

FOLLOWED

MARK 8:31-9:1

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB materials.)

1. Can you think of someone who was in a leadership position and when you met them, they were not at all what you thought they would be? (Dr. T. W. Hunt.)
2. What is there about a leader that makes you willing to surrender some of your own freedoms to follow them?
3. What role would you prefer to serve—leader or follower?
4. What fears arise when someone asks you to follow them? (What is it going to cost me?)

In our passage today, Jesus' disciples see that in many ways, His mission as the Messiah was not what they expected—and neither was their role as His followers!

CONTEXT!

After Jesus' trip to Tyre, and the Decapolis, that we studied last week, Chapter 8 shows Him feeding 4,000, then He has another confrontation with the Pharisees, and He heals a blind man. Then in verse 27 Jesus takes His disciples to Caesarea Philippi, a city about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, at the base of Mt. Hermon.

On the way there, the Bible says Jesus asks His disciples Who they say that He is, and Peter confesses "You are the Christ." But is this "Christ" going to be what they expected? This brings us to our focal passage today. Here Jesus begins to prepare His disciples for the idea that His mission as the Messiah was **not** going to be what they thought it was!

GET BEHIND! Read Mark 8:31-33

1. Why is Jesus' statement outlandish? (It's fantastic! Jesus proclaimed beforehand that He would die and come back alive—and He DID!)

This is the single most compelling fact about any religious leader who ever lived: that Jesus rose from the dead, and appeared to 500 witnesses, many of whom went to their deaths, testifying that they had seen Jesus alive! NO OTHER RELIGIOUS LEADER has this claim.

Note that Jesus uses the phrase "Son of Man" here. Some think He uses this term to "disguise" that He was the Messiah, but Dan. 7:13 uses this term in reference to the Messiah.

2. Why would Peter take Jesus aside and "rebuke" Him? (First, Peter didn't understand the nature of the Messiah's mission. Secondly, Peter might be thinking, "Look, we gave up everything to follow You, and now You are going to die!")
3. What obstacles make it difficult to distinguish God's concerns from our concerns? (Perspective—God sees the whole picture.)
4. Why was it important for Jesus to set Peter straight when it came to understanding the necessity of the crucifixion and the resurrection? (Notice Jesus turned to address all the disciples. Peter may have just been the spoke person. Without the cross and resurrection there is no salvation. If there is no cross, there is no crown!)

Satan tried to tempt Jesus to bypass the cross, and Peter was following that pattern. Faithfully following Jesus requires us to view life from His perspective.

God's plan was for the Messiah to die for our sins. To say otherwise is worldly thinking. Isaiah 53— "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The whole gospel depends on this!

5. How is your mind structured to think, like the world or like God? (One of our biggest challenges is to "restructure" our minds, to think God's way instead of the world's way.)

This is hard to do when we're bombarded by the media 24/7, and they are "programming" us how to think like the world. Most of us need to spend a lot less time with worldly media of all kinds, and more time in God's Word "transforming us" and "renewing our minds"—Romans 12.

Follow Me! Read Mark 8:34-38

1. WHO is this call to? ("The crowd and His disciples.")

Jesus purposefully summoned, not just His disciples, but also "the crowd." This emphasizes the fact that this call is for anyone; whoever will respond to it. It is all through this passage: v 34, 34b, 35, 36/37, 38. We saw this last week with the Syrophenician woman and the man from Decapolis. Jesus' call is to anyone!

Whoever you are, the call is for YOU!

Whoever you know, the call is for THEM!

Anyone in the world, the call is for them too!

No one is excluded from Jesus' call!

2. What does He call "anyone" who will, to do? ("Deny himself." "Take up his cross." "Follow Me!")

3. How can a person deny self? (Peter's arrogant presumption of bending Jesus to his own will is the exact opposite of what denying oneself looks like. My desires must be what Jesus desires!)

4. What would taking up a cross look like in our culture? (An electric chair hung around my neck.)

The cross today is a beautiful piece of jewelry. In Jesus' day it was a death sentence! The caterpillar literally dies and is re-birthed as a butterfly. We must die to self!

KEY: This is important because some think that it is one thing to get saved, and another to be a "disciple" of Jesus, that not every Christian is a disciple. Some think a disciple is a super Christian. When Jesus gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28, He said, "Make DISCIPLES, baptizing them..."

5. Who does Jesus say we baptize? (Disciples!)

Every Christian, everyone who gets baptized, is a "disciple." A "disciple" is not another "level" of Christian; a disciple is what a Christian IS.

If you are not a disciple, you are not a Christian!

If you are a Christian in a backslidden condition, you will feel conviction in your heart. If there is no conviction about your ungodly lifestyle, you are not a Christian.

These verses are not only for "lost people," but are the continued call of Christ to us as we follow Him.

After we come to Christ, we still need to "deny self, take up our cross (daily as Luke says) and follow Him.

This is something we should pray about every day.

6. What happens when we try to "save" our own life? (We lose it. God's economy works just the opposite of the way ours does.)

7. What will a man give in exchange for his soul? (One atheist stated he would become a Christian if he could continue his lifestyle. He may actually "get it" more than some Christians.)

That man was basically trading his soul for the worldly pleasures he didn't want to give up. He'll have all eternity to think about it!

Let's hear from the other side: A century ago, a band of brave souls became known as one-way missionaries. They purchased single tickets to the mission field without the return half. And instead of suitcases, they packed their few earthly belongings into coffins. As they sailed out of port, they waved goodbye to everyone they loved and everything they knew. They knew they'd never return home.

A. W. Milne was one of those missionaries. He set sail for the New Hebrides in the South Pacific, knowing full well that the headhunters who lived there had martyred every missionary before him. Milne did not fear for his life, because he had already died to himself. His coffin was packed. For thirty-five years, he lived among that tribe and loved them. When he died, tribe members buried him in the middle of their village and inscribed this epitaph on his tombstone:

**When he came there was no light.
When he left there was no darkness.**

8. How does losing self make it possible to find true life? (Until we fully surrender to God, we will never experience the life we were designed to live!)

SEE HIS POWER! Read Mark 9:1

1. What promise did Jesus give in this passage? (Some standing there would not die until they saw the “kingdom of God come in power.”)
2. What does this mean? (First let’s understand what it doesn’t mean. It doesn’t mean some of them would be alive at Jesus’ second coming. I believe the most likely event is in Acts 2, after Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit came in power on the day of Pentecost.)
3. Why might the promise of seeing God’s power excite some and frighten others? (Christians should be excited. Unbelievers should be in fear because judgment is near.)

As believers we have the hope (confident assurance) Jesus gives us strength to follow Him daily.

CHALLENGE!

1. How is God revealing His power through the Holy Spirit’s work in your life?
2. What collective adjustments might be made to facilitate an even greater impact on our church and community?
3. What does “carrying the cross” look like in your life on a day-to-day basis?
4. In what ways have you given up some of your plans to be able to pursue Christ’s mission in the world?

Prayer.