



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V22 N46 November 29, 2020

## KING JESUS

“Follow Me to Death”

Mark 8:34-9:1

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Disciple-Making

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues, and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

*“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”*

2 Timothy 2:2



What does it take to follow Jesus?

Children are typically asked “What do you want to be when you grow up?” While the question hasn’t changed over the years, children’s answers have. Surveys have been taken, of course, and their findings reported. I found the findings of one recent survey particularly interesting; it compared what elementary school children said they wanted to be with what high school students said they wanted to be. Six professions appeared on the top-ten career lists for both. Here they are in no particular order: professional athlete, teacher/professor, scientist, artist, musician/singer, and doctor. The reasons behind their choices are more or less evident. Students watch sports and play sports. It comes as no surprise that many would want to play basketball like LeBron James or soccer like Hope Solo, football like Patrick Mahomes or tennis like Serena Williams. Teachers make a life-changing impact on their students; no wonder students see themselves as teachers making a similar impact on others. It goes without saying that students listen to music a lot and make music, too. Naturally, they have their favorite artists, and if musicians themselves, they likely have artists they aspire to be like. Doctors help people, and scientists are cool. What’s more, all of these professions bring either fame or fortune or both. That said, parents remain the most powerful role models for their children. Children typically want to be like their parents and to do what their parents do. Conventional wisdom agrees. Proverbs like “Chip off the old block,” “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree,” and “Like father like son” indicate as much. Asking “What do you want to be when you grow up?” amounts to asking, “Who do you want to be like when you grow up?” The answer to that question is important because people turn out to be like their role models, the people they follow.

The same is true for adults. And while having role models is generally associated with children, adults have role models and mentors, too—some who model character, some who model success, some who model both. Speaking personally, I have accrued numerous role models and mentors over the years. I had a special relationship with my father, a patient

man, who lived a simple life. I had a Sunday School teacher, a man of integrity, who gave freely of his time to teach and coach fifteen-year-old boys. It was his love and encouragement rather than his teaching that left an indelible impression on me. In Bible college, a Dallas Seminary trained professor frequently hosted students in his home. One semester he taught an elective course I was taking in his home. I’ll never forget the hours I spent with fellow students talking theology with him after class. The pastor of the church where I first served students reshaped my thinking about the ministry, emancipating me from my legalism. He encouraged me to continue my education, giving me permission to attend seminary. Unfortunately, my church tradition frowned on higher education in general and seminary education in particular. During my seminary years, I developed close relationships with two faculty members in particular. I learned how to pastor from the first, whom Ruth and I named our only son after, and how to interpret the Bible from the second. I think it’s safe to say that throughout my ministry I have tried to be like them. I will forever be grateful to them both. I must mention one last person, the president of the university where I served for twelve years. He provided me with a model of Christian leadership and an example of Christian leadership to follow. I suspect that your experience, like mine, testifies to *the power of personal relationships to transform lives*.

Making disciples involves becoming one, too, and there can be no doubt that the decision we make regarding the ones we choose to emulate, the ones we choose to follow, is of utmost importance. We inevitably become like them! This implies that people who want to be like Jesus must choose to follow him. It’s a wise choice to make. Jesus himself says in Mark 8:34-37: “If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and because of the gospel will save it. For what benefit is it for a person to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his life? What can a person give in exchange for his life?” (NET).

# 1

## EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

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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 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."

9:1 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."

### READ in another translation

Then Jesus called the crowd, along with his disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and because of the gospel will save it. 36 For what benefit is it for a person to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his life? 37 What can a person give in exchange for his life? 38 For if anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

1 And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, there are some standing here who will not experience death before they see the kingdom of God come with power." (NET)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "crowd" in v. 34.
- Circle "my disciple" in v. 34.
- Bracket "take up their cross" in v. 34.
- Bracket "follow me" in v. 34.
- Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 35.
- Insert "for" at the beginning of vv. 36, 37, 38 (see NET).
- Underline "save" and "lose" in v. 35.
- Double underline "life" (2x) in v. 35 and "soul" in vv. 36, 37.
- Circle "ashamed" (2x) in vv. 38.
- Circle "Father's glory" in v. 38.
- Circle "has come" in 9:1.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What is the subject of Mark 8:34-9:1? What is Jesus talking about in these verses?
2. "Jesus called the *crowd* to him along with *his disciples*." How would you describe Jesus' audience?
3. Put what "deny themselves" means in your own words and give an example.
4. Put what "take up their cross" means in your own words and give an example.
5. Put what "follow me" (present imperative) means in your own words and give an example.
6. Contrast the *risk of refusing* to be Jesus' disciple with the *reward of choosing* to be his disciple (v. 35).
7. Give the *implied* answer to each of the two *rhetorical* questions in verses 36 and 37.
8. When the Son of Man comes, he will be *ashamed* of those who are *ashamed* of him. What exactly does that mean?
9. To what event does 9:1 refer?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about whether you think Jesus' warning pertains in theological terms to *justification* or *sanctification*.

### Commentary On The Text

Following Peter's confession, "You are the Messiah" (Mk 8:29), Jesus explained "that the Son of Man," referring to himself, "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" (v. 31). This revelation touched a nerve in Peter and the others, making it necessary for Jesus to explain what is required of those who want to be his disciples. The subject of verses 34-38 is discipleship; Jesus is listing what his followers must do and why. It is "the first of several passages on the nature, cost, and consequences of discipleship" (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 202). Rewards *not eternal life* hang in the balance. Jesus lists the demands of discipleship in the form of three imperatives in verse 34 and then follows up with four explanatory statements in verses 35-38 — each beginning with the Greek word *gar* ("for"), only one of which is translated in the NIV (cf., NET).

Jesus tells not just the Twelve but any who want to follow him, that is, to be his disciples to do three essential things: "deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (v. 34). They must first "deny themselves," "not things that the self wants, but the self itself. Jesus calls for a deliberate refusal to be guided by self-interest, for a conscious surrender of control over one's life, for an intentional renunciation of self-determination" (Schnabel, 202). They must also "take up their cross." One commentator writes: "Cross-bearing is a powerful ancient image . . . Criminals bore their own crosses as they journeyed to their death. Thus for a Christian to bear a cross is to be prepared to face rejection and death, even as one remains accountable to God for the path one walks. It means that one has died to the world, separated from its values and lifestyle (Gal. 6:14)" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 265). Finally, they must follow Jesus. Unlike the others, this third command views following Jesus not as a discrete act but as something the disciple must do daily.

Jesus goes on to explain four things. *First*, there is something to be lost by those who refuse to follow Jesus and something to be gained by those who agree to follow him. On the one hand, whoever chooses to "save their life," that is, whoever refuses to surrender their life to Jesus and his will for them, "will lose it," namely, their life. In the end, they will find that they have lived their life in vain and have nothing of eternal value to show for it. On the other hand, whoever "loses their life," that is, whoever surrenders their life to Jesus and his will for them, "will save it," namely, their life. In the end, they will find that they have lived a full, meaningful life and have much of eternal value to show for it. One commentator explains: "One may speak of a life

preserved from the standpoint of temporal experience, but lost from the standpoint of eternity. Thus a martyr for the cause of Christ has certainly lost his life in a temporal sense. But the life laid down for God is not really lost. Indeed, such a life achieves a kind of immortality. Its value and impact are unending, as is also the glory it gains for the Christian who has made such a sacrifice. On the other hand to shrink from the pathway of obedient suffering may be temporarily self-preserving. But the life thus selfishly held back is lost in terms of enduring eternal worth. It would be a mistake to think here of heaven or hell. The call which preceded this challenging conception is a call to self-denial and bearing one's cross. It is a call to follow Jesus, that is, a call to discipleship" (Zane Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 29). Another captures the thought in a nutshell: "Verse 24 summarizes the point nicely. If you try to save your life by preserving yourself from the opposition of the world and/or by accommodating yourself to the world, what results is loss of *real life*. On the other hand, if you are willing to lose your life for the sake of the things of God, then what you save is *real life*" (Bock, 266, italics added).

*Second*, whoever gains the *whole* world at the price of his *whole* life strikes a fool's bargain. It amounts to no good (v. 36). *Third*, to make matters worse, since no one can regain their spent life at any price, theirs is an irrevocable choice (v. 37). And *finally*, when Jesus comes, he will be ashamed of whoever was ashamed of him (v. 38). This suggests that whoever was ashamed of Jesus "in this adulterous and sinful generation" will suffer loss when Jesus comes as judge. But will it be the loss of salvation or the loss of reward? One commentator suggests: "Those who were too ashamed to identify with Christ will experience Christ's shame. The effect of Christ's shame is not specified, but one could surmise that for a redeemed and now fully-enlightened believer, this would at least produce *agonizing regret*. In the parallel passage, Matt 10:32-33, the idea of *recompense is good (v 32) or bad (v 33) accordingly*. Christ's confession (or lack of it) in heaven would not relate to the judgment of our salvation, but to an acknowledgment (or lack of it) before the Father of the disciples' unity or fellowship with Christ which is recompensed in an unspecified but appropriate way. (However, one might compare 2 Tim 2:12, where reigning with Christ is the specific reward)" (Bing, 33, italics added).

Jesus' comment regarding the coming of the Son of Man is followed by an authoritative announcement ("Truly, I tell you") to the effect that some standing alongside Jesus will see the kingdom of God come with power before they die. The close connection of Jesus' announcement to the events described in 9:2-13, indicates that the transfiguration offers a preview and guarantee of the Son of Man's future glorious appearing.

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## Word Studies/Notes

v. 34 *crowd*                      The crowd contains people who believe Jesus is the Messiah as do the Twelve. "By calling the crowd Jesus indicates that the conditions for following him are relevant for all believers, and not for the disciples alone . . . It indicated that the stringent demand for self-renunciation and cross-bearing extends not only to Church leaders but to all who confess that Jesus is the Messiah" (William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, 306). "The presence of a crowd of people who are at least potentially followers of Jesus suggests that Jesus and the disciples have started to move south into Jewish territory . . . If the 'high mountain' on which the transfiguration took place (9:2) was Mount Meiron in northern Galilee, the present scene could have taken place in a settlement such as Meroth (mod. Horbat Marus) on the northern boundary of Upper Galilee (Josephus, *War* 3.40)" (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 202). The "high mountain" (9:2) is more often identified as Mount Hermon, the only truly high mountain in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi (8:27); however, that identification fails to account for the "crowd of people."

v. 34 *my disciple*                      Lit., "follow after me;" cf., "be my follower" (NLT); "become my follower" (NET). "Although 'following' Jesus is not a technical term for being a disciple throughout Mark, in 8:22-10:52 it is frequently used in this sense (cf., 8:34; 9:38; 10:21, 28,52; Luz 1983: 84; contra Gundry 1993: 453)" (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 406).

v. 34 *take up . . .*                      "For the first-century inhabitant of the Roman Empire, taking up one's cross would call to mind the condemned person carrying his cross to the place of execution (see Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 62: 'People were all too aware of what it meant to bear the cross through the city and then to be nailed to it')" (Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 34B, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 25). "The expression 'take up the cross' refers to the practice of criminal condemned to crucifixion carrying to the place of execution the *patibulum*, the heavy horizontal beam or crossbar to which their outstretched arms were eventually attached with nails or ropes; this was then hoisted up on a post so that the criminal could be exposed to the public until he died (cf., 15:21; Matt. 27:32; Luke 23:26; John 19:17)" (Schnabel, 203).

v. 34 *follow me*                      The repetition of "follow" as a specific requirement for being "my follower" (NET) is somewhat clumsy, which explains why the NIV translates "my disciple" in the first instance. "Unlike the aorist tenses found in the opening two requirements for becoming a disciple, the present impera-

ative found in the third requirement emphasizes the continual nature of following Jesus. Thus the 'act' of denying oneself and taking up one's cross is followed by the process of following Jesus (Best 1981: 32) . . . What is being emphasized is not the road to martyrdom but the continual following of Jesus until his return (13:32-37; 14:25) and enduring to the end (13:13; Matt. 10:22; 24:13)" (Stein, 407).

v. 35 *save, lose*                      "The verb *save* (*sozo*) often does not refer to eternal salvation. It is probably used here in the general sense of 'rescue, preserve from danger' or 'deliver' i.e., save from a life of self-denial and cross-bearing, for this thought explains ('For,' *gar*) the impact of the previous conditions" (Charles C. Bing, "The Cost of Discipleship," [faithalone.org/journal-articles/the-cost-of-discipleship](http://faithalone.org/journal-articles/the-cost-of-discipleship), 33). "People who *want to save their life* (NRSV) are people who refuse to deny themselves (negative sense of 'save'), whereas people who lose their life for Jesus' sake *will save it* (positive sense of save)" (Schnabel, 204). People who *lose* their life because they want to save it, having chosen to *not* follow Jesus, will find they have lived in vain and have nothing enduring to show for their life. What is at risk is not one's eternal life but the quality of one's present life and its eternal legacy. "What Jesus appears to be saying is this: 'Whoever desires to preserve himself from the hardships of God's will of self-denial and cross-bearing will in fact forfeit the essential quality (= true spiritual value) of the present life he is trying to preserve'" (Bing, 33), and will have nothing enduring to show for his present life in eternity.

vv. 35, 36, 37 *life, soul*                      In the NIV, the Gk. word *psychē* is translated "life" in verse 36 and "soul" in verses 36 and 37; in the NET, it's consistently translated "life."

v. 38 *ashamed*                      "Jesus will be ashamed of anyone who was ashamed of him . . . The coming of the "son of man" . . . in the glory of his Father with the holy angels' reverses and compensates for the earlier shame and indignity. So it is in the case of the disciples. They too will face persecution, hardship, suffering, and indignities. But if they remain true to Jesus and the kingdom proclamation, then they will save their lives and, by implication, take part in the glory of the 'son of man'" (Evans, 27), implying that those who refused to face the shame and indignity of following Jesus, will not be compensated or rewarded by sharing in the glory of the "son of man."

9:1 *has come*                      "Jesus' transfiguration was a striking preview and guarantee of His future coming in glory (cf. 2 Peter 1:16-19)" (John D. Grassmick, "Mark," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 142).

# 4

## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Whoever makes the wise choice to follow Jesus must decide to subordinate their will to his, to face the indignities of serving him, and to live daily as he lived, knowing the reward of discipleship far outweighs its cost.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



### 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## FAMILY TALK

A few months ago, I added some family pictures to my office walls. When I need a brain break, I look up and smile as I take a moment to relive the memories that bring so much joy and happiness. There’s nothing cuter than a three-year-old princess in a crown celebrating her birthday. My whole life I wanted to be a mom and I can honestly say being a parent truly is wonderful. (Especially parenting teenagers. Honestly, they’re hilarious; you’ll love teenage sarcasm!) Parenting has definitely made my marriage richer and fuller. Watching my husband with our kids makes me love him a billion times more. That being said, parenting isn’t always sunshine and rainbows. It can be extraordinarily challenging, filled with crippling anxiety and overwhelming sorrow. I think one of the hardest parts of parenting is setting our own desires aside to pour into our kids. Am I the only one who finds it hard to turn the brain off and really listen to all the words at school pick up? Am I the only one who finds it hard to rally after a long day’s work for a game of LIFE or stuffies? Am I the only one who thinks that dinner every single night is a little overrated? But, as they say, the days are long, and the years are short and I don’t want to miss a single opportunity to engage with my kids, especially when it’s Gospel related. I’m praying for all of us that God will help us to deny ourselves and enjoy all the fleeting moments with these tiny humans we can.

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 8:34-9:1.

1. What should we do in order to follow Jesus?
2. What does Jesus mean when He says we should give up the whole world?
3. What happens when we are ashamed of Jesus or His words?

### What Do You Think?

What does it mean to take up your cross and follow Jesus?

### What Do You Do?

Pray and ask God to show you what He wants in your life. Practice saying, “You first,” this week.

### CORE COMPETENCY: Single-mindedness

I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

### MEMORY VERSE: Romans 1:16

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes . . .*

## KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week’s verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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**Stephanie Thomas** (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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