

WEEK 19

7/12/20

Mark 8:31-9:1

Tim Keller Bible Study

The book of Mark divides into two sections of roughly 8 chapters each.

The first half begins with a summary of Jesus' "first half" message — "**The kingdom of God is near!**" (Mark 1:14-15.) This leads up to Peter's confession in 8:29 "You are the Christ." **Now the second half begins with a summary statement of Jesus' "second half" message in Mark 8:31-38.** And it will climax with the centurion's confession at the cross in 15:29 — "Surely this man was the Son of God."

Now that Jesus is revealing more explicit details about his mission, he also reveals more explicit details about what it means to follow him. In the first half, he told people to **follow** him (1:17-18, 20; 2:14-15), but now he begins to explain **what that following entails**. As Jesus takes up a cross, we must also. As the cross and glory are linked in Jesus' life, so the cross and glory will be linked in our lives. That is the surprising theme that is introduced to us in the second half of Mark, beginning here.

Exalting Jesus in Mark

Main Idea: The normal Christian life involves dying to self that we may find life in Christ.

I. You Must Know and Personally Confess Who Jesus Is (8:27-30).

A. There is an inescapable question (8:27-28).

B. There is one acceptable answer (8:29-30).

II. You Must Learn and Affirm the Ways of God and Not Man (8:31-33).

A. God's ways are often hard but clear (8:31-32).

B. God's will is often a challenge but perfect (8:32-33).

III. You Must Understand and Accept That Jesus Calls You to Die (8:34-38).

A. The self-centered life must be put to death (8:34).

B. The safe life must be put to death (8:35).

C. The self-serving life must be put to death (8:36-38).

Preaching the Word: Mark – Jesus, Servant and Savior

• HIS FRIENDS' EXPECTATIONS EXCEEDED

- The blind man's friends' expectations had been exceeded. Not only was their friend healed, but he had a dancing, exuberant faith in Christ.
- We must understand that our Lord's miracles were more than events of healing. They were parables of spiritual reality. The progressive healing of the blind man reveals to us that God sometimes heals or saves us in inscrutable stages.

- Paul says, “we are God’s workmanship”—literally, “his poems, his masterpieces” (Ephesians 2:10). But we are individual works of art, and the process is unique to each one. We must submit to his touch.
- Mark 8:27–38 With this study we now come to the middle of the book of Mark. It is the turning point of the Gospel and from it all events move toward Jerusalem, the betrayal, the whipping post, and the bloody Cross. The text centers around Peter’s famous confession of Christ, and explains what it meant for Jesus to be the Messiah and what it requires to be identified with him.
- Peter’s identifying Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One meant the disciples believed that Jesus was the One Israel had been waiting for since the time of David—a superhuman leader who would overthrow Israel’s enemies, regather God’s earthly people from the four corners of the world, and make Jerusalem and Palestine the center of the world, establishing the perfect reign of God. Peter said it, but they all believed it, and had believed it for some time. They all nodded and murmured assent
- Jesus set about instructing them, and in doing so taught them something which in their wildest imaginations they had never dreamed: namely, he was to be a suffering Messiah.
- If we are to confess Christ, we must embrace a suffering Messiah, a God no one would ever have thought of. Taking our suffering Savior into our heart and loving him may come far easier now, this side of the Cross, after his death and resurrection, but there is something more that is required. We must embrace his example as a model for living, and this is not so easy.
- **THE DISCIPLE’S LIFESTYLE (vv. 34–38)**
- Confessing Christ means we must follow him to crucifixion. “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’” (v. 34).
- The Cross is for all who follow Christ. Christ leads the procession carrying his cross, and we, his followers, tread in his steps, bearing our own crosses. We march to death.
- What are our crosses?
- We must confess Christ as the suffering Messiah and Savior. We must embrace the life he exemplified and calls us to. We must bear crosses because we are living like him. We must lose our lives for him, for losers are keepers. If we confess him, the Son of Man will rejoice in us.

Discussion Guide

Review Mark 7:31–37. Why do you think Jesus told the people not to tell anyone about His healing of the deaf man? Why do you think Jesus healed this man in a secluded

place? This miracle is recorded only in Mark's gospel. Why might hearing about this Gentile's healing have been particularly valuable for Mark's Roman readers?

Read verses 31-32. In light of the teaching of entire first half of the gospel of Mark, how are these verses completely unexpected, even (apparently) contradictory to it?

In verse 31, the word *must* modifies and controls the entire sentence. What does it tell us about Jesus' purpose and what he came to do?

Read verses 32-33. Why is Peter rebuked, and how is Peter a warning for us today? In verse 35, what does the first "save his life" mean (35a)? What does the first "lose his life" mean (35b)? What does the second "lose his life" mean (35a)? What does the second "save his life" mean (35b)?

How do verses 34 and 36 shed light on what verse 35 means?

Read verse 9:1. In what way might some of those present see the kingdom of God come with power before they die?

There is a strange mixture of strength and weakness in Christianity. How does Jesus show this strange mixture in his mission? How do we see this strange mixture in Peter in verses 32-33? How do we see this strange mixture in the life Jesus calls us to in verses 34-37?

Read Mark 8:22—9:1. When they arrive in Bethsaida, Jesus heals another blind man (8:22-26). How is this healing related to what happened in the boat?

The blind man needs two touches to bring his physical sight. What two touches did the disciples need to bring the spiritual sight Peter articulates in 8:27-30?

The Jewish people were expecting a Messiah they thought would be God's agent in bringing in the kingdom, in sorting out the mess and muddle Israel was in politically, in putting the Gentiles in their place. Peter's reaction makes it clear that's the way he thought."

How does Jesus redefine what the Messiah would do instead here in 8:31—9:1 and throughout the first eight chapters of Mark?

Jesus asks us the same question he asked his disciples: "Who do you say I am?" What is your answer to who Jesus is and what he is actually doing in the world?

The disciples must have known that by following Jesus they were taking risks. The death of Jesus' mentor, John the Baptist, will simply have confirmed that. But now

Jesus began to teach them something new, implying that once they'd declared that he was the Messiah, they'd need to pick up their own cross (8:34). How can following Jesus be dangerous for us as well?

This passage makes it clear that following Jesus is the only way to go. Following Jesus is, more or less, Mark's definition of what being a Christian means; and Jesus is not leading us on a pleasant afternoon hike, but on a walk into danger and risk.

How have you seen in your life and in others' lives the truth that "if you want to save your life, you'll lose it; but if you lose your life because of me and the Message you'll save it"?

DIGGING DEEPER

[Empty Words - Larry Osborne- Mark 8:27-33 \(52:08\)](#)

[Discussion guide](#)

[How to Become a Christian- Christopher Hilken- Mark 8:34-38 \(52:15\)](#)

[Discussion guide](#)