

Notes for Mark 8:34-38

(This is not God's word, just my notes from meditating on it. I would suggest that you have a Bible to look up the verses and pray that the Holy Spirit reveal what he wants you to understand about the passage. I pray that my notes are also helpful to you. These verses were written view that you are already a follower of Christ, a child of God, but all are welcome to read it).

Mark 8:34 Jesus says whoever wants to be his disciple must do three things:

1. Deny theirself - We're not our own anymore. We were bought with a price. We are indentured servants. (Col. 3:24; 1 Peter 2:16; Ephesians 6:6; Romans 6:22). We “owe” our lives, our heart, our soul, to Jesus. We are his. And we are also his children. (Galatians 3:26; John 1:12; Romans 8:1). Jesus is Lord, so we don't let ourselves have, or do, everything we want. The kingdom of God is at center state, not ourselves. Our money is not our own. Our time is not our own. Our possessions are not our own. Our business is nor our own. Even our friends and family and kids are not our own. Our desire is not the world's way. The world chases after riches, entertainment, the easy way, comfort and convenience, whatever feels good, leisure, stuffing ourselves overfull with rich food, sex outside of God's will. As a child of God, a desire for those things may come up, but our greater desire is to be more like him, so we ultimately deny ourselves of those things. We deny our flesh because our heart is with Jesus, and our heart wants what wants more. The fruit of the Spirit, self-discipline comes into play here. Sometimes denying ourselves will feel like we're denying our needs. But 9 times out of 10, those needs are really wants. We need food, clothing, water, shelter, ...other than that...it may, or may not be, a true need. Our world has conditioned us to believe we need a whole lot of things that we don't really need.

2. Take up their cross - We must bear what being a Christian life entails. We must be willing to suffer. Jesus said, if we follow him, we *will* suffer. (He didn't say might. We will.) (2 Timothy 3:12). He wants us to patiently endure it without giving up or losing faith, but just trust him to bring us through it. (2 Timothy 3: 10-11). The cross is heavy. It won't be easy. We might feel angry, abandoned, forgotten, forsaken. That's where the "rubber meets the road". We are tested in our time of trial. Will we keep trusting in God? If we deny ourself, and realize that its not about us, and remember that God knows what he's doing (We may be suffering in the process of his saving someone else, or just bringing about his will in some other way, or it may be for our own spiritual purification...) Will we depend on God, praying through it, praying for his will despite our suffering, or will we just have our own desires on our mind (for the suffering to end). Before Jesus endured the cross, he prayed, "Not my will, but yours, Father..." We see his humility and submission here. (Also see, The Lord's Prayer).

3. Follow him - Christians are being hated more and more, if you haven't noticed. Christians are called crazy, "narrow thinkers", old-fashioned, and a whole lot of other names. We are to stand strong no matter how much persecution we suffer, no matter what people think of us. To follow Christ is not to compromise and not follow the world's thinking.

35a Trying to save your life. The question comes down to, Who is our God? Whom do we serve? Are we living for ourselves, or do we give our time, money and heart to the kingdom of God? (Matthew 6:24). What is our focus? What are we thinking about most of the day? There's a lot of talk about prepping for End Times disasters. Nothing wrong with preparing, but should that be our whole focus? Is our primary focus God's agenda, or are we trying to save ourselves? At some point, we realize dependence on God, loving him, and living for him, is the most important thing, serving him whether we live or die (Philippians 1:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:10) .

What are we praying for? (Matthew 6:9-13). Are we stepping out in faith for the sake of the gospel, so others will believe, or are we playing it safe (for that comfort and security).

Strong faith in God allows us to take the leap of faith. We trust in God to get us through it (I'm not saying doing foolish things that put God to the test, but following his Spirit to do things that may not be comfortable, convenient, pleasant, easy, etc.)

Other ways people might try to save their life: Spending all their money on a medical treatment that was not God's will, doing all the preventive medicine, exercising to the point that it takes over your whole life; joining (an apostate) church in hopes that they might have people there for them in times of need; going along with something they know is wrong in order to keep their jobs, their friends, their title, etc.; These "areas of compromise" are the true tests of our faith, of who is our God, of who we put our trust in and follow. Going along with families demands that we know are wrong actions, in order not to be ostracized. Remember what Jesus said. Being a Christian *will* involve persecution, hatred, etc., and it doesn't always just come from the ones we think of as enemies. Sometimes our enemies are the members of our own household. (Matthew 10:34-37) God asks us to follow him no matter what the cost - losing friends, family, popularity, comfort, etc. It may be a career we've taken a lifetime to build, whatever we think is our security may be taken from us for being a Christian. Whatever we lose in this life, will all be worth it in the end. God's true followers will realize that and live for him.

35b Losing your life for Jesus and the sake of the gospel

Faith and actions go hand-in-hand. (James 2:14-26.) When we're God's child, we will bear fruit. We will have love, and long for others to hear the gospel, we will want to be like Jesus so that our lives shine the light so others want to join us.

36 What good will all that do you in the end?

You can have all those things...success, a million Facebook friends

and 300 close friends, all the nice things money can buy, great relationships, the best entertainment every day, wild parties every night, the best food and great health, the best doctors, vacation houses in three countries. You can be the CEO of the multi-million dollar company and the richest man on earth, all the guns and ammo that money can buy, an army to fight for you, an underground shelter for a time of emergency, all the supplies you'll ever need. What good will all that do you when you stand before Jesus, if you're not his.

What can you give to buy everlasting life?

That big bank account won't save you, nor will the three houses, or the precious metals, nor will your good deeds. Only trusting in Jesus. He's the only way. His blood shed on the cross for our sins. (John 14:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11).

38 Are you ashamed or embarrassed to be a Christian or glad, no matter what?

Jesus knows what's in our hearts. He sees through the outward show...all the things people do for their reputation, to look good, to appear successful and kind and good. He knows our true intentions. (1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 21:2). What's in your heart? See also Matthew 10:32-42.

Encouraging verses:

Hebrews 4:14-16

Matthew 10:22b

Matthew 6: 28-34

1 Thessalonians 5:16-28

Similar Passages:

Matthew 10:1-42

Luke 12:1-58

Matthew 6:19-24