

ALL !N WITH JORDAN EASLEY

What's the Price of a Soul?

Questions Jesus Asked | Part 6 | Mark 8:34-38

INTRODUCTION

Years ago I heard about a young violist who got the chance of a lifetime — an invitation to perform in one of the most prestigious recital halls in Europe. She'd earned it: years of practice, hours of scales and technique, every detail drilled and polished under her teacher's watchful eye. On the big night she played her last note and the hall erupted — a long, loud standing ovation. She smiled, she bowed, she soaked it in. But then she looked up to the balcony where her teacher always sat, and there he was: not standing, not clapping, just sitting still and unmoved. In that instant her smile faded and tears filled her eyes, because suddenly all the applause in the world didn't matter — the one person whose approval meant the most wasn't impressed. One day, every one of us will stand before the only One whose opinion really matters. The world might cheer for you and applaud your success, but if Jesus — our Teacher, our Lord, our Master — isn't pleased, the applause of earth won't mean a thing.

Throughout this series, Jesus' questions have cut straight to the heart, because He doesn't ask for information — He asks to expose what's going on inside us. Today we come to maybe the most sobering question of all. In Mark 8:36 Jesus asks, "For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life?" — or as some translations put it, "What good is it to gain the whole world and forfeit your soul?" This isn't just a question about money or morality; it's a question about value — what we treasure, what we're pursuing, and what we're willing to trade. Context matters: Jesus asked it near Caesarea Philippi, a city built to honor Caesar and crowded with pagan temples and idols. In that place of false worship, He asked, "Who do you say that I am?" and Peter answered rightly, "You are the Messiah" (v. 29). But when Jesus said He must suffer and die, Peter pulled Him aside to rebuke Him — and Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are not thinking about God's concerns but

human concerns" (v. 33). Peter wanted a crown without a cross. And it's right there that Jesus gathered the crowd and taught what it really costs to follow Him.

KEY POINTS

1. Jesus Exposes What We Value Most

Jesus didn't pull the twelve aside for a private word — He "called the crowd along with his disciples" and said, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). This was an open invitation and a very public challenge, built on three simple but costly commands: deny yourself, take up your cross, follow Me. In Jesus' day the cross wasn't jewelry or wall art — it was the most feared instrument of death in the Roman world. Rebellions were common, and Rome's answer to rebels was crucifixion; crosses stood along the roads as warnings, some left up for decades to declare, "This is what happens to anyone who resists Rome." So when Jesus said "take up your cross," nobody thought He was being poetic. They knew He meant, "Following Me means death to your old life, death to your own agenda, death to self." He wasn't calling them to a comfortable faith; He was calling them to complete surrender — and that's exactly what reveals what we truly value.

Then Jesus said, "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it" (v. 35). The word for "life" is the Greek *psyche* — your soul, your identity, the very core of who you are. Cling to control and you'll lose what matters most; surrender your life to Him and you'll finally find it. This is where the question starts to expose us, because whatever you refuse to surrender reveals what you truly worship. When Jesus asks for your time, He exposes how you spend it; when He asks for your trust, He exposes where your security lies; when He asks for your obedience, He exposes who's really calling the shots. Whatever you refuse to give up for Jesus is the very thing that owns you. For Peter it was power, for the rich young ruler it was possessions, for the Pharisees it was pride — so what about you? Comfort, approval, success, reputation, a relationship, an image, a secret sin, a dream you won't release? The most loving thing Jesus can do is expose the things we're clinging to that can't save us, can't satisfy us, and won't last.

2. Jesus Reminds Us What Truly Matters

"For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life? What can anyone give in exchange for his life?" (vv. 36-37). Jesus asks us to imagine the ultimate trade: you gain everything the world offers and lose the one thing you can never replace. Picture it — the promotions, the platform, the applause, the money, the fame, the dream life with the family and the income and the network, the full calendar and full house and full bank account — and at the end of it all, you lose your soul. If that's the story of your life, what have you really gained? Then comes the second question, and the word "exchange" means to trade for something of equal value. Here's what Jesus wants you to hear: there is nothing of equal value. Nothing compares to the worth of your soul.

You were created in the image of God and designed for eternity, which is why nothing in this world can fully satisfy you — nothing in this world was made to. Some of us know exactly what it's like to chase "more": more money, more approval, more comfort, more likes, more control — and the more we chase, the less satisfied we become, because the soul was never meant to be filled by success; it was meant to be filled by the Savior. Possessions fade, positions end, applause dies, health changes, careers shift, relationships move — but your soul is forever, and what you do with Jesus determines its destiny. There's a story of an art collector who traded away an original Rembrandt for a counterfeit that looked "prettier" — smoother lines, brighter colors, an impressive frame — but the value was gone, because it wasn't real. That's what happens when we trade eternal things for temporary ones: it looks good for a while, until the truth comes out. Jesus is asking, "Why trade what will last forever for what won't last at all?"

3. Jesus Invites Us to Surrender All

"For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (v. 38). Here Jesus moves from the present choice to the eternal consequence: following Him isn't just about this life, it's about the next. To be "ashamed" is to shrink back, stay quiet, and hide your faith when silence is easier than standing firm — and if we're honest, we all feel that pull. A father once asked his teenage son why he stayed quiet during the family's Thanksgiving tradition of sharing what they're thankful to

God for, and the boy said, "I didn't want to make it awkward for the neighbors who don't believe." The dad wisely replied, "Son, it's not awkward to be grateful — it's awkward to be silent when God's been so good." Sometimes we let social comfort outweigh spiritual conviction, but gratitude is meant to be expressed, not hidden.

Jesus isn't looking for part-time believers or half-hearted disciples; He invites us — and expects us — to surrender all, to say, "Lord, You can have everything: my plans, my pride, my priorities, all of it." Surrender doesn't mean losing your life; it means finding it. It doesn't lead to emptiness, it leads to fullness. You may lose the approval of a few people, but you'll gain the presence of God; you may walk away from temporary gain, but you'll walk toward eternal glory — and that only happens when you go all in with Jesus. A woman once told me that Thanksgiving changed after her father died: "The food still tastes the same and the house still smells the same, but that chair at the end of the table is empty. It made me realize life is too short to chase things that won't matter when all the chairs are empty." Don't spend your life filling your table and forget the One who gave you the table in the first place. So what is Jesus asking you to lay down, what step of surrender is He calling you to take, and where is He inviting you to stand unashamed? Because when you live surrendered, gratitude becomes your testimony, obedience becomes your worship, and your life becomes a declaration that Jesus — not the world — is your treasure.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. "Whatever you refuse to give up for Jesus is the thing that owns you." What are you most unwilling to lay down — comfort, approval, success, a relationship, an image, a secret sin — and what does that reveal about what you truly value?
2. Jesus says the soul is worth more than the whole world, yet we're tempted to trade the eternal for the temporary. Where have you been chasing "more" and finding less satisfaction, and how would seeking the Savior instead change that pursuit?
3. To be "ashamed" of Jesus is to shrink back and stay silent. Where is Jesus inviting you to stand unashamed this week — and what would it look like to let your gratitude and surrender show?
