

*Do you read your Bible in order to confirm your beliefs or do you read your Bible in order to be transformed? Don't answer quickly. But let this question sit and let yourself begin to feel the gravity of what is being asked.

I. Introduction

A. Mark 8:31, following Jesus defined

1. Self-denial: recognition that my bias is for me and my thoughts/reactions must be held suspect
2. Taking up my cross: choosing the way of Jesus because (not regardless) of what it cost me

*There is a drive and desire in every one of us to reconstruct these demands to a more amenable request of our natural selves.

B. Call of Jesus

1. There is a radical difference between the conventional values (held by the disciples and society) and the new perspective of the Kingdom Jesus introduces (in the shadow of 8:31).
2. Jesus calls us to ...
 - a. Lose life in order to find it
 - b. Choose between approval of others and the Son of Man
 - c. Become the least and servant in order to be first
 - d. Welcome those naturally rejected
 - e. Drastic rejection in this world to gain life

*Self-denial and taking up my cross!

II. Unpacking following Jesus

A. Substitutions

1. Marriage (design) v1-12
 - a. "Is it lawful ..."
 - 1) Context: back in Judea, Herod's territory; answer irrelevant to the Pharisees; It's A Trap!
 - 2) What did Moses command? Moses allowed/permitted ...
 - b. Marriage had been redefined
 - 1) Husband initiated only
 - 2) Shammai - unchastity only (minor opinion)
 - 3) Hilel
 - a) If she does not accept your control
 - b) Not liking her behavior (famously Josephus)
 - c) A spoiled meal or found one fairer than she

*Note: God has not been honored in marriage, not by Israel, not by the church. The design and definition of marriage was broken long before the Supreme Court ruled on same sex marriage.

But let's be candid, it is far less personal and painful for most to target same sex marriage than be honest about the state of divorce and of married believers living together far from God's design, specifically a design that reflects His love for the Church.

*The Pharisees and the Church have taken a concession to human sinfulness and made it the norm.

2. Children (productivity) vs 13-16
 - a. Children were the least important members of society
 - 1) Childhood: the unavoidable interim period between birth and adulthood.
 - 2) Children consumed and contributed nothing to society (6 of 10 died before 16)
 - b. Disciples already forgot the lesson Jesus just got done teaching them in private (remember Kyle and Jeremiah?)
 - c. Jesus' response contains irritation and repugnance at their attitudes.

*The disciples and the Church have taken productivity/value as an excuse from the inconvenient, inconsequential, and inefficient.

3. Money and Success (moral spirituality) vs 17-27
 - a. The man
 - 1) Successful/wealthy: Jewish society saw success and wealth as a mark of God's blessing and favor
 - 2) Moral: kept the commandments
 - 3) Knew Scripture
 - 4) Clear conscience: approved of and loved by Jesus. Invited to join the disciples on the deepest level!
 - b. The man's problem: he couldn't really trust Jesus apart from his own success and self-reliance. He wanted his success and high morality to be the entrance token into the Kingdom.

*The would-be disciple and the Church have taken morality and knowledge as a substitute for dependance and surrender.

B. The reveal

1. July 1999, John F Kennedy Jr died in a plane crash in the Atlantic Ocean off Martha's Vineyard. The crash was ruled pilot error, specifically, spatial disorientation.
2. Play video clip
3. When it comes to following Jesus, just like the pilot who trusts his internal senses over the external flight instruments, we tend to trust ourselves over the very words of Jesus.
 - a. We take liberty with concessions the Bible makes, we say our way is more productive, and we substitute morality and even knowledge of Scripture to excuse ourselves from self-denial and taking up our cross.

You and I, if we're honest, suffer from spatial disorientation all the time and it's killing the passengers God has entrusted to us.

C. The way of following Jesus

1. Marriage

- a. The right question: What was God's original design and desire for marriage? Life-long, intimacy, permanence; a vision of Jesus love for the church (the people of God); Jesus doesn't divorce
- b. What does that require of me? Self-denial and loving like Jesus loves the Church (my cross)
- 2. People and productivity
 - a. What does Jesus do with the inconvenient, inconsequential, and inefficient when it comes to people?
 - b. What does that require of me?
- 3. Money and success and morality
 - a. Morality, knowledge of Scripture, and a "blessed" life doesn't mean a right relationship with Jesus
 - b. Jesus asks that I am willing to surrender everything for His sake and the sake of the Gospel.
 - c. What does that require of me?

III. Conclusion (vs 28-31)

A. Sacrifice and reward

- 1. Peter: we've left all; unlike the rich man; our place is secure?
- 2. Jesus: if you have and for the right reasons (my sake and the Gospel's) I will care for you and transform you
 - a. Now
 - 1) The family of God (which we often reject; the reason Jesus prayed what He prayed in John 17)
 - 2) Persecutions (shared experience with Jesus)
 - b. Later: eternal life and all that entails

*It will look different than the world (first/last; last/first) so you need to adjust your focus.

*I'll pose the question again, do you read your Bible in order to confirm your beliefs or do you read your Bible in order to be transformed?

B. What about me?

- 1. Where am I trying to adjust how Jesus calls me to follow Him?
- 2. Who will I confess that to and ask for follow-up?

*We can't say, "Jesus, I know a better way," and Jesus say, "Deny yourself and take up your cross" and both be right. These are incompatible statements.

JESUS

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF MARK

MARK 10:1-31

ADJUSTED JESUS FOLLOWING
JANUARY 31, 2021 | PASTOR MATT WHITEFORD



GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT AS YOU START YOUR CONVERSATION)

- 1 **Following a celebrity, sports star, company or your favorite author has been redefined a lot in the last 10-15 years because of social media. Who or what do you tend to currently follow and how is it different now than when you were younger?**

In the western church, it seems as if many Christians have made following Jesus a fairly easy thing to do, requiring no large interruptions to our comfort or plans we make day to day. In Mark 10:1-31, we get some insights into what following Jesus should look like. This is a great opportunity to measure how we typically follow Jesus and how the Bible describes following Jesus in areas such as marriage, relationships, money, and success. The takeaway is this: if some adjustment is required to sync up with the Bible's idea of following Jesus, will we readjust?

QUICK REVIEW (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week's message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

DIG DEEPER (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

- 1 Someone read **Mark 10:1-12** in their Bible.

In Jesus' day, there was a tremendous amount of debate about divorce and remarriage among the Jews. Some rabbis said that a man may not divorce his wife unless she was sexually immoral. Others said that a man may divorce his wife if she did not properly cook a meal for him or if he found a fairer woman. Prevailing views on divorce in Jesus' day not only devalued marriage but objectified women. It is in this context that Jesus was questioned by a Pharisee about divorce.

What was the Pharisees' motive in questioning Jesus about divorce?

Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4. How was Moses' allowance for divorce being misused by the people of Jesus' day?

Was divorce really allowed? What does Jesus' comment in v. 5 reveal about this commandment?

When the Pharisees came to Jesus, they were more curious about Jesus' perspective on their opinion rather than bringing their lives under His perspective. Jesus responds by telling them divorce wasn't God's design for marriage, yet a command was given to restrain the corruption of divorce. It was given because of the hardness of their heart. Allowing divorce and establishing a command to limit it are two very different things. The Pharisees' question shows their limited perspective.

Marriage, in the eyes of God, is not a contract that people can break. It is a covenant that only He can break. What is the difference between a covenant and a contract?

- 2 Someone read **Mark 10:13-16** in their Bible.

Why did the disciples try to keep the children away from Jesus? What childlike qualities was Jesus encouraging?

It is only as adults realize that they, like children, have no position or status by which to earn access to God's Kingdom but that they will be able to receive it as a gift of God's grace.

3 Someone read **Mark 10:17-31** in their Bible.

Why did the rich young ruler ask the question in v. 17? What was the man's desire in wanting to follow Jesus and where may he have needed to adjust his idea of following Jesus?

What was Jesus teaching us in this passage?

How do you know when to sacrifice family demands for what God wants (vs. 29–31), and when to focus on family in order to love God by caring for your family?

The disciples realized the radical nature of Jesus' statement and wondered about their own fate. If it is difficult for anyone to enter the Kingdom, then what chance did they have? This was Jesus' point. It is, indeed, impossible for a man to make his own way into the Kingdom. It is God Who grants this gift. And as we receive it, Jesus wants nothing less than to be at the center of our lives.

LIVE IT OUT (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

1 What does it look like to trust Jesus with your marriage? If you are unmarried and wish to be, how can you trust God's plan for your life? If you are married, how can you depend on Jesus to sustain your marriage and reflect Jesus to others?

2 If you have been through a divorce, how have you seen God redeem the pain of that experience for His glory?

3 Where in your life are you needing to adjust how Jesus calls you to follow Him? How can we (this group) help you with this?

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time in prayer with your group.

NEXT WEEK:

Read **MARK 10:32-45** before Sunday and your next home group gathering. Remember to take good notes so you are ready to add to the discussion your home group will have!

PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of being in a Home Group. Here are some tips to help make group prayer be a life-giving aspect of your group.

PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME: Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request or praise during the prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next request or praise.

PRAY MORE THAN ONCE: If your group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one should be required to pray.

KEEP PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE: Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one should be required to pray out loud.

How to Use this Discussion Guide

This guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and becoming like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel the need to read all the content during your group discussion or ask all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community. In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!

Visit cpmodesto.org/groupleaders to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit cpmodesto.org/homegroups and use the Home Group Finder!

COMMENTARY

MARK 10:1-31

10:1. Jesus then left that place—Capernaum, His home base. This corresponds with the statement in Luke 9:51 that Jesus “resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” He was leaving a place of comfort and acceptance to go to a place where He knew He would be betrayed and murdered. He would not return to Capernaum again. As Jesus crossed to the eastern side of the Jordan River, He was coming back to the place where John the Baptist was put to death. This region was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas. As He traveled, the crowds gathered around Him. Jesus was well known here, either from hearsay or from His association with John the Baptist.

10:2. The Pharisees searched for ways to get rid of Jesus. Their motive was not to understand or to learn but to trap Jesus in His own words. The Pharisees might have been hoping that Jesus would condemn Herod Antipas’s adultery as John the Baptist had and thus would suffer the same fate. If not that, Jesus’ answer to their question would surely offend one of the two schools of thought on divorce. The more conservative school, that of Shammai, stated that the only justifiable ground for divorce was adultery. The school of Hillel taught that any displeasure with a wife—including her cooking or her looks—justified a husband’s seeking a divorce.

10:3. Jesus avoided answering their question directly, showing further that the Pharisees were testing Him. When people asked Jesus a question because they wanted to learn or because they did not understand something (see Mark 9:11-12), Jesus did not circumvent the question but answered directly. In this situation, and with questions coming up in later chapters, Jesus turned the question back on the questioner. He asked the masters of the law what the law commanded. It called to their minds that no matter what their motives were in questioning Him, Jesus would not go against Moses. In fact, He gave richer meaning to the law.

10:4-5. The Pharisees referred to Deuteronomy 24:1. Jesus, however, stated that this was given because of their hardened hearts. As with much of the law, it was meant to curb behavior already in practice. For instance, with the law known as “an eye for an eye,” God was not commanding that an injury be made for every injury received. Instead, He was limiting what amount of retaliation could be sought. The law regarding divorce was similar in that it limited behavior rather than setting precedence. It gave a measure of protection to women from husbands who would leave them for trivial reasons.

10:6. Jesus reminded His listeners that marriage did not come into existence with the law and Moses. It had been instituted at the beginning of creation by God. Marriage should not be entered into lightly or dissolved for trivial reasons.

10:7-8. While God allowed divorce, this was not his original, ideal intention. His intention was the making of new social groups. A man was to leave his family in order to form a new family unit of his own. As strong as the bond between a child and parents is, the bond between a husband and wife is stronger. In fact, Paul used the image of this bond to show the relationship between Christ and His Church. They are one flesh.

10:9. The ideal instituted by God in the creation was for a lasting union between a man and a woman. God is the one who separates the couple through death. Barbieri notes that the verb for separate, *chorizeto*, is in the present and literally means “to make it a habit to be separating” (Barbieri Mark, p 221). The use of the present tense may indicate a judgment on those who separate lightly, thereby flouting God’s ideal of one flesh.

10:10. Again, the disciples needed further instruction, and Jesus complied. Because the disciples truly wanted answers, Jesus answered them more fully. Their questioning showed that Jesus’ interpretation of marriage went against what was commonly taught.

10:11-12. Mark’s Gospel is often considered to be unfriendly to women. Jesus’ statement is a refutation of this myth. The radicalness is in the words “commits adultery against her.” In Jewish society, a woman could commit adultery against her husband. A man could commit adultery against another

man by having relations with that man's wife (Deut. 22:13-29). A man could not, however, commit adultery against his wife. Jesus' proclamation raised the status of women.

10:13-14. Rabbis were known to lay hands on children and bless them. The children in this incident could have been anywhere from infants to 12-year-olds. The disciples, who were tired and tense with the prospect of going to Jerusalem, were probably trying to protect Jesus' time. Note Jesus' anger in this verse. The Greek verb "aganakteo" implies deep, strong feeling. Jesus' service, and therefore the service of the disciples, was for such as these children (9:36). This is one more instance where the disciples failed to realize that there are no outcasts or unimportant people in the Kingdom.

10:15-16. Not only were the outcasts as important as others; Jesus also stated that everyone who desires the Kingdom must be like these little children. Much has been written about how children act and what Jesus could have been referring to here. We could talk about a child's total dependence and trust—two qualities needed for the Kingdom. But Jesus' point was, how do children receive gifts? They receive with anticipation. They receive joyfully and thankfully. They receive without believing they did anything to deserve the gift. This is a picture of how we come to the Father. We know we do not deserve the great gifts He has in store for us, but He loves us and desires to give us good things. We need to receive the gift of Christ's redemption with joy and thanksgiving. The Kingdom belongs to such as these. Therefore, not only are disciples to receive little children (9:36-37); they are to possess childlike qualities themselves.

10:17. This young ruler ran to Jesus and fell at His feet. In the Middle East, it was undignified for men to run. This man with his youthful passion was throwing himself at Jesus' feet. This section follows the previous section naturally, since the man asked what he could do to earn eternal life. Jesus' teaching on the children emphasized that there is nothing one can do to earn it. It is given freely and must be received freely.

10:18. The man called Jesus "good." This word was not used lightly. Had the man made the leap that Jesus was indeed God, who was good? As we see in verse 22, his passion outweighed his commitment.

10:19. Jesus in this verse did not list the commandments dealing with a person's relationship to God. These were internal commandments, not as easily discernible from observing behavior. Perhaps Jesus also knew that this man could not keep the first commandment—to have no other Gods before Yahweh, the supreme God. Jesus mentioned "do not defraud" instead of the tenth commandment, "do not covet." Defrauding someone, however, was listed in the law (cf. Lev. 19:13) and at its heart was jealousy. The young man had never defrauded anyone, but neither had he gone the extra mile and been generous with his money.

10:20. If this list were all the law contained, then it would not be impossible to conform to its demands—difficult, yes, but not impossible. On the commandments that Jesus listed, this man had it made—externally. Apparently, even he knew there had to be more to it because he did not leave immediately, rejoicing at Jesus' answer. He knew in his heart that he lacked something.

10:21. Jesus was declaring that nothing must come between a person and devotion to God. Some people may have to give up money. Others may have to abandon a cherished dream. Still others may have to surrender family. But one thing is certain: Jesus' love comes before the command. Whatever He commands us to do is because of His love for us. Jesus' command to the man to "follow Me" came at the time when He was headed for Jerusalem and certain death at the hands of the religious leaders. This echoes Jesus' command to every disciple to take up the cross and follow Him (Mark 8:34).

10:22. This verse is the only instance of someone coming to Jesus with a need and leaving without the need being filled. No matter how much we are loved by God, He will not override our choices.

10:23 The event became the occasion for a brief discourse. Jesus' statement must be contrasted with the Jewish attitude toward riches. The dominant Jewish view was that riches were an indication of divine favor and a reward for piety (Job 1:10; 42:10; Ps 128:1-2; Isa 3:10). Although provision was made for the protection and assistance of the poor (Deut 15:7-11; Prov 22:22-23), rarely was poverty associated with piety.

The teaching of Jesus was nonetheless revolutionary in its time and remains scandalous even today. However, Jesus did not condemn riches as evil in themselves. They are a temptation, a hindrance, a diversion. They provide false security that makes radical trust in God difficult.

10:24 In view of the prevailing Jewish attitude toward riches, the disciples' amazement is not surprising. Whereas v. 23 describes the difficulty of the rich in entering the Kingdom, this verse, according to the best attested Greek text, affirms the difficulty of all in so doing.

10:25 A few witnesses of medium quality reverse the order of vv. 24 and 25 and make minor changes in v. 25. Verse 25, however, appropriately follows v. 24 as a concrete example of the uncompromising statement in that verse. All attempts to ease the harsh meaning of v. 25 must be resisted, e.g., the substitution of the Greek word meaning rope for the one meaning camel (there is only one letter difference in Greek) or the idea that the reference is to a small gate in Jerusalem called "Eye of the Needle" through which a camel could go only with great difficulty.

The mere existence of the word meaning rope is unattested until at least the fifth Christian century and perhaps until medieval times. Furthermore, to put a rope through the eye of a needle would be almost as difficult as to put a camel through it. No early evidence exists that there was a small gate called "Eye of the Needle." The claim first appears in the ninth Christian century, long after the destruction of the Jerusalem of Jesus' day. The contrast between the largest Palestinian animal and one of the smallest openings is clearly intended to indicate the impossibility of a rich person—or anyone else (v. 24)—entering the kingdom by doing something for himself or herself.

10:26 For once the NIV, NRSV, NEB, and GNB do not follow the earliest and usually best manuscripts, which have "to him" (RSV, NASB). The latter probably is a grammatical improvement upon the former reading "to each other" by the Alexandrian text-type, which is sometimes guilty of such a thing. It should be noted that being saved, the Kingdom of God (vv. 23-25), and eternal life (v. 17) all refer to the same thing, a right relationship with God.

10:27 This verse probably is the key to understanding the entire passage. Inheriting eternal life, entering the kingdom, and being saved are impossible for any human being, but not for God, who is good and desires the salvation of all. Therefore all must depend entirely upon God. Such absolute trust in God makes possible a life of faithful discipleship (v. 28).

10:28 Again Peter appears in the narrative as the spokesman for all the disciples. One may question, however, the accuracy of his use of the word “everything.” It is probably an exaggeration. In leaving occupation and family, however, observe that Peter, James, and John did leave far more than many modern-day disciples (1:18, 20).

10:29 From warning, Jesus turned to promise. The medieval text adds the word “wife” after “mother” (KJV, NKJV), doubtless in an attempt to apply Peter’s example to celibate priests and monks.

10:30 Though v. 29 mentions leaving father to follow Christ, fathers are noticeably absent in the enumeration of relationships in v. 30. This absence suggests that God is the one “Father” of disciples. Some commentators have questioned whether Jesus included the word “persecutions” as part of the “reward” of discipleship, and they have suggested that it is the addition of the early church in light of its experiences. Jesus, however, could have foreseen the persecution of his followers. He himself was persecuted, and it was reasonable to expect that His disciples would be also. Significantly, both Matthew and Luke omit this reference to persecution. If this had been added by the early church, it most likely would have found its way into all three accounts. Persecution is a specially Markan emphasis.

10:31 The different contexts of this saying in Matt 20:16 and Luke 13:30 suggest it was probably a “floating” saying. It is, however, the kind of statement Jesus could have made more than once. Mark likely placed it here to provide an appropriate warning about being preoccupied with rewards and also to summarize and nicely conclude vv. 17–30.