

Rooted Simply Word Study: Take Up

Matthew 16:24

“If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, **take up** his cross, and follow Me.”

The phrase “**take up**” is not passive. It’s active, deliberate, and weight-bearing.

The Greek Word: αἶρω (airō)

Meaning

The verb αἶρω means:

To **lift, raise, or pick up**

To **carry or bear**

To **take upon oneself**

To **remove or take away**

In this context, it specifically means to **pick up and carry something that is heavy and costly**.

This is not a gentle action. It’s purposeful and weighty.

How the Word Functions in the Verse

“**Take up his cross**” means:

To **willingly shoulder** the cost of discipleship

To **embrace** the suffering, sacrifice, and shame associated with following Jesus

To **accept** the consequences of allegiance to Christ

To **carry** the instrument of your own death – symbolically dying to the old life

This is not about enduring random hardships. It’s about **choosing** the path of Christ even when it is costly.

The Grammar Matters

The verb is also in the **orist imperative**, just like “deny.”

This implies:

A **decisive act**

A clear moment of commitment

A deliberate choice to shoulder the cross

It's not accidental. It's not forced. It's **chosen**.

Cultural and Historical Background

In the first century, “take up your cross” was not a metaphor.

Everyone knew what it meant:

A condemned person carried the **horizontal beam** of their cross to the execution site.

It was a **public display** of submission to Rome's authority.

It symbolized **death, shame, and total surrender**.

Jesus repurposes this image:

Instead of submitting to Rome, the disciple submits to **Him**.

To “**take up your cross**” meant:

“I am walking the path of death to self.”

“I am embracing the cost of following Christ.”

“I am publicly identifying with Jesus, no matter the consequences.”

Other Biblical Uses of αἴρω

The word appears frequently in the New Testament:

John 1:29 — “takes away the sin of the world”

John 5:8 — “take up your mat and walk”

Matthew 14:12 — disciples “took away” John’s body

Matthew 21:21 — “take up” and cast into the sea

In each case, αἴρω involves **lifting, carrying, or removing** something significant.

Spiritual Implications

To “take up your cross” means:

Accepting the cost of obedience

Carrying the responsibilities of discipleship

Embracing the death of the old self

Walking the path Jesus walked

Living with open allegiance to Christ

It’s not about suffering for suffering’s sake. It’s about **choosing Christ over comfort**.

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A Practical Summary

Here's a simple way to capture the meaning:

Aspect	What "Take Up" Means
Action	Lift and carry intentionally
Cost	Embrace sacrifice and suffering
Identity	Publicly align with Christ
Commitment	Choose the path of obedience
Symbolism	Carry the instrument of your own death to self

A Thought to Carry Forward

"Take up your cross" is not about enduring life's inconveniences. It's about **embracing the cost of following Jesus with open eyes and a willing heart.**