# "Jesus, Our Champion"

Matthew 16:13-28

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell
Part of the RBC family of Ministries

## Individual Study Introduction

After listening to the audio segment, use the following questions as your time allows. You may want to record your answers or jot down thoughts and notes in a personal journal. You may also want to use your journal as a record of your prayer time with God. Write out your prayer or simply record your requests and the areas of your life you are releasing to God. This written record will help you watch God's movement in your life. You'll see more clearly the ways God is giving you "strength for the journey"!

## Getting Started:

Joe Stowell recalls taking his young son to the local YMCA to learn to swim. Joe shares the intense emotion that can accompany such occasions.

- What experience is etched in your memory of either teaching a child to swim, walk, ride a bike, etc.—or of learning to do so as a child yourself?
- Do you have a hero from the world of sports? What's the difference between the connection we can have with that kind of champion and the connection we can have with Jesus, our Champion?

## Strength through Scripture:

Read Matthew 16:13–28.

1) What does Joe mean when he asserts, using J. R. R. Tolkien's imagery, that we are "hobbits"? How do you feel about being a hobbit?

2) How does grasping the reality that Jesus our Champion has gone before us and won the victory on our behalf enable us now to move from declaration through disappointment to confident, courageous cross-bearing?

3) What does it mean to you that Jesus is the author (archegos, the "ultimate man") and finisher of your faith (Hebrews 12:2)?



*Notes:*

*"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"*
Matthew 16:15

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4) Joe contends that we're not tough enough to be a champion; the issue, therefore, isn't if we will be a champion, but rather if we recognize that we need a champion. How does that claim fit with the individualistic, success-oriented culture in which we live?

5) How will you respond to the closing challenge of Joe's message: "When you get into that arena, will you please lift your eyes to the emperor's box and see Jesus lift his nail-scarred, victorious hand to you, saying, 'Take up your cross. The kingdom is coming' "?

***Digging Deeper:***

If you have enough time, answer one or more of these optional questions. But be sure to save time for the final two sections.

1) What added insight does the story of David and Goliath, the "champion" of the Philistines (1 Samuel 17), provide in regard to Jesus being our Champion?

2) Just before Joe's message, we heard several encouraging Scripture readings. What Bible verse or passage has gotten you through hard times?

3) "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.' " What does it mean to take up your cross? In what sphere do you sense Jesus calling you to "deny yourself" and "lose your life" as part of following him: In relation to your spouse? Your children? The people you work with? The broader secular world around you?

**Strength through Reflection:**

1) Joe points out that we have all experienced spiritual defeat—trudging through life feeling like there is no victory, no way to win. To what extent is that your current condition?

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2) Read the three action points pertaining to this passage from Matthew 16 below. What specific step does this call for in your spiritual journey?

**Strength through Prayer:**

Spend some time in prayer. Commit yourself to Jesus our Champion, the one who went before us and gave his life on our behalf. Thank him for winning the victory over Satan's schemes and over our sins and discouragement. Pledge your allegiance to take up your cross and follow him.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

"Jesus, you are the Messiah. I look to your nail-scarred, yet victorious, hand. I choose to follow you as you beckon me to confident cross-bearing, for I know that your kingdom is coming."

***Closing Call to Action:***

1) We don't bail on Jesus, even when life gets really tough, because we know he has already defeated Satan. This is the weight of the cross, which he bore for me, on my shoulder. I'm on the winning side, and I don't want to go over to the losing side ever again.

2) So that discouragement doesn't consume us, we keep the eyes of our heart fixed firmly on Jesus and that raised OK sign—his nail-scarred hand conveying, "I made it through; you will too."

3) As we refuse to bail, commit ourselves to the winning side, and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus our Champion who has gone before us, we realize this is not the only world that exists. A better, richer, more wonderful world is coming; and we can walk into that world with courage and confidence.

*Notes:*

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