



To Follow Christ

Text: Mark 8:34-38

Context: We're at the climax of Mark's Gospel, we're still standing on the peak. We've learned along with the Disciples that Jesus is not going to fit our preconceived plans. Peter has rebuked Jesus (8:32); Jesus has strongly rebuked Peter, "*Get behind Me Satan!*" (v33). Now Jesus turns his attention from the Twelve to you and me. He's about to explain that following "the Christ" has a cost.

Read Mark 8:34-38

Why has Jesus summoned the crowd to hear what he has to say? **Misunderstanding Jesus leads to misunderstanding discipleship.** Jesus speaks plainly to the crowd, "*If anyone wishes to come after Me, He must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me*" (Mark 8:34). In our questions for this text we'll look at four (4) "for" statements of Jesus that define what it means to follow Christ.¹

1) Jesus saves your life, but it will cost your life. (1st "For..." in Mark 8:35)

How do you take words of Jesus in verse 35: literal or figurative? Why does it matter? How does a lost life become a saved life in the economy of the Gospel?

2) Jesus teaches the human soul has *infinite* value. (2nd and 3rd "For..." Mark 8:36-37)

What is the paradox in this verse? How does Jesus re-define the value of the soul in these two "for" statements? How do these two statements help you understand the cost of following Jesus?

3) Jesus will come in GLORY. (4th "For..." Mark 8:38)

Why would someone be *ashamed* of Jesus and His words? How does this relate to Peter's rebuke of Jesus (8:32)? Why do you think Jesus turns the attention of the crowd to His future Glory?

BIG IDEA: Jesus defines following Christ as self-denial and carrying a cross. (Mark 8:34-38)

Jesus has defined the Gospel and re-defined everything (8:31). The biblical picture of following Jesus doesn't fit well in the confines of man-made religion, self-help philosophies, or the pursuit for happiness. Following this Jesus will cost you. His life redefines the direction and purpose of our lives.

How do you think people misunderstand Jesus and what it means to follow Him today?

What about Jesus or which of His Words tempt you to be ashamed?

What does it look like to deny yourself (personally)? How are you carrying your cross for Jesus?

Next Week's Passage: Mark 9:1-13 (Mount of Transfiguration)

¹ The four "for..." statements are clearly seen in more literal translations like the *New American Standard Bible*, which is the preferred English translation of our Teaching Pastors.