

For Real 01: "Do What?!"

Mark 8:27-38

Big Idea: Faith in Jesus Christ is authenticated by self-denial and cross-bearing.

Difficult to Follow

Some leaders make it difficult to follow them. They say or do things that just aren't reasonable. Believe it or not, Jesus did and said some things that made it difficult for His followers. An excellent leader, Jesus still said some things that were not easy to grasp.

For Real?

Some have the mistaken belief that Jesus was easy to follow. His love unconditional and His compassion so demonstrative, surely He was willing to include everyone – REGARDLESS. But according to His own words, Jesus made it clear that it can be difficult to truly follow Him (see Matthew 7:21). Following Jesus Christ was not easy. He said some things that would cause His listeners to respond, **"For Real?"** Yeah, for real.

Background

Mark 8 is a turning point in the Gospel. Up until this point, Jesus has been demonstrating who He is. He healed the sick. He fed thousands. He calmed storms. He cast out demons. The crowds loved that version of Jesus. Who wouldn't? But now Jesus begins to explain why He came. Jesus said that He would suffer, be rejected, be killed, and rise again. That wasn't the Messiah anyone expected. The Jews wanted a conquering king. The disciples wanted a political revolution. The crowds wanted a miracle worker. Nobody wanted a suffering Savior.

Self-Denial

When Jesus says, "deny yourself," He is not talking about giving up chocolate for Lent. He is not talking about skipping dessert. He is not talking about making life miserable either. The word deny means *"disown, reject, or refuse allegiance."* It is the same word used when Peter later denied Jesus. Peter essentially said: *"I don't know Him."* Jesus is asking us to say the same from His followers and their old self. "I don't know that person anymore."

Cross-Bearing

When we hear the word "cross," we think of jewelry. We think of church steeples. We think of Good Friday and Easter. That day, the crowd heard something completely different. To a first-century audience, the cross represented one thing – Death. Nothing more. Nothing less. When a man carried a cross through the streets, everyone knew where he was going. He was walking toward his own execution. He had surrendered. Rome was right; he was wrong. The cross is a symbol of total surrender. It is dying to self so that Christ can live through us.

The Real Question

The real question today is not: Do you attend church? Do you own a Bible? Do you believe God exists? Even the demons believe. The real question is: **Has Jesus changed who sits on the throne of your life?**

Family Night – Read Mark 8:27-38

- **Elementary School** – Ask, "Who did the people think Jesus was? Who did Peter say He was? What would happen after Jesus suffered and died (v.31)? What do we have to do to follow Jesus (v.34)?"
- **Middle/ High School** – Ask, "Why did Jesus rebuke Peter? Why is self-denial difficult for us? What does it mean to carry our cross? How is verse 36 relevant to American culture? What is Jesus saying in v.38?"

Prayer: "Father, we will follow Jesus by making Him King in our life and trying to obey Him. Amen."