



Small Group Leader Guide

Mark 8:27-38 | What Jesus Said About...You

Prepare: Things to do before your small group gets together

- **Consider** yourself. What makes you, you? What are the things about you that other people would say are your best qualities? What would the people who know you best say are your worst qualities? Upon reflection, what keeps you from being who God wants you to be? **Pray** and spend time with God letting him examine you. **Thank God** for searching you and revealing the truth about you, both the negative and the positive. **Praise Him** for the reality that you are wonderfully made, that He has known you from the beginning, that He is the author and designer of your destiny, and that He guides your paths. **Ask God** to show you what He expects of you, and to give you the faith to walk by faith in obedience.
- **Read** the following Mark 8:27-38. **Notice** the emphasis that Jesus places on understanding who Jesus and His call to relate with Him in the proper manner. **Submit** your heart to God's conviction, that you may be exhorted to experience anew the timely activity of God's Holy Spirit in your life.
- **Preview** this material and engage with God's Spirit as He guides your study.
- **Pray** for your small group members by name, asking God to use you to be a teacher of influence for each person in your group, for the glory and cause of Jesus. **Seek God's wisdom** in leading your small group to apply God's word to their lives. **Commit yourself** to the Lord, that you would live what you teach.

To The Point – What to impart to your small group

Key Verse: "And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Luke 8:34)"

Objectives: Through your time exploring this passage, your small group members will:

Discuss the identity of Jesus and the implications of relating to Him as the Christ.

Explore the ways people deny the identity and authority of Jesus.

Apply the personal responsibilities and opportunities to follow Jesus, understanding the costs and consequences.

Encounter: A suggested plan for your small group experience

Ice Breaker: Guess Who's Coming to Small Group

Prepare: As people arrive, write the name of each participant on a scrap of paper. Once everyone has arrived, put all the scraps in a bowl or hat (or a bowler hat).

Say Each person take a scrap of paper. If it is your own name, put it back and take another. Don't tell anyone else whose name you have. Once everyone has a name, we will go around and see if the rest of us can guess the name you have. The challenge: you only get two words to describe the person. The words can't be the person's name, or any other name of a family member. They have to be adjectives, like "nice," or "creative." Try to choose words that are specific (and positive!).

Participate in the activity, until everyone has had an opportunity to play.

Say In this final time together in the "What Jesus said about..." series, we're taking a look at what He said about you. The fact is, Jesus said many things about you, and there were many ways we could take this particular discussion. However, we are focusing on what He said about you, pertaining to relating with Him. In this, we simplify life to its most important relationship, and bring clarity and definition about who you are from God's perspective.

Open in prayer for your time together.

Who is Jesus to you? (Luke 8:27-30)

Jesus asks the disciples what other people are saying about him; namely, who others think he is. What are their responses, and what is significant about those responses?

Others are saying about Jesus that He is:

- *John the Baptist - There was rampant gossip that He was John the Baptist, resurrected from the dead (see Mark 6:14-16)*
- *Elijah - The Jewish people expected, according to Mal. 4:5, Elijah to return as a precursor to Messiah.*
- *One of the prophets - Many thought Jesus was another in the long line of prophets, sent by God to deliver divine messages to His people.*

What stands out to you about verse 29?

Allow the group to respond. Responses may include:

- *Jesus transitioned from the matter of what everyone else was thinking/saying, to their personal understanding.*
- *Jesus was emphasizing that it was their personal understanding that mattered, not what was popular or even commonly thought about Him.*
- *His question centered on their understanding of His identity, not His function.*

Who do you say that Jesus is? What does it mean that Jesus is the Christ, as Peter declared?

Allow the group to respond. Highlight that Peter's response illuminates Jesus as Messiah, the Savior of the world, promised from the beginning (Gen. 3:15-16), and prophesied throughout history. He is the Christ, the Savior of the Gentiles. He is the one anointed and appointed to atone for the sins of humans, who alone came to save the world from the impending judgment and wrath of God against all unrighteousness.

What do you think are some of mistaken thoughts that people today have about Jesus?

Allow the group to respond. Responses may include:

- *That Jesus is a great teacher.*
- *That Jesus is a good example of the human ideal.*
- *That Jesus is a myth, or a legend.*
- *That Jesus never claimed to be the Christ, or God Himself.*
- *That Jesus is just one incarnation of God, but no different than Buddha, Allah, or any number of other deified personalities throughout human history.*

Why do you think Jesus forbade the disciples from telling others that He was the Christ?

Allow the group to respond. The "Messianic Secret" is a common theme in Mark. Publicly, Jesus did not permit His identity as Messiah to be popularized, possibly because the widespread politicization, misunderstanding, and outright ignorance pertaining to the mission of the Messiah. However, privately, Jesus sought and affirmed this understanding. You may also be interested to note to your group the paradox that in the Bible, Jesus repeatedly told people not to spread the word of who He is, but people went and told others. Today, Jesus has a standing command for us to tell others, and many people never tell anyone else about who He is!

Problems with Authority Figures (Mark 8:31-33)

Upon the disciples' understanding of Jesus as the Christ, verse 31 reveals the implications of His identity. What stands out to you in this verse?

Allow the group to respond. Responses could include:

- *He self-identifies as the Son of Man. This is indicative that the role of the Messiah is come to serve men and die so that all people may live.*
- *He must suffer many things. The suffering of Jesus shows that His anointing and appointment highlights the depth and breadth of human rebellion against God.*
- *He must be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes. He would be rejected by the civic leaders, the spiritual leaders, and the religious experts. He would be rejected by those esteemed to have the utmost human wisdom. His rejection is the thorough evidence of the incomprehensibility of the love, grace, mercy, and righteousness of God Almighty!*
- *He would be killed. We have no shortage of animosity against our Creator, that we not only would murder Him, but that we would subject Him to ignominy and humiliation in doing so.*
- *After three days, he would rise again. It almost seems like an afterthought, this promise of victory. It demonstrates that Jesus would in fact die...and remain dead for three days. There would be no way to suggest that Jesus did not really die, that He merely swooned. His resurrection was inevitable, but for it to pass, He must die!*

You may want to note that verse 32 clearly teaches that all these things Jesus said plainly. He wasn't trying to be metaphorical or vague. This was a clear, consistent private teaching of Jesus.

What do you make of Peter's attempted rebuke of Jesus?

Peter did not understand what it meant that Jesus was the Christ. He had been shaped

by the socio/political cultural/religious understanding of Jesus' Messianic identity. Jesus' own teaching contradicted and challenged Peter's understanding and expectations of who Jesus was supposed to be and what Jesus was supposed to do. So he attempted to rebuke Jesus to "snap Him back" to Peter's own lesser agenda.

How do we sometimes/often settle for a less-than-who-He-truly-is appreciation of Jesus?

Allow participants to respond. Responses may include:

- *Some people have a cheap appreciation for Jesus as Savior. They see Him as saving them from the mess they are in at that moment, or from the mistakes they have made, but they don't appreciate their own sinful nature or the depth of their own depravity that can only be atoned for by the death of the Spotless, Sinless Lamb of God.*
- *Some people see Jesus as the good example or the idealized human who offers a sage approach to life, but without any realistic expectation of living consistently the way He lived.*
- *Some people see Jesus as the timeless therapist, the Cosmic Counselor who offers them therapeutic aid for their circumstances, without requiring anything more of them in an ongoing way.*
- *Some people see Jesus as their "God in a box," who they can put on the shelf to be accessed for their circumstantial need, and put away at all other times.*

How did Jesus respond to Peter, and how does He similarly respond to our contemporary mistaken approaches to Jesus?

Jesus rebuked Peter, and rebukes our carnal, man-sized views of who Jesus is. He is not available to accommodate our selfish agenda for the Savior of the World. He is not beholden to our limited views, our impaired perception, and our ignoble purposes for Him. He is God! He alone had the authority to rebuke Satan and rebut any carnal agenda. In going to the cross, He showed the ultimate folly of men's plans to force the will of God. He will not be constrained, restrained, obstructed, or undone. The cross could not hold Him, the grave could not imprison Him, and you cannot control Him!

The Cost & Consequences (Luke 8:34-38)

Jesus now returns His teaching to the crowd, and clearly teaches that if you are going to come after Jesus, you must take up your cross and follow Him. What does that mean to you?

Allow the group to respond. Responses may include:

- *Following Jesus is about relationship. He wants you to be with Him, and go where He is going.*
- *He went to the cross and died. If you want to follow Jesus, you must expect that doing so will come at a personal expense. You will have to give up your life (either literally or, for most people, at least figuratively).*
- *It is "your cross." Your cost is personal. You don't have to pick up Jesus cross. He already was nailed to "THE cross" to pay for your sins. The weight of your own cross, while significant to you, pales by comparison. Only because Jesus went to the cross, are you likewise able to even pick up your cross.*

What does "losing your life" look like to you?

Allow the group to respond. Responses may include:

- *For many people in history, they paid the ultimate cost and gave their lives for the name of Jesus and the sake of the Gospel.*
- *Most of us don't ever have to pay that steep price, or even consider having to follow Jesus to the martyr's death.*
- *Most of us have to lose our lives of self...our priorities, our comforts, our extravagancies, our luxuries, our conveniences, our reputations, our leisure, our excesses, our indulgences.*
- *Some of us have to lose our reputations as self-made men and women.*
- *Some of us have to lose our stubborn selfishness that manifests itself as prideful independence.*
- *Some of us have to lose our self-glorifying sense of entitlement.*

What does verse 37 indicate about what God values compared to what people value? What is the implication of this difference?

People value life, defined by the relatively short time on earth and measured by what we can acquire and accumulate while here. God, though, values the soul, the "true you" that lives on eternally and is independently valued apart from temporal acquisitions. The implication is that the great act of faith (and great gift of faith) is to re-orient your understanding of self according to what God has revealed, rather than continue in your human understanding, at the cost of forsaking your soul.

What does verse 38 reveal about the role of Jesus as the Christ in the matters of your life, from an eternal perspective?

Verse 38 reveals that following Jesus as the Christ of God is an act of faith where you show you have no shame in living transparently before the world with your belief in who He is. You count the cost of your self as being worth the consequence of being honored by Jesus before God in heaven. You'd rather be a fool before all people than be ashamed before God.

What does this unashamed life look like for you this week? What adjustments do you need to make? Where is Jesus leading you that you have been unwilling to go?

Allow the group to respond.

What is one "take-away" for you from this chapter?

Allow the group participants to respond.

Say Jesus determined you were worth dying for, so you could truly live. He thinks exceedingly encouraging, life-giving thoughts about you, and speaks wonderfully redemptive words into your life. Now, by the grace of God, with the mind of Christ, and the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, may we live in this reality, abiding in Christ and bearing fruit that glorifies God!

Close in prayer: Invite the group to pray for one another. Pray over any needs or issues that were shared in your time together. Pray over the content discussed in your small group, highlighting the aspects that God's Spirit revealed to your group as important. Confirm your plans for your next gathering!