I would not. And that which I would not, I do.

Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death? And all of us having seen the divine ideal and consenting to it and saying, yes, Lord, that is the right life and that's the life I want to live and that's the life I'm going to live, have experienced that weakness of our own flesh. And those things that we promised we would do, we are not doing. And those things we said I'll never do again, we're still doing them.

Oh, wretched man that I am! Notice at the end of chapter 7 in Romans, Paul has thrown off now any self-help formulas. How can I change? No longer is that his cry. And as long as you're crying, how can I change? How can I do better? I'm looking for another formula.

Doesn't anybody have any dietary aids to help me, you know? Nothing's worked. I've tried them all. He's not looking for another formula.

He's not saying, how can I help myself? Doesn't anybody else have any more ideas, self-help program, how to be a better me? But he's calling for outside help. He's come to the end. Who shall deliver me? I can't do it myself.

I've tried, I've failed. Who shall deliver me? And therein is the answer. When we come to the end of ourselves and we begin to cry out for that outside help, Paul responds to his own question, thanks be unto God that through Jesus Christ, we have the victory.

I don't have to be a defeated Christian. I don't have to be in bondage to my flesh. And chapter 7, you find the I, I, I, I, I all the way through.

But in chapter 8, it disappears as he begins to talk about the Spirit and the glorious, victorious life that he is now living by the power of the Spirit. There is a cross. If any man's going to come after me, he's going to have to deny himself the self-governed life.

He's got to bring it to the cross and reckon the old nature and the old man to be dead, yes, crucified with Christ. And then Jesus said, follow me. And then he gives a rationale.

First of all, an explanation, then the rationale. The explanation is amplifying, for whosoever will save his life will lose it. If you're trying to find life apart from Jesus Christ, you're going to end up losing your life eternally.

But whosoever will lose his life for my sake, he'll find it. He'll find what real life is. Then the rationale, for what should it profit a man if he would gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Now, if you could have anything, here we are now, the genie's popped out of the bottle, and you have three wishes.

If you could have anything that you wanted, if there were the magic genie, and you could have anything you desired, anything you wanted, what would it be? What would it be? Now, if you were able to achieve or to attain that wish, that desire, but it cost you your soul, what would it then really profit you? What would it profit you if you gained the whole world, but you lost your own soul? So, you see, Jesus is saying, look, you've got to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me. For what profit is it if you would gain the whole world and yet lose your soul? Secondly, what will a man give in exchange for his soul? Now, as far as God is concerned, your soul is worth more than the whole world. As far as God is concerned, if you were offered the whole world in trade for your soul, and you took the whole world in exchange for your soul, you'd be making a bad deal, a stupid deal.

Your soul is eternal. The world is going to pass away. The world and the lust thereof, he said, is going to pass away.

Your soul is eternal. You're trading your eternal soul for something that's just going to pass away. And as far as the Lord is concerned, you've made a bad deal.

Then the question, what will a man give in exchange for his soul? What would you take for your soul? Now, every once in a while, these plots are developed by the movies of Satan coming and offering a guy, you know, sell out, you know, and the guy names his price, you know. What would you exchange your soul for? What will the man give? You know, I am always shocked at what men often give for their souls. I'm shocked at how cheap man often values himself or his eternal life.

I see people exchanging their soul for such foolish things such as pride or pleasure for a moment or fame or glory. They sell out so cheap, and it always amazes me that people value their soul so lightly when God places such a tremendous value upon it. For Jesus said, the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father.

Jesus is going to come again in the glory of his Father with his angels. Now, he says, this time I'm going to be crucified. I'm going to be turned over into the elders.

They're going to crucify me. They're going to kill me. Third day I'm going to rise, but I'm going to come in the glory of my Father with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to their works.

Verily I say unto you, there are some who are standing here which will not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. What does he mean by that? Well, it's unfortunate that there is a chapter break there, because what he meant by that is explained as we go right into chapter 17. But with the chapter break there, they should have made the chapter break at the end of verse 27.

So we'll start our lesson next Sunday night with verse 28, and it really belongs to chapter 17 of the book of Matthew, and we'll go on next Sunday night on through to chapter 20. Shall we stand? May the Spirit of God take the word of God tonight and continue to minister it to your heart and to your life as you deal with those issues of your own soul and of your own relationship with God and of your own life, the flesh life versus the spiritual life. And I pray that God might work in your heart.

And if you have not yet been brought by the Spirit of God to the cross, our place of victory in Jesus Christ, I pray that the Spirit will lead you to the cross this week. That you might come to the end of self and the self-governed life and put it there on the cross. Recognize that the old man was crucified, that the body of sin might not rule over you anymore, but that you might be ruled now by the Spirit of God.

That new life, that life of victory in Christ. And some of you who have been wandering in the wilderness in your Christian experience, has been a wilderness barren experience that you might pass over Jordan and come into the promised land, the life of the Spirit and begin to know the victory and the power of the Spirit in your life, in those areas where your flesh has kept you in defeat before. And so may this be a week of spiritual development and growth as you continue your walk with Jesus Christ.

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