

Mark 8:22-38 ~ Scripture Verses

The Healing of a Blind Man at Bethsaida

²² They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

²⁴ He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

²⁵ Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village." [a]

Peter's Confession of Christ

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

²⁸ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Christ. [b]"

³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Predicts His Death

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life [c] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷ Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Footnotes:

a. Mark 8:26 – Some manuscripts: Don't go and tell anyone in the village

b. Mark 8:29 – Or Messiah. "The Christ" (Greek) and "the Messiah" (Hebrew) both mean "the Anointed One."

c. Mark 8:35 – The Greek word means either life or soul; also in verse 36.

[New International Version, NIV, 1984]

Mark 8:22-38 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What did the people do about the blind man's condition? Why do you think they did this? (8:22)
2. What did Jesus do? Why did he treat the blind man differently from others he had healed? Is there some connection between the gradual (two-step) healing and the disciples' slowness to understand Jesus? (8:21, 24-25)
3. Has there been a time when God only answered a part of your prayer? Why do you think he might not answer a prayer like we wanted? How do you respond?
4. Have you ever been changed by a touch from Jesus, but at some point (now, perhaps) needed a "second touch?" Do you know someone now who needs a "second touch?" How can *you* help this person? Encouragement? Accountability?
5. Who are you? (Or who am I?) Who would people say you are?
6. Why do you think that Jesus asked two questions in the order he did? (8:27, 29) Are we influenced by what others think?
7. What is your answer to Jesus' second question? (8:29) Why is it so important? Why is it important not to hide your faith in Christ?
8. Who rebuked whom? (8:32-33) Why did Peter rebuke Jesus two minutes after proclaiming "You are the Christ" and Jesus responding "And I tell you that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18)
9. In what way did Peter have in mind "the things of men?" What was wrong with his thinking? (8:33)
10. What did Jesus want his disciples to do? (8:34)
11. What does it mean to deny yourself? To take up your cross? To follow Christ?
12. In what way can a person both save his life and lose it at the same time? (8:35)
13. How did Jesus refer to the people to whom he was speaking? What does it mean to be ashamed of Christ? (8:38)
14. How can we make sure we have in mind the things of God?

Mark 8:22-38 ~ Leader's Guide

1. What did the people do about the blind man's condition? Why do you think they did this? (8:22)

Just as the people brought a deaf and mute man to Christ for healing (7:32), the people brought a blind man to Christ, thus showing their compassion and faith.

2. What did Jesus do? Why did he treat the blind man differently from others he had healed? Is there some connection between the gradual (two-step) healing and the disciples' slowness to understand Jesus? (8:21, 24-25)

Jesus took him out of the village for two reasons: (1) for the sake of prayer, that he might collect his mind, get closer to God, and pray more intently and earnestly; (2) that he might shun vain-glory and human praise (and teach us to shun it also). Jesus spitting seems to be an act that had a mystical meaning; it was the instrument by which God operated.

This second laying on of hands is unique in Jesus' healing ministry. Usually, healing is immediate. Matthew Henry suggests that Christ showed how by his grace he heals people, who by nature are spiritually blind. At first, their knowledge is confused; but, like the light of the morning, it shines more and more to the perfect day, and then they see all things clearly.

[Side note: this miracle is recorded only in Mark, which is unusual.]

3. Has there been a time when God only answered part of your prayer? Why do you think he might not answer a prayer like we hope? How do you respond?

4. Have you ever been changed by a touch from Jesus, but at some point (now, perhaps) needed a "second touch?" Do you know someone now who needs a "second touch?" How can *you* help this person? Encouragement? Accountability?

5. Who are you? (Or who am I?) Who would people say you are?

In the hospital ER, a self important guy barges to the front of the line and demands to be seen right away. "Do you know who I am?" he shouted. The receptionist pressed the button on the PA system and announced, "I have a gentleman here who doesn't know who he is. Can someone please assist him in finding out. Thank you."

Who am I? The world out there has plenty of ideas. Some would say I am who I was: I am defined by my parents and ancestors. Others would say I am what I achieve. Many believe I am how I look. In our community I am where I live. For others I am what I drive. For some I am what I eat. For many I am what I do. For some I am who I love. For some I am what I know. For others I am who I know.

For lots of people I am what I possess. Many are trapped not knowing who they really are.

Who am I? You will never know who you are until you decide on Jesus. Because Jesus says, *I am who I follow*. Jesus is our eternal reference point – our magnetic north pole – our compass – the way, the truth and the life. When we find him, we find ourselves.

6. Why do you think that Jesus asked two questions in the order he did? (8:27, 29) Are we influenced by what others think?

Some thought Jesus was John the Baptist. Some said he was one of the prophets, like Jeremiah. That is how most Muslims view Jesus today. That is probably the key difference between Islam and Christianity: who we believe Jesus is.

All that we can say is that there appears to have been no consistent opinion among the people as to who Jesus was, even though they associate him with God and as his messenger by their identification of him as being one of the dead prophets. This indicates that they held him in very high regard, for these were the great names of Israel. But never once is it recorded that the populace had even the slightest inkling that this is the Messiah.

Are we influenced by what others think? Of course we are. It would be foolish to say we aren't influenced by our parents, teachers, pastors, bosses, and friends. And it would be foolish not to learn from others who are older, wiser, or more experienced than we are. For every Bible study or sermon I put together, I'll look at many books, web sites, and other sources. But then, after reading and studying the scripture verses myself, I have to decide which, if any, of these other sources makes sense or clarifies the meaning of the verses. And eventually, it comes down to me making up my own mind.

7. What is your answer to the second question? (8:29) Why is it so important? Why is it important not to hide your faith in Christ?

Isn't the process above what Jesus led his disciples through? Who do others say I am? Do you believe them? Does what they say make sense? What about you? Who do you say I am? This is the ultimate question, as one commentator said, the highpoint, the watershed of the gospel of Mark. Everything in the first eight chapters has led up to and provided the answer to this question. Your answer, what you believe and say about Jesus Christ will determine your destiny. Your answer is truly a matter of life or death. How you answer that question determines where you will spend eternity. There is no more important question in the Bible.

8. Who rebuked whom? (8:32-33) Why did Peter rebuke Jesus two minutes after proclaiming "You are the Christ" and Jesus responding "And I tell you that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18)

Having confessed their faith in him, Jesus began to explain why he had come. He was going to Jerusalem where he would die on a cross. This announcement stunned the disciples. If he is indeed the Christ of God, as they had confessed, why would he be rejected by the religious leaders? Why would they crucify him?

Didn't the Hebrew Scriptures promise that Messiah would defeat all their enemies and establish a glorious kingdom for Israel? There was something wrong somewhere and the disciples were confused. True to character, it was Peter who voiced their concern. One minute Peter was led by God to confess his faith in Jesus Christ, and the next minute he was thinking like an unbeliever. Indeed expressing the thoughts of Satan. This is a warning to us that when we argue with God's Word, we open the door for Satan's doubts and deceptions. Peter began rebuking his Master, and Mark uses the same word that describes how Jesus rebuked the demons.

9. In what way did Peter have in mind "the things of men?" What was wrong with his thinking? (8:33)

Peter's protest was born out of his love for his Lord but also his ignorance of God's word. One minute Peter was a "rock," and the next minute he was a stumbling block. Peter did not yet understand the relationship between suffering and glory. When Jesus rebuked Peter, he looked at his disciples for they too needed to hear. When we are tempted to try and mold Jesus into the kind of "Jim will fix it" kind of Messiah our materialistic generation is seeking, we must hear this same rebuke. "The Son of Man must suffer" said Jesus. He uniquely came to die in our place, to atone for our wrong doing.

10. What did Jesus want his disciples to do? (8:34)

Jesus calls us to follow him, to take up our cross and follow him.

- We must walk with Christ. "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34)
- We must sacrifice for Christ. "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." (Mark 8:35)
- We must confess our Christ. "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory" (Mark 8:38)

11. What does it mean to deny yourself? To take up your cross? To follow Christ?

- To deny yourself is to cease to make self the object of one's life and actions.
- To take up your cross indicates a willingness to suffer and die for the Lord's sake.
- To follow me might indicate suffering the same type of death by crucifixion

as Jesus.

The world doesn't understand the cost of being a Christ-follower. Because it doesn't understand who Christ is it cannot understand what Christ has done for us. Mark 8:34 indicates that, though Jesus and His disciples had met in private, the crowds were not far away. Jesus summons the people and teaches them what He has taught His own disciples: there is a price to pay for true discipleship.

This is an excerpt from a true news story. January 1982, Washington, D.C. It was bitter cold and snowy and a blizzard was blasting the northeastern part of the United States. Air Florida Flight 90 had been sitting for an hour on the tarmac and was finally given permission to take off. But no one had examined the wings for icing. As it took off, the plane couldn't climb enough and clipped the top of the bridge over the Potomac River, causing it to crash in the cold, freezing water of the river.

Seventy-eight people died instantly. Six people managed to crawl out onto the wing and hang on there. Eventually a small helicopter flew in, hovered above the wing, and dropped a line down with a life preserver at the end of it. Among the six people on the wing, there was an older man, portly, pot bellied, with a giant mustache. As the life line came down from the chopper and the big man grabbed the life ring but rather than putting it around himself, he put it around another person on the wing. The helicopter flew the rescued person to shore. The second time. The third time. The fourth time. The fifth time. And each time, the big portly balding man with the large mustache, took the life ring and gave it to another. The helicopter came back the sixth time and the man was gone. He had slipped off the wing and drowned. The chopper pilot later said, "I have never seen anyone with that kind of commitment in a crisis situation."

Later, when they found his body and identified him, a friend said, "Well, that is the kind of man that he was. He was always giving of himself to others. That's how he lived." This man understood. He understood that God is love and whoever lives in love, lives in God, whoever walks in love, walks in God. He understood that no greater love has a person than the willingness to give their life for a friend...or a stranger. This man understood what it means to deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow Jesus. This man understood what it means to lose your life in order to find it.

12. In what way can a person both save his life and lose it at the same time? (8:35)

Physical life may be saved by denying Jesus, but eternal life will be lost.

Jesus asks two questions to crystalize the issue.

- Question 1: is about profit or loss: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36) This question asks us what we value most? Most people gain little of the world, a few gain some of the world, but no one has ever gained the whole world. Even if a man should somehow gain the whole world, its riches, honors, and pleasures, what would all these profit him,

seeing they can only be enjoyed during his physical life?

The world is full of temptations towards profitable dishonesty and many people given in to these temptations thinking, “I’ll enjoy life. People will think well of me.” But the real question, the question that everyone in the end will have to face is not, “what did people think of me?” but “what does God think of me?”

• Question 2: is about fair exchange: “Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:37)

Answer: Absolutely nothing. When one’s soul has been lost at death it cannot be relived or recovered. Time travels in one direction. We never get a second go at it.

So, profit or loss? Fair exchange? Two questions we must each answer for ourselves. The world, the devil, and even a man’s own heart are opposed to his salvation; therefore it is difficult; we cannot accomplish it alone. The soul was made for God, and cannot be united to him, nor be happy, until it is saved from sin. He who is saved from his sin and united to God, possesses the utmost delight that the human soul can enjoy, both in this life and the coming world. Salvation—a gift from God through the sacrifice of Jesus—is vital, the only way.

If we live for ourselves, we will lose ourselves, but if we lose ourselves for his sake and the Gospel’s, we will find ourselves. From the human point of view, we are losing ourselves, but from the divine perspective, we are finding ourselves. When we live for Christ, we become more like him, and this brings out our own unique individuality. We become the person God intended for us. But note the motivation for true discipleship: “for me and for the Gospel” (Mark 8:35).

13. How did Jesus refer to the people to whom he was speaking? What does it mean to be ashamed of Christ? (8:38)

“This adulterous and sinful generation” both in a moral and spiritual sense referred especially to the Scribes and Pharisees who adulterated the word of God by their false glosses and added doctrines. But it equally applies to us today. A person who is more concerned about fitting into the values of this world and pleasing his own desires than about following and pleasing Christ will have no part in God’s kingdom.

14. How can we make sure we have in mind the things of God?

Mark 8:22-38 ~ Additional Discussion Questions

1. Mark mentions several people who followed Jesus with faith. Who were they?

Mark 1:16 _____

Mark 1:19-20 _____

Mark 2:14 _____

Mark 10:52 _____

2. What are three things you must do in order to follow Jesus? (Mark 8:34)

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

3. To follow Christ with faith means at least three things.

A. You have to have heard of Jesus and recognize him.

John 1:35-38 _____

B. You have to know something about him.

Mark 8:29 _____

John 3:2 _____

C. You have to have met him for yourself.

John 1:39-42 _____

Mark 10:46-52 _____

4. What do you have to do in your life to follow Jesus with faith? What attitude or practice in your life do you need to change to be a genuine Christ follower?