



LESSON 14

Jesus defines discipleship

MARK 8:27-38



Follow the Messiah.



"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

Supporting Truths

1. Jesus is the Messiah.
2. The Messiah is victorious through death.
3. Those who follow the Messiah must follow Him to victory through death.
4. Those who are ashamed of the Messiah will be excluded from the Messiah's glorious kingdom.
5. Following the Messiah is worth it.

Objectives

1. Answer, "Who do you say that I am?"
2. Explain what "Christ/Messiah" means.
3. Recite the command in Mark 8:34.
4. Explain why everyone will either experience humiliation in this life or in the life to come.
5. Weigh the costs and benefits of following Jesus.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Summary

By this time, the disciples were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, but they did not understand the Messiah's mission. Jesus confirmed that He was in fact the Messiah, but He explained that the Messiah would first be rejected and killed and three days later rise from the dead. Because this is who the Messiah is, this is also who His followers are. And those that follow Him through rejection and death will also live with Him forever.

Spotlight on the Gospel

The good news of the gospel comes only through death. It comes through the death of Jesus the Christ, whose perfect sacrifice alone pays the penalty for sin. But it also comes through the deaths of all His followers, since no one can follow Jesus and himself at the same time. To enjoy the blessings of being a follower, you must actually follow, and to follow, you must surrender your life to the control of Jesus.



Jesus walks on water
Matthew 14:23–33

**Jesus defines
discipleship**
Mark 8:27–38

**Jesus is gloriously
transfigured**
Luke 9:27–36

JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE

Lesson Commentary

Follow the Messiah.

Mark wrote to declare the gospel of “Jesus **Christ**,” to show that Jesus is in fact the **Messiah**. (Mark 1:1). So why does Mark not use “Christ” again until the end of chapter eight? It’s possible that Mark avoided this title for Jesus in order to highlight an important turning point in Jesus’ life. Beginning in Mark 8:31, Jesus began preparing His disciples for His mission as the Messiah: to suffer, die, and rise again. This event is also the turning point in the life of every person, as each individual must consider the cost of following Jesus. While though the cost of following Jesus is great, the reward is far greater.

Jesus is the Messiah (8:27–29)

The disciples were still in need of instruction. Even after Jesus fed the 4,000, they still lacked understanding (8:21). They saw the big picture and believed, but they did not yet understand all the details of God’s plan. So Jesus took them to the very north end of Israel near Caesarea Philippi (8:27a). This was Gentile area, away from Jewish crowds. It was also a quiet place, full of green trees and sparkling streams. Here the disciples would learn a startling lesson.

The disciples knew that the people believed Jesus was one of the prophets returned from the dead (8:28; Luke 9:19). Jesus did, in fact, resemble several prophets. Like John the Baptist, Jesus proclaimed repentance and the kingdom of God (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 14:2). Like Elijah and his successor, Elisha, Jesus

miraculously fed people (John 6; 1 Kgs 17:9–16; 2 Kgs 4:42–44). Jesus and Elijah both saved a Gentile woman’s child near Sidon (Mark 7:24–30; 1 Kgs 17:9, 23), and Jesus and Elisha

both raised an only son from the dead beside the Hill of Moreh (Luke 7:11–16; 2 Kgs 4:8–37). This type of response is still common today: many people respect Jesus as a good teacher, but most do not give Him the honor and obedience He deserves.

But the disciples did honor Him. Speaking for them all, Peter called Jesus the **Christ**, the Greek word for **Messiah**. Both words mean anointed one, someone set apart for God and empowered by God to do a special task (Exod 29:7; 1 Sam 16:13; Ps 105:15). The prophets especially looked forward to a Messiah who was both the Son of God and the son of David, both Savior and King (Ps 2; Isa 61:1; Jer 23:5; Matt 16:16).

So when the disciples confessed that this Messiah was Jesus, it showed that God had shown them the truth (Matt 16:17).

THINK ABOUT IT
Your evaluation of Jesus will determine your eternal destiny (Mark 8:29).



The Messiah is victorious through death (8:30–33)

But if the disciples knew who Jesus was, why did Jesus tell them to be silent (Mark 8:30)? Even though they knew Jesus was the Messiah, they still did not understand the Messiah’s mission. Jesus did not want them spreading the wrong message and drawing people to a false gospel.

So from this point on in the gospel of Mark, Jesus repeatedly taught His disciples about His mission as the Messiah (8:31). He would be rejected by the leaders of the nation He had come to rescue. Instead of powerfully taking control, He would suffer and be killed. This is not what the disciples expected. Peter even tried to pull Jesus quietly aside to set Him straight (8:32)! But Peter should have paid more attention to Scripture and less attention to popular expectations. The book of Daniel foretold that the Messiah would be killed, even indicating the timing of this event (Dan 9:26). Isaiah and David described the type of rejection, suffering, and death the Messiah would experience in great detail (Isa 53; Ps 22). And the sacrificial system anticipated Christ’s spotless sacrifice (Lev 1–5). Jesus was only repeating what the Scriptures had declared long ago.



THINK ABOUT IT
Jesus illustrates good teaching: use questions!

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But the disciples were so stunned that they did not pay any attention to the last part: after three days Jesus would rise again (Mark 8:31; cf. Luke 24:6–7, 46)! Yes, Christ had the most painful mission set before Him, but through death would come victory, and through death would come glorious life. With His heart fixed on this joy (Heb 12:2), Jesus firmly resisted Satan's temptation through Peter (Mark 8:33; Matt 4:1–11). He refused to give into the natural longing to avoid so much humiliation and pain. In fact, while Peter hoped to quietly rebuke Him

in private, Jesus turned and spoke for all the disciples to hear: God has chosen victory through sacrifice, and anyone who wants to skip the sacrifice is siding with Satan.



THINK ABOUT IT

When a person truly loves God, he chooses to do things God's way, not his way.

The Messiah must be followed at great cost (8:34–38)

If you want to follow Jesus, you must understand Jesus' mission, because **following** Him means **living like He did** (1 John 2:6). Since His path included rejection, suffering, and death, you must be willing to follow Him through the same (Mark 8:34; 1 Pet 2:21). Since the Messiah made Himself **humble**, you must also make yourself **low and empty** (Phil 2:5–7). You must **deny yourself: stop exalting yourself, stop trusting in yourself, and stop pleasing yourself**. Instead, you must be full of Christ, consider Him great, trust His way, and do what pleases Him.

But it gets even more extreme. A **disciple**, or **follower**, of Jesus must "**take up his cross**" (Mark 8:34). This is not talking about enduring the troubles that come to all people. It pictures **the death march of a prisoner carrying the cross beam to the place of his own crucifixion**. It involves extreme humiliation. Along the way the victim would be taunted and mocked. He would then come to the place of crucifixion, a public place by a busy highway, where he would hang for hours or even days while people looked with disdain. It identifies someone stripped of every

human dignity, yet without responding sinfully. Someone humiliated, disrespected, and denied what is rightfully his, yet patient and content. Someone whose only care is to be with Jesus, so He follows Him wherever He goes, even into extreme humiliation.

Second, taking up your cross involves extreme sacrifice. It may require death itself, just as Jesus came to die. But included in death is giving up everything that life on earth includes—your comforts, advantages, reputation, security, possessions, and pleasures. Jesus isn't just saying, "Be prepared to take up your cross." He's saying, "Take it up, and do it now!" Live as one who has already died. If you do, Christ Himself will come and live within you (Gal 2:20). No sinful passion will have power over you (Rom 6:7; 1 Pet 4:1). Instead, you will be free to follow Christ with unrestrained joy (John 15:10–11).

But is it really worth it? Of course it is! Anyone who truly knows Jesus understands this. The cost of not following Jesus is much greater than the cost of following Him. Your soul, which lasts forever, is more valuable than anything this passing world has to offer (Mark 8:36). Do not keep seeking honor and respect from people in this world for, if you do, you will not be welcomed and accepted by the King when He comes back to rule in the next world (8:38; Dan 7:13–14). So die to yourself today and find great joy.

As you share in Christ's suffering, you will know the joy of His Spirit in you now and in the future you will rejoice when His glory is revealed (1 Pet 4:12–14).

THINK ABOUT IT

If you suffer with Him, you will also be glorified with Him (Rom 8:17).



Lesson Outline

Follow the Messiah.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Follow Jesus because He is the Messiah (8:27–30).
2. Follow Jesus because He died to conquer death (8:31–33).
3. Follow Jesus, not yourself (8:34).
4. Follow Jesus and live with Him forever (8:35–38).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. **Jesus is the Messiah (8:27–29).**
 - The people said Jesus was one of the prophets (8:27–28).
 - Peter confessed, “You are the Messiah” (8:29).
2. **The Messiah is victorious through death (8:30–33).**
 - Jesus told the disciples not to tell others yet (8:30).
 - Jesus first had to teach them the Messiah’s true mission (8:31).
 - Jesus had to correct their wrong ideas about the Messiah (8:32–33).
3. **The Messiah must be followed at great cost (8:34–38).**
 - To follow Jesus, you must deny yourself (8:34a).
 - Following Jesus will cost you your life (8:34b–35).
 - Not following Jesus will cost you even more (8:36–38).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. Who did Peter say Jesus was?**
The Christ, which means the Messiah, the anointed one, the Savior and King.
- 2. What did Jesus say would happen to Him?**
He would be rejected and killed before rising from the dead.
- 3. If you want to follow Jesus, what do you have to do?**
Deny myself, take up my cross, and follow Jesus.
- 4. If you choose to honor yourself instead of Jesus, what will Jesus do to you?**
He will keep you out of His glorious kingdom.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. Who did the people say Jesus was?**
John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. Jesus was a prophet, but He was much more than a prophet.
- 2. Why did Jesus tell the disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah?**
The disciples did not properly understand the Messiah's mission.
- 3. What did Peter do when Jesus said He would suffer and die?**
Peter tried to rebuke Jesus. He wanted to do things the human way, without humility and sacrifice.
- 4. What does it mean to deny yourself?**
It means to humble yourself. To stop exalting yourself, stop trusting in yourself, and stop pleasing yourself.
- 5. What did Jesus mean by "take up your cross"?**
It means giving up both your honor and your life.
- 6. What does it mean to lose your life?**
It means being willing to die for Christ. It also means living now as if you have already died, by not living for yourself. It means giving up control to Jesus.
- 7. Is following Jesus worth it?**
Yes! True life with Jesus is worth more than having the whole world.
- 8. Can someone seek honor in this world and also live with Jesus in the next?**
No. Only those who love Jesus in this world will be loved by Him in the next.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5

A
B
C



INTRODUCE



ILLUSTRATE



APPLY

SURPRISE ENDING

"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will find it" (Mark 8:35). This is a difficult concept to introduce to young children. Prepare them for the lesson by playing a simple, familiar game. Tell the children that there will be a surprise ending. When the game ends as normal, reveal the surprise ending: the losers are actually the winners this time! The children will be surprised, but use this opportunity to introduce Jesus' surprising teaching that only those who lose their life will find it.

WHO IS HE AND HOW SHOULD I RESPOND?

Jesus' identity as God's Son requires us to respond to Him in a certain way. Act out a number of characters for the children to guess (doctor helping a patient, a policeman directing traffic, etc.) and ask the children who you are, what you do, and how people should respond to you as a result. If we misunderstand who a person is, we may not respond to them correctly. In today's lesson, we will discover who Jesus is, what He has done for us, and how we need to respond to Him.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Following Jesus means living like He did. Illustrate this by instructing the class to do everything their line leader does (hop on one foot, skip, walk slowly, etc.). As they follow their leader, they should try to do everything exactly as He does.

WHAT DOES IT PROFIT?

Use a toy barn to tell the story of the rich man who built barns for himself and then died (Luke 12:16–21). This illustrates Jesus' point that getting lots of earthly things is pointless if you lose your soul in the process. Nothing this world has to offer will last; we will lose it all the moment we die. Living for self in this world is worthless if you miss out on eternal life.

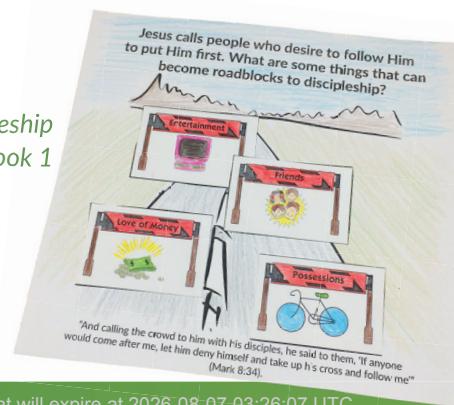
OBSTACLES TO DISCIPLESHIP

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheets, glue, scissors, and crayons.

Directions: Give each student the above materials and ask them to color and cut out the things that can become a roadblock to a person denying themselves, taking up their cross and following Christ. Glue these pieces to the craft sheet with the road. Color the background.

*Obstacles to Discipleship
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1*



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE



ILLUSTRATE



APPLY

WHAT'S WORTH MORE?

Bring in three sets of objects (basketball and videogame controller, movie and book, candy and soda, two different kinds of toys, etc.). Show two objects to the children and ask which one would be harder to give up. After the activity, ask the children which object is more valuable to them than all the others. Ask them what they would be willing to give up to receive their favorite object. Explain that their soul is far more valuable than anything the world has to offer. However, there are some people that would and do give up their souls for things in the world. But Jesus says that in order to follow Him, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him. In today's lesson, we will learn that when we give up the things of this world we gain something far more valuable—our soul.

I SPY

Play a game of "I spy" with the children. In a similar way, Jesus' life and ministry provided people with the clues they needed to discover who He really was. In today's lesson, we'll find out what they concluded as well as who Jesus really is.

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

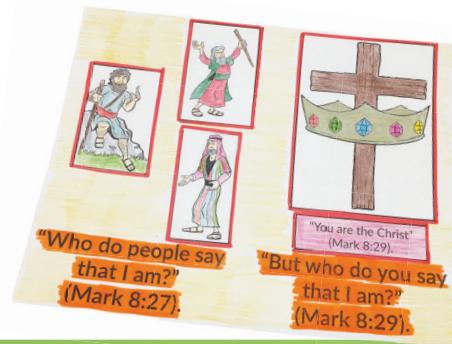
Bring in a piece of wood to illustrate what it means to "take up your cross." Explain that Christ sets the ultimate example of what it costs to live for the glory of God, and He expects no less from His disciples. Although the cross has come to symbolize many things today, in the first century it symbolized only one thing—a cruel and humiliating death. Jesus calls His disciples to be continually denying themselves and counting the cost of following Him. Discuss some of the costs of following Christ with the children (we cannot always do what we want to do, we cannot always do what other children do, we may be mocked or rejected, etc.).

PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Bring in a pearl or other valuables and tell the parable of the pearl or the parable of the buried treasure (Matt 13:44–46). Talk about why having Christ is worth more than the whole world.

Who Am I?

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1





COSTLY TESTIMONY

Introduce the children to and pray for some of the Christians around the world who are persecuted and even killed for their faith in Christ. In today's lesson, we will find out why paying such a cost is worth it.

MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT

Ask the children if they have ever been humiliated by something their parents, siblings, or friends said or did. Did they want to get away from them? Did they want to deny that they knew them or were related to them? What about Jesus? Have they ever been ashamed of something Jesus said or did in the Bible? In today's lesson, we will learn that whoever is ashamed of Jesus in this life, Jesus will be ashamed of him when He comes in His kingdom (Mark 8:38).

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

Denying oneself and following Christ demands commitment. Illustrate this concept by talking with the children about war. Those who go off to war completely commit themselves to either a particular person or cause. They deny themselves all the privileges that we enjoy here at home (a warm bed, home, food, freedom, family, etc.). And even though it may cost them their life, they are willing to do whatever is necessary to obey their orders. This type of giving oneself and full commitment is exactly what Jesus requires of those who wish to follow Him today.

DENY YOURSELF

Discipleship involves self-denial. To be a disciple of Christ, we must deny ourselves. That means we must completely disown and utterly separate ourselves from our own wants and desires. We see a picture of this in Peter's denial of Christ. Each time Peter was confronted about his relationship to Jesus, he strongly denied knowing Him (Matt 26:30–34, 57–58, 69–75). In the same way, we must deny ourselves in order to follow Jesus.

WHAT IS IN THE WAY?

Following Christ is not a decision which is to be taken lightly. Jesus demands that we continually deny ourselves and consider the implications of following Him. Humanly speaking, this presents an obstacle for some people who would like to follow Christ. Show the children some hurdles or road signs which depict an obstacle or obstruction in the road. Ask the children what things sometimes get in the way of them following Christ on a daily basis (pet sins, personal wants and desires, pride, etc.). Explain that we cannot follow Christ while these obstacles are blocking the way. Only the faith which comes as a gift of God's grace can overcome such formidable obstacles; we cannot do it by our own self effort alone. We must ask God to give us this faith.