



STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Teaching Title: More Than a Name

Key Scripture: Mark 8:27–38

CEDAR VALLEY

5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

Monday: Mark 7:1-23

Tuesday: Mark 7:24-37

Wednesday: Mark 8:1-21

Thursday: Mark 8:22-9:1

Friday: Mark 9:2-29

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's Word (The Bible), what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

MEMORY VERSE:

Mark 8:34 NLT

Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

Introduction:

This week we continue our teaching series on the Gospel of Mark—Who is This Jesus? This week in particular, we get a clear understanding of who Jesus is and what it looks like to be His followers. Following Jesus is not just about using the right title, but truly understanding what it means. While Peter correctly identifies Jesus as the Messiah, he (and all the disciples) misunderstood His mission. They expected a political savior rather than one who would suffer, die, and rise again to save people from sin and establish God's kingdom. Jesus then makes it clear that following Him is more than claiming the name "Christian"—it required real surrender. A follower of Jesus must give up their own way, take up their cross, and fully submit to His leadership. Christian isn't just a name you claim, but a life you lay down.

Questions:

Ice Breaker: Who is someone you looked up to as a kid, and what made them stand out to you?

1. Read Mark 8:27-38 as a group. Why do you think people had different ideas about who Jesus was (John the Baptist, Elijah, a prophet)? What does this reveal about their expectations? (See Notes)
2. When Jesus asks, "Who do you say I am?" (v. 29), why is this question so important, both for Peter and for us today?
3. In verse 31, Jesus explains that He must suffer, be rejected, die, and rise again. Why would this have been shocking or confusing to the disciples? (See Notes)
4. Why do you think Peter reacts so strongly—even rebuking Jesus—after hearing Jesus predict his own suffering and death? Why does Jesus call Peter "Satan"? (See Digging Deeper)
5. What does it actually mean to "deny yourself" in our modern context? (See Digging Deeper)
6. What does it mean to "take up your cross"? Is it a metaphor for a daily burden, or something more radical? (See Digging Deeper)

7. Which part of Jesus' definition of following Him (giving up your own way, taking up your cross, or following Him) do you personally find most challenging right now? Why?

NOTES

Question 1—The Old Testament says that the Messiah would come from the royal line of David, which evolved into this belief that the Messiah would be a political figure. (Side note: The genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke both show that Jesus is from the line of David.) People were also reading their current situation into the prophetic words about the Messiah in the Old Testament. Remember, the people at this time lived under the rule of the Roman Empire. The Romans were an oppressive government, that served many false Gods. Keep that in mind while we read the words of the Old Testament:

—Zechariah 14: 9 And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day there will be one Lord—his name alone will be worshiped.

—2 Samuel 7:16 Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever.”

The people were waiting to be saved from the rule of the Romans, and it's easy to see how they had this incorrect expectation of the Messiah given the words of the Old Testament and their current situation.

DIGGING DEEPER

Question 4: Get behind me, Satan? Why did Jesus address Peter with such severity?

“When, in the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi, Peter confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, Jesus laid a strict charge on him and his fellow disciples not to mention it to a soul. Why? Probably because the title “Messiah” (the anointed king) was bound up in the minds of most people, and to some extent even yet in the disciples' minds, with ideas of political rule and military conquest, which were very far from Jesus' own understanding of his mission in the world. If the people of Galilee learned that his disciples considered him to be the Messiah, their own convictions about him, which he had done his best to dispel at the time of the feeding of the multitude, would be reinforced, and this might have disastrous results...The words of Jesus' reply (Get behind me, Satan!) recall those with which he repelled the tempter in the wilderness, and indeed they have much the same sense here as they had there. It should be understood that “Satan” is not primarily a proper name. It is a Hebrew common noun “adversary.” When it appears in the Old Testament preceded by the definite article, it means “the adversary.” In the story of Job, for example, where Satan (better, “the satan”) is said to have presented himself at a session of the heavenly court (Job 1:6), the expression means “the adversary” or, as we might say, “counsel from the prosecution.”} This is the regular function of this unpleasant character in the Old Testament...The Greek word corresponding to Satan is *diabolos*, means “accuser” (it is the word from which our “devil” is derived).”

Read Isaiah 53 to understand how Jesus understood his life mission as Messiah.

—Kaiser, Walter C. Jr. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. IVP: Downers Grove, 1996.

Questions 5 & 6: Denying self and cross-bearing

“Two requirements of discipleship are (1) denial of self and (2) taking up one's cross and following Jesus. By denial of self, Jesus does not mean to deny oneself something. He means to renounce self – to cease to make self the object of one's life and actions. This involves a fundamental reorientation of the principle of life. God, not self, must be at the center of life.

Cross bearing does not refer to some irritation in life. Rather, it involves the way of the cross. The picture is of a man, already condemned, required to carry his cross on the way to the place of execution, as Jesus was required to do. Although the cross was a Roman method of execution, it was well known to the Jews of Jesus' day... To bear the cross is to follow Jesus. This means suffering and death.”

—Wessel, Walter, W. *Mark: The Expositors Bible Commentary*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1984.