

8:31-38 'Rely on Jesus to get glory later'

8:31-33 Jesus will die, then rise

8:34-38 Disciples must 'die', then rise

'Deny self' & 'take up cross'

The rest of Mark 8-13 demonstrates that *to deny oneself*, or *to take up one's cross* means to no longer rely on self, or one's current life, works, privileges or status.

9:1-13 Transfiguration: a trailer of later glory

9:1 Peter, James and John ('some') will not die before seeing the 'glory later'

9:2-8 A preview of:

- the brilliant glory of King Jesus
- a world where Moses and Elijah are alive

9:9-10 Q: what's the transfiguration about?

A: a preview of the general resurrection

9:11-13 Q: does Elijah need to come before the general resurrection?

A: yes, but that checkpoint has already been reached!

'Elijah must come first'

Malachi 4:5 says,

'See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.'

9:14-29 An example of relying on self, rather than relying on Jesus

Boy's deathly situation:

- can't speak (9:17)
- thrown to ground, foams at mouth, becomes rigid (9:18)
- thrown into fire/water to kill him (9:22)
- 'he's dead!' (9:26)

Disciples' self-reliance:

- unable to drive out spirit by themselves (9:18)
- 'unbelieving generation' (9:19)
- didn't rely on Jesus (9:28-29)

9:30-50 Relying on Jesus for eternal life means spending this life helping others reach it

9:30-32 Jesus setting the pattern of *dying, then rising*

9:33-34 Disciples' wrong intuition: be *great* now

9:35-41 Jesus: be servants of all now

↓ ↓
 9:36-37 'all' includes even children
 9:38-41 serving other gospel workers

9:42-50 Purpose of service is *eternal life*

- implication: importance of church family

Salt metaphor

salt *noun*

humility; lowliness *Mark 9:50*

i.e. the opposite of competitive greatness; the disposition which makes peace with others possible

to be salted *verb, passive*

to be humbled; brought low *Mark 9:49*

i.e. to undergo God's fiery judgment, in which pretensions to greatness are decisively reduced

Mark 8-13 section

Verses	Function	Main point
8:31-10:52	The right way to enter Jesus' kingdom	Rely on God
11:1-12:44	The wrong way to enter the kingdom	Rely on external religious credentials/respectability
13:1-37	Motivation to choose the right way	God destroyed the definitive 'wrong way' (Jewish temple)

Small group discussion questions

- 8:31-38 1. 'Must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me'
 This expression in 8:34 is vague, and this vagueness has led to a wide range of interpretations. Below are four unpacked/amplified versions – please consider and score each between 0-5.
 NB this exercise requires at least some familiarity with Mark 8:31-13:37

Mark 8:34 variations	Score out of 5	
	Closeness to usage by Mark 8-13	Biblically/theologically kosher
A. Earn eternal life! 'Whoever wants to be my disciple [and earn eternal life] must deny themselves and take up their cross [i.e. sacrifice themselves] and follow me [obey me].'		
B. Prove your faith! 'Whoever wants to be my disciple [and prove genuine faith] must deny themselves [no longer self-serve but serve others] and take up their cross [accept suffering] and follow me [persevere in obedience].'		
C. Who/what do you trust? 'Whoever wants to be my disciple [and receive <i>eternal</i> life from me] must deny themselves [reject reliance on obedience/respectability] and take up their cross [reject reliance on your <i>current</i> life] and follow me [rely on me].'		
D. Who is in charge? 'Whoever wants to be my disciple [and submit to my rule] must deny themselves [reject self-rule] and take up their cross [accept suffering as part of team-Jesus] and follow me [obey me].'		

2. 'Seems a little *extra* there, Leo?'
 Why might these differences A, B, C, D above matter?

9:1-13	3. <u>Transfiguration as a 'glory later' trailer</u> How persuaded are you that the transfiguration is a 'glory later' preview? If not, what alternate view do you suggest? How does 'Elijah must come first' affect your reading? In Malachi 4:5, God says, 'See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.'
9:14-29	4. <u>'This kind can come out only by prayer'</u> How persuaded are you that the disciples' problem is more: a. trusting the <i>wrong person</i> (i.e. themselves rather than Jesus) rather than b. the <i>degree of trust</i> they had in Jesus being too weak?
9:30-50	5. <u>'This is your spare life'</u> Logically-speaking, if eternal life is (a) true and (b) much better than this life, then how reasonable would giving up on this life be, in order to help others get eternal life? What obstacles, then, do we have that make us reluctant to think like this?

Getting back into the text

- 8:31-38
1. What is the effect of Mark recording that Jesus ‘must’ suffer and die, rather than e.g. merely predicting that he will?
 2. Why does Mark contrast ‘the concerns of God’ with ‘human concerns’ in 8:33?
 3. What is the literary effect of the repeated reversal: *save your life* → *lose it*; *lose life* → *save it*?
 4. Why does Mark escalate from ‘saving your life’ to ‘gaining the whole world’?
 5. What is the effect of ending this teaching paragraph with the Son of Man coming in glory?
- 9:1-13
6. Why might Mark give the reader a visual demonstration of Jesus’ glory here, rather than merely another statement about it?
 7. What is the effect of Mark dwelling on the extraordinary brightness of Jesus’ clothes?
 8. What might Moses and Elijah represent?
 9. What is the significance of God’s voice saying, ‘This is my son, whom I love. Listen to him’?
 10. What do you make of the almost clumsy phrasing of 9:9-10 and repeating ‘rising from the dead’?
 11. What is the effect of inserting the Elijah discussion before returning to Jesus’ suffering? Why resolve that apparent prophetic obstacle here?
- 9:14-29
12. What is the effect of cutting directly from (a) the glory on the mountain to (b) the confusion and failure back on low ground?
 13. Why does Mark introduce the disciples in this scene not merely failing, but arguing with the teachers of the law? What impression does that create?
 14. What is the effect of Mark piling up detail after detail about the boy’s terrifying condition?
 15. Why does Mark give us the father’s movement from ‘if you can’ to ‘I do believe; help my unbelief’? What contrast does that create with the disciples?
 16. What is the effect of Jesus’ answer being ‘prayer’?
- 9:30-50
17. Why does Mark repeat Jesus’ prediction of his death and resurrection so soon after 8:31?
 18. What is the effect of telling us again that the disciples do not understand? Mark adds that they were ‘afraid to ask him’ – what does that detail contribute?
 19. What is the effect of placing the disciples’ argument about who is greatest immediately after Jesus predicts being killed?
 20. How does the ‘first → last’ reversal in 9:35-37 work together with the earlier reversal in 8:34-38 ‘save your life → lose it; lose your life → save it’?
 21. What is the effect of escalating *welcome one such child* → *welcome Jesus* → *welcome God*?
 22. What is the effect of John’s rationale, ‘because he was not one of us’ in 9:38?
 23. Mark spends 1 verse discussing what you can do to another person (9:42), then 4-6 verses (depending on footnotes) warning what you can do to yourself (9:43-48). What can you deduce from this weighting of verses?
 24. To what extent might hand → foot → eye make Jesus’ warning progressively harder to evade?
 25. Mark contrasts (a) the mutilation of our present bodies with (b) entering eternal life. How might this impact our valuation of eternal life?
 26. Why might Mark leave the salt theme unexplained?
 27. How does that ending ‘be at peace with each other’ contrast with the disciples’ argument about who is the greatest in 9:33-34?

Psalm 2 (ESVUK)

Psalmist

2 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
² The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD
and against his Anointed^a, saying,
³ “Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us.”

Humanity plots against God (v1-3)

⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
⁶ “As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill.”

God crowns his King... (v4-6)

God's King

⁷ I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me,
“You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.
⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

...who will smash his enemies (v7-9)

Psalmist

¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,
and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Therefore, kiss the Son (v10-12)

^a Or *Messiah* (Hebrew); or *Christ* (Greek)

<u>Mark 8:31-13:37</u> Surprise #2 Jesus' kingdom is for the humble, not externally religious	<u>Mark 14:1-16:8</u> Surprise #3 The mighty eternal King Jesus did actually suffer a miserable death
--	--

²⁹ 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'

Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah.'

³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. 'Get behind me, Satan!' he said. 'You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.'

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life^a will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.'

9 And he said to them, 'Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.'

² After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!'

⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

^a The Greek word means either *life* or *soul*; also in verses 36 and 37.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what 'rising from the dead' meant.

¹¹ And they asked him, 'Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?'

¹² Jesus replied, 'To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? ¹³ But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.'

¹⁴ When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵ As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

¹⁶ 'What are you arguing with them about?' he asked.

¹⁷ A man in the crowd answered, 'Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.'

¹⁹ 'You unbelieving generation,' Jesus replied, 'how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.'

²⁰ So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

²¹ Jesus asked the boy's father, 'How long has he been like this?'

'From childhood,' he answered. ²² 'It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.'

²³ "'If you can?'" said Jesus. 'Everything is possible for one who believes.'

²⁴ Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'

²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. 'You deaf and mute spirit,' he said, 'I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.'

²⁶ The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, 'He's dead.' ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

²⁸ After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?'

²⁹ He replied, 'This kind can come out only by prayer.^a'

³⁰ They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹ because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.' ³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

³³ They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' ³⁴ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

³⁵ Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.'

³⁶ He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.'

³⁸ 'Teacher,' said John, 'we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.'

³⁹ 'Do not stop him,' Jesus said. 'For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰ for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

⁴² 'If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung round their neck and they were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.^b ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell.^c ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where

“the worms that eat them do not die,
and the fire is not quenched.”^d

⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire.

^a Some manuscripts *prayer and fasting*

^b Some manuscripts include here the words of verse 48.

^c Some manuscripts include here the words of verse 48.

^d Isaiah 66:24

Isaiah 66:22-24

²² “For as the new heavens
and the new earth that I make
shall remain before me,
says the LORD,
so shall your offspring
and your name remain.

²³ From new moon to new moon,
and from Sabbath to Sabbath,
all flesh shall come
to worship before me,
declares the LORD.

²⁴ “And they shall go out and look
on the dead bodies of the men
who have rebelled against me.
For their worm shall not die,
their fire shall not be quenched,
and they shall be
an abhorrence to all flesh.”

⁵⁰ 'Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.'

10 Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

² Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?'

³ 'What did Moses command you?' he replied.

⁴ They said, 'Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.'

⁵ 'It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,' Jesus replied. ⁶ 'But at the beginning of creation God "made them male and female".^a ⁷ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,"^b ⁸ and the two will become one flesh."^c So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'

¹⁰ When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹ He answered, 'Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹² And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.'

¹³ People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

¹⁸ 'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good – except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother."^d

²⁰ 'Teacher,' he declared, 'all these I have kept since I was a boy.'

^a Genesis 1:27

^b Some early manuscripts do not have *and be united to his wife*.

^c Genesis 2:24

^d Exodus 20:12-16; Deuteronomy 5:16-20