

Jesus Teaches About Commitment

Mark 8:31-38

This seems to be the first time in the Bible that Jesus openly told his disciples of his coming rejection and death, and they did not like it. Peter, often a spokesman for the group, confronted Jesus about these negative comments—surely things weren't that bad, he thought. The disciples were counting on a great earthly kingdom in which Jesus would lead the Jews in overthrowing the Romans and would place his disciples in important positions. Peter wanted Jesus to change his mind and forget all this talk about dying.

Jesus' rebuke of Peter doesn't suggest that Satan had really taken control of Peter, but that Peter's wrong ideas were ones that Satan might have used to tempt Jesus. Peter's thinking was based on wrong assumptions because he saw things from a purely human point of view. In this case, Peter wasn't acknowledging Jesus as the all-knowing, all-powerful God, but as someone he hoped to influence toward his own desires. Here we see a clear statement about what it means to follow Jesus. Too often we think of God as someone who will give us the things we want, a powerful being who can help us advance our own agendas and achieve our own goals. Instead, truly following Jesus means listening to what he says, discovering his will for our lives, and then obediently following, no matter how attractive or repulsive that may seem to us at the time.

The next segment of the passage takes that concept a step further. Jesus points out how difficult it may be to become a disciple. Denying oneself means turning away from selfish,

self-protective attitudes and seeking the true humility and faith God wants to see in us.

What does it mean to take up your cross? Jesus no doubt used that wording because he knew he was going to die on a cross. For his disciples to each take up his own cross didn't mean just to endure suffering. It meant to accept the suffering they would face because of their faith in Christ. Jesus wanted his disciples to know that their faith might cost them something, a message not too often heard and an event not too often experienced in our culture today.

Devotion for Teachers

The One Thing: Humans are willing to sacrifice a lot for the sake of those they love. Your relationship with Jesus *will* require sacrifice, risk, and loyal commitment—but it's all worth it.

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: How can you take up your cross? Try living out the "JOY" acronym: Pray about one specific way you'll put *Jesus* first (such as spending time with him first thing each day), put *others* second (such as washing a friend's car), and put *yourself* last (such as giving up time watching TV in order to minister to others).