

Altitude — Sermon Notes

Pastor Corey Sanders · September 13, 2026 · Matthew 16:24-26 · 41 minutes

On the launch Sunday of the ALTITUDE series, Pastor Corey Sanders walked the room through the most specific invitation Jesus ever made. Looking at people who had no direction, Jesus immediately called them into a higher way of living — and He did not leave the route vague. He gave three verbs: deny yourself, take up your cross, follow me. These notes follow those verbs in order, with the key quotes from the message and questions to carry into your week.

The big idea. Jesus never offers a vague invitation. In Matthew 16:24 He gives three verbs — deny yourself, take up your cross, follow me — because God is specific about how disciples are made. A new altitude always begins with a surrendered first step.

Memory verse — Matthew 16:24. "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Truth 1 — Deny yourself: the old way of thinking will hinder you in your new season

- Jesus says "my disciple", not "a disciple". A disciple picks the route; His disciple takes His.
- Old shoes are comfortable and wrong at the same time — old captivity, old trauma and old baggage cannot make the climb.
- Denying yourself is not self-hatred; it is finally refusing to be your own boss.

"That old way of idolizing things will hinder you in your new season."

Truth 2 — Take up your cross: the way you live will hinder you in your new season

- Before the crucifixion, Romans made criminals carry their own cross — Jesus chose that image on purpose.
- The cross is where the old you ends, so the new you can begin.
- It is daily, not dramatic: pick it up again today, and again tomorrow.

"Pick up your cross, because the way you live will hinder you in your new season."

Truth 3 — Follow me: reorient your whole life around Jesus

- Not around your husband, your wife, your kids, your wealth, your career — around Me.
- "I am the way, the truth, and the life. If you want to get to God, you go through Me."
- He does not just ask for followers; He modeled the life first, then walks it with us.

"He just did not tell them. He modeled to them how He wanted it done."

The scripture trail

- **Matthew 16:24-26.** The key text: deny yourself, take up your cross, follow me — and the paradox that losing your life is how you find it.
- **Proverbs 3:5-6.** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding — shown on screen during Walk by Faith.
- **2 Corinthians 5:7.** For we walk by faith, not by sight — the verse the third montage takes its name from.
- **Galatians 5:22.** The fruit of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness — read over the Becoming montage.

Discuss it together

Use these five questions in a small group, over dinner, or in personal journaling. They move from honesty to action in the same order as the sermon.

1. What "old shoes" do you keep retreating into — and what would it cost to finally take them off?
2. Which of the three verbs (deny, take up, follow) is hardest for you right now, and why?
3. Pastor Corey said even slow motion is still motion. Where is God asking for progress, not speed?
4. What does it practically look like to reorient one area of your life around Jesus this week?
5. "You cannot do anything good enough to make Him love you more." How does that truth change the way you climb?

Sermon notes prepared by Vessel Media from the September 13, 2026 message at Motion Church, Madison, Alabama. Scripture quotations are from the New International Version. The five-day devotional that pairs with these notes is available on the sermon page.