

Jesus Teaches His Followers: Part 1



SABBATH—AUGUST 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Mark 8:22–30; Mark 8:31–38; Mark 9:1–13; Mark 9:30–41; Mark 9:42–50.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then Jesus called the crowd to him, along with his followers. He said, ‘If anyone wants to follow me, he must say “no” to the things he wants. He must be willing to die on a cross, and he must follow me’ ” (Mark 8:34, ICB).



**When we follow Jesus,
God will give us
more spiritual wisdom
about Jesus and
who He is.**

THE FIRST HALF OF THE BOOK OF MARK shows us who Jesus is. His powerful teachings and miracles help us to understand that He is the Savior.

At the beginning of the second half of the Book of Mark, Jesus asks His followers who they believe He is. After Peter answers, Jesus starts to explain what will happen to Him as the Savior.

In the last part of Mark 8 to the end of Mark 10, Jesus teaches His followers about what will happen to Him. Jesus talks about the Cross. Then He teaches His followers special lessons. These lessons are important for us today.

Jesus also heals two different blind men. Jesus heals one blind man in the middle of Mark 8 and the other blind man at the end of Mark 10. These miracles teach us about following Jesus. When we follow Jesus, God will give us more spiritual wisdom about Jesus and who He is. Jesus' teachings helped His followers become better people. His teachings continue to help us today, too. They show us what we will need to do to follow Jesus and the blessings that God will give us when we do.

JESUS HEALS THE BLIND MAN (Mark 8:22–30)

Read the story about Jesus and the blind man in Mark 8:22–30. Why did Jesus touch the blind man two times to heal him? What lessons do you learn from this story?

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John talk about some blind men that Jesus heals. Jesus heals a blind man in Mark 8. In Mark 10:46–52, Jesus heals a blind man named Bartimaeus. Matthew talks about two blind men (Matthew 20:29–34). John 9 tells the story about Jesus healing a man born blind. Jesus tells this man to wash in the Pool of Siloam.

But the story in Mark 8 is special. We find this story only in the Book of Mark. Jesus heals a blind man in this story, too. But this miracle is the only one of Jesus' miracles that has two parts or actions. Jesus touches the man twice. As part of the story, Jesus also takes hold of the man's hand and leads him out of the village.

But why does Jesus touch the man two times to heal him? Was it because Jesus wasn't strong enough? Jesus touches the man twice to teach a lesson. The healing miracle is a living picture story. Jesus shows us we take time to grow in spiritual wisdom as Christians. Also, look at the writing style or form that Mark uses for this part (Mark 8–10). Mark starts and then ends the chapter with a story about Jesus healing a blind man. So, when Jesus gives the blind man his eyesight, Jesus shows us that He will help us "see" or understand the lessons He wants to teach us, too.

Teachers like questions. Teachers use questions to help students understand a topic. In Mark 8, Jesus asks His followers who He is. Jesus hasn't asked them this question before this time. Peter is the first person who isn't filled with a demon who announces that Jesus is the Savior. After Peter makes this announcement, Jesus starts to explain that He is going to die on the cross.

Why does Jesus tell His followers to tell no one that He is the Savior? Doesn't that order go against His starting the kingdom of God? In Jesus' day, the people expected the Savior to fight the Romans and force them to leave Israel. Jesus didn't come to be that type of Savior. So, He ordered His followers not to tell anyone who He was.

Are there times when we shouldn't talk about some Bible truths? If yes, why shouldn't we talk about them? How does this story help us answer these questions?



When Jesus gives the blind man his eyesight, Jesus shows us that He will help us "see" or understand the lessons He wants to teach us, too.

WHAT MUST WE DO TO FOLLOW JESUS? (Mark 8:31–38)

Read the story in Mark 8:31–38. What does Jesus teach us about the things we must do to follow Him?

The followers now know that Jesus is the Savior. This knowledge changes their relationship with Jesus. As readers, we knew this information from the beginning of the Book of Mark (Mark 1:1). So, we understand things in a way that Jesus' first followers didn't.

When Jesus first invited men to follow Him, He promised to teach them how to “catch” men instead of fish (Mark 1:17). Jesus didn't talk about any future trouble or hard times that would happen when people followed Him. But now the followers know who Jesus really is. So, Jesus tells them the reason that God sent Him to this earth. Jesus must suffer many things. He must be rejected and killed. Then He will wake up from the dead after three days.

This news is surprising. An instant before, Peter confessed that Jesus was the Savior. Now Peter takes Jesus aside and scolds Him for saying He will suffer and die. Jesus says sharp words to Peter that must have hurt Peter's heart. Jesus says that Peter is Satan, and tells him to get out of His way. Why does Jesus talk this way to Peter? Because Peter's words and thoughts were not in agreement with God's plan for Jesus' life.

“Peter's words did not give Jesus the help or hope He needed to suffer the many things ahead of Him. Peter's words were different from God's plan of mercy for lost sinners. Peter's words did not agree with the lessons that Jesus came to teach. Jesus came to teach His followers that they must give up things to follow Him. Jesus' life was the example of His teachings.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 415, adapted.

Jesus wants His followers to carry the cross and follow Him. The cross was the worst death that the Romans could force a person to suffer. Everyone wanted to avoid the cross. So, why would anyone want to use the cross as a symbol of their love for Jesus?

In the Christian faith, we give up things for Jesus. He gives us the gift of everlasting life. If we get everything we want in this life and lose everlasting life, we have nothing.

How does your life show the Bible truth in John 12:25?



Jesus wants His followers to carry the cross and follow Him.

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE CROWD (Mark 9:1–13)

Read the story in Mark 9:1–13. What did Peter, James, and John see at night with Jesus?

In Mark 9:1, Jesus says that some standing with Him would not die before they saw the kingdom of God in all its shining beauty. Jesus' promise comes true a few days later when He takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain alone. There Jesus is changed before them. He shines with the bright glory of God's kingdom.

Elijah and Moses come from heaven to talk with Jesus. Luke tells us that they talked about what Jesus was about to do in Jerusalem (Luke 9:30, 31). Jesus' shining glory on the mountain is connected to His coming death on the cross (compare with Mark 9:9). When Jesus died on the cross, the followers would think back to Jesus' shining glory on the mountain. This thought would give them hope.

The next morning, Jesus and His three followers come down the mountain. Then Peter, James, and John ask Jesus about the Bible promise that says Elijah must come first. The Jews expected Elijah to appear before the Savior came (compare with Malachi 4:5, 6). Jesus answers that Elijah already came. Jesus was talking about John the Baptist. Elijah was a symbol of John the Baptist. Jesus' enemies killed John. They also will kill Jesus. But Jesus will wake up from the dead after three days.

After the night of shining glory, Jesus and the three followers come down to the bottom of the mountain. There, the other nine followers met a boy filled with a demon. But the nine followers could not command the demon to come out of the boy. When Jesus comes down to the bottom of the mountain, everyone runs to meet Him. Jesus learns about the demon's control over the child. The father of the boy says to Jesus, " 'If you can do anything, please have pity on us and help us' " (Mark 9:22, ERV).

Right away, Jesus notices the man's doubt. The Lord's answer can be written this way: "What do you mean, 'If I can'?" (Mark 9:23, author's translation, adapted). Jesus' question helps the father understand that his son is not the only one with a problem. The father has a problem, too. His problem is doubt. His doubt could keep his son from being healed! "Right away the father of the child, with tears in his eyes, said loudly, 'I do believe! Help me to believe more!' " (Mark 9:24, WE). Then Jesus heals the boy.



When Jesus died on the cross, the followers would think back to Jesus' shining glory on the mountain.

WHO IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON? (Mark 9:30–41)

Read the conversation between Jesus and His followers in Mark 9:30–41. What is different about Jesus' second sermon about His death and resurrection, or waking up from the dead? (Compare with Mark 8:31.) Also, what do the followers argue about? What lesson does Jesus teach them?



If you want to be the most important person in God's kingdom, then you must become a servant.

In Jesus' first sermon about His death, He talks about the people who will reject Him and kill Him. In His second sermon, Jesus tells His followers that someone will sell Him to His enemies. Jesus doesn't say who will sell Him. But the reader knows that Judas will do it because Mark tells us early on in his book (read Mark 3:19). Again, the Lord says that He will be killed and then wake up from the dead after three days. But His followers don't really want to hear this announcement any more than they wanted to hear the first one.

In Mark 8:27, Jesus was north of the Sea of Galilee near Caesarea Philippi. In Mark 9:30, Jesus passes through Galilee. In Mark 9:33, Jesus enters Capernaum alone. His Twelve Followers are far behind Him. When the followers arrive at the house where Jesus was, Jesus asks His followers to tell Him what they talked about on the way there. No one says anything at first. Their conversation was about who was the most important person among them.

Jesus teaches His followers an important lesson about God's kingdom. First, if you want to be the most important person in God's kingdom, then you must become a servant. Then Jesus shows what He means with an action. Jesus puts a little child in the middle of their group. Most children may feel scared if they are in the middle of a group of strangers or big men. But Jesus picks the child up in His arms. The child relaxes. Jesus teaches His followers that if you accept the child, you accept Jesus. If you accept Jesus, then you accept His Father. So, the child that no one thinks is important is connected to God.

John asks Jesus a question about strangers or people who don't belong to the Jewish people group. Jesus teaches the important lesson that everyone who isn't against our cause is on our side. The Lord says that God in heaven always sees when we help people, even in small ways.

What does the Bible teach about who is the most important? How are you trying to live this Bible truth?

THE HEALTHY MAN IN HELL (Mark 9:42–50)

Read Mark 9:42–50. What are the teachings of Jesus in these verses? What words connect the teachings together?

At first, we may think that these verses are a collection of Jesus' teachings that are not connected together. When we take a closer look, we see that each new teaching has a word that connects it to the teaching before it. Mark 9:42–50 uses three important ideas to help us understand Jesus' teachings: (1) "causes to sin," (2) "fire," and (3) "salt."

The first teaching is about little ones. Little ones is a word picture for new Christians. God asks teachers and leaders in His kingdom to be responsible for new Christians. Teachers and leaders must show new Christians special care. In the same way, the Old Testament teaches that we should care for the people in our communities who need our help the most: widows, orphans, and foreigners. Jesus says that it would be better for someone to drown in the sea than to cause one of these new Christians to sin.

In Mark 9:42–50, is Jesus really teaching people to cut off their hand or foot? Or to remove one of their eyes? Also, is Jesus teaching that hell is a place where people will burn forever? The answer to the first question is no. Jesus is not teaching us to hurt our bodies. The Jews were against this behavior (compare with Deuteronomy 14:1; 1 Kings 18:27, 28). The Lord is using word pictures to teach an important lesson: we may think losing a hand, foot, or eye is terrible, but sinning is far worse!

The answer to the second question also is no. Jesus is not teaching that people will burn in hell forever. How do we know? Think about the people who are going to heaven in Jesus' example. They enter heaven with only one eye, foot, or hand. Now think about the people who are going to hell. They enter into hell with all their body parts. A healthy man in hell? Shouldn't it be the other way around? A healthy man will go to heaven. Jesus uses humor to help us understand the topic. He wants us to know that sin is very bad. We should be willing to lose a hand, foot, or eye before we are willing to lose everlasting life!

Hell's flames are not everlasting. But what the flames burn up stays dead forever. So, people who are lost don't burn forever. But they do stay dead forever.



Jesus says that it would be better for someone to drown in the sea than to cause one of these new Christians to sin.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Ministry,” and “Who Is the Greatest?” in *The Desire of Ages*, pages 426–442.

“Do you wish to be honored? Then first you must empty your heart of all pride. When God chooses people for important jobs on earth, He chooses workers who are the same as John the Baptist in their hearts. John the Baptist was not filled with pride. When we are this same way in our hearts, we will be much the same as a child. A follower who is the same as a child makes the best worker for God. Angels can work with God’s followers who are trying to save other people. These followers are not filled with pride. They do not live to honor self.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 436, adapted.

“What gifts did God give you that He didn’t give to someone else? Maybe God blessed you with the education, training, and religious experience that most other people don’t have. God gave you these gifts that He didn’t give to other people so that you will use these gifts to bless them. Are you strong? Then help those who are weak. Angels love to help God’s children. These angels shine bright with God’s glory, and always see the face of the Father in heaven. God commands the angels to watch over people who are not easy for us to love. Angels go where they are most needed. The ones who need their help the most are the people who have the hardest battles with self to fight. These people live in places that do not give them much hope. God’s loyal followers will work with His angels to help these needy and suffering people.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 440, adapted.



“God’s loyal followers will work with His angels to help these needy and suffering people.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read again Mark 8:27–29. How often do you confess to other people that you believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?
- ② Compare God’s view of success with the human view of success. How are the two different? What type of men and women do most people think are important? Who does God think is a success that the people on this earth pay no attention to or may not even like very much? What do your answers tell us about how wrong the sinner’s ideas about success really are?

PART 4: A BIG DISAGREEMENT OVER FOOD

One Sabbath, Anush and Mother came home from church. Anush learned that Father made plans for a picnic in the country. He told them, “Let’s barbecue.”

Anush said, “No Father. That’s not a good plan. I don’t eat meat anymore.”

Father decided not to go on the picnic. But he didn’t really understand that Anush gave up eating meat for good. The next day, Father made chicken for Sunday lunch. He offered her a piece. Anush said, “Father, I don’t eat any meat.” Now Father understood. He got upset. He thought that eating no meat was not normal.

The next day, Father told Anush and her mother that they couldn’t go to prayer meeting at the house church in their town. When Mother and Anush got upset, Father got angry. He complained about Adventists. He didn’t like that they gave God tithes or 10% of all the money they got (Malachi 3:8–10). If that wasn’t bad enough, they gave God offerings, too. Father blamed the Adventist Church for being a foreign group that wanted to destroy Armenia. Father said bad things about the way that Anush lived. Father said, “Today you say, ‘I don’t eat meat.’ Tomorrow you will say, ‘I don’t have a father.’”

Anush sat quietly and prayed in her heart. She said, “What shall I say, Lord?” Every time Father spoke against God or the church, she prayed, “Father is not really saying these things to me. He’s saying them to You. It’s your job to answer.” Then Anush remembered Romans 2:4, which says, “God is kind to you so that you will change your hearts and lives” (ICB). Anush believed that God was telling her to show the same love to her father. Anush prayed, “Help me to love him. Amen.”

Father owned a small grocery store. When Father left Mother or Anush in charge, they didn’t sell alcohol or cigarettes. Now, as Father scolded them, he felt guilty. He said, “Do you think that I’m evil and you’re good because I sell alcohol and cigarettes, and you don’t? I’m a better Christian than you both! To prove it, I will lead Sabbath worship from now on. So, you no longer need to go to church.”

That announcement ended the conversation. Anush went to her room. Mother followed. Both were surprised. Mother said, “What will we do now?”

Anush suggested that they cooperate with Father as long as he honored the Bible. Anush said, “Father said we will worship at home on Sabbath. He didn’t take away our Bibles. He also respects the Sabbath. Let’s wait for Sabbath. If Father keeps his promise, we will keep the Sabbath at home with him. If he breaks his promise, we will pray and let the Lord lead us.”

INSIDE Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



When Father left Mother or Anush in charge, they didn’t sell alcohol or cigarettes.