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Mark 8:31-38

Leadership guru John Maxwell has said, *“If you think you’re leading, but no one is following, then you are only taking a walk.”* There’s no question that Jesus is ALWAYS leading, so let’s turn that around. If Jesus is leading and I’m doing something else, then I’m not following Jesus.

Here at FBCW our mission is the help people “find and follow Jesus.” In this text Jesus described what it means to follow Him.

- Jesus ministry had flourished and His disciples were convinced He would soon overthrow the Roman Empire and become Israel’s earthly king.
- He surprised them with a different view of the future; God’s plan not theirs.

**Mark 8:31-38 (ESV) — 31** And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. **32** And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. **33** But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

- Lesson #1: Don’t argue with (or correct) Jesus.
- My mother taught me not to correct my elders. Jesus isn’t just an elder.
- We sympathize with Peter. What Jesus said seemed to make no sense.
- Those who are not Christians (and sadly some who ARE) try to correct or argue with what Jesus said (in scripture.) They argue by asking: *“Did God really say?”* That goes back to the Garden of Eden. Some say, *“Jesus didn’t say that specifically.”* If it’s in the Bible, the Spirit of God said it.
- How do we avoid sounding or thinking like Satan? Don’t argue with Jesus.
- It is one thing to accept what Jesus said; how do we follow Him?

**34** And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

- How do we take up our cross?
- Chuck Swindoll writes, *“...[T]o take up one’s cross [is] to die to one’s own agenda. Jesus calls His followers to do this daily.”*
- How do I deny myself? What does my self want versus what Jesus wants?
- **My self wants to be the boss.** I just think I’m boss. Without Jesus, my sinful nature is REALLY the boss and my sinful nature makes a terrible boss.

- Trusting Christ requires surrendering my rights to His better plan and making Him boss of my life. My self will naturally fight against that.

- **My self wants to sin.** What does Jesus want?

**Galatians 5:24 (ESV) — 24** And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

**Colossians 3:5 (ESV) — 5** Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

**1 Peter 1:15 (ESV) — 15** but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

- My self wants to sin. In this life I'll never be "sinless" but His Holy Spirit living in me will help me "sin less" and not be a slave to sin.

- **My self wants to be the star of my show.** What does Jesus want?

**Colossians 3:3–4 (ESV) — 3** For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

- Do people see me, or Jesus living in me? Who is the star of this show?
- Followers are to make HIM famous to others; our glory comes in Heaven.

- **My self desires comfort, stuff and pleasure.**

- Jesus never said we couldn't enjoy nice things. What did He say?

**Matthew 6:24 (ESV) — 24** "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

- Money and nice things are only bad if they hinder me from following Him.

- **My self wants to rush to the front of every line.** What does Jesus want?

**Mark 10:43–44 (ESV) — 43** But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

- **My self wants to put my needs and desires first.** Paul wrote:

**1 Corinthians 10:24 (ESV) — 24** Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.

- Paul also wrote in Romans 14 that even if I'm allowed to do something because of my freedom in Christ, I shouldn't do it if it would cause a brother or sister (or future brother or sister) to stumble. (Romans 14:21)

- That was Paul, how do I know Jesus wants me to put others first?

**Mark 10:45 (ESV) —** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." [Jesus died proving the point.]

**35** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

- Following Christ DOES cost some their physical life.
- For most Christ-followers though, the cost is to give up living for myself and do what Jesus says instead.

**Mark 8:36–37 (ESV) — 36** For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? **37** For what can a man give in return for his soul?

- *“Gain the world and lose your soul.”* Of course, if someone never trusts Christ as Savior and Lord, they can’t buy their way to eternal life.
- How do Jesus words apply to those of us who HAVE trusted Christ?
- Wiersbe: *“Remember, He was instructing His disciples, men who had already confessed Him as the Son of God. He was not telling them how to be saved and go to heaven, but how to save their lives and make the most of their opportunities on earth. “Losing your soul” is the equivalent of wasting your life, missing the great opportunities God gives you to make your life count. You may “gain the whole world” and be a success in the eyes of men, and yet have nothing to show for your life when you stand before God.”*<sup>ii</sup>

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Jesus is ALWAYS leading. If Jesus is leading and I’m doing something else, then I’m not following Jesus. How DO I follow Him.
- What Jesus wants us to do is found in scripture. Don’t argue with Jesus.
- Following Jesus means dying daily to my own agenda in favor of His.
- It means denying self, pushing back against my sinful nature, putting the needs of others ahead of mine, putting the spotlight on Jesus and not me.
- All this sounds hard! It’s not hard; it’s impossible without Jesus.
- Dying to self is a fight to the death. But before you pack for a guilt trip take comfort from the great Apostle Paul who confessed:

*“[W]hen I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.”<sup>22</sup> I love God’s law with all my heart.<sup>23</sup> But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.<sup>24</sup> Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?<sup>25</sup> Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>iii</sup>*

- How does Jesus help me deny myself daily and follow Him?
- What have we been learning from a man named Titus?

**Titus 2:11–13 (ESV) — 11** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, **12** training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, **13** waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

- The grace of God makes it possible for me to deny self and follow Jesus.
- That grace is a gift paid for by Jesus’ death on the cross.
- The power to live this way comes from His Holy Spirit living in us.
- The Holy Spirit comes through trusting Jesus as Savior and Lord.

- As Paul said, “*Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord!*”

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<sup>i</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Mark (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 2) (p. 227). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>ii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 1, p. 140). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>iii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ro 7:21–25). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.