



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

WEEK 1 — DAY 1

Mark 8:27–30

Devotional

When Jesus asks the disciples, “Who do people say I am?” they respond the way we might expect. They start listing opinions, repeating the rumors and interpretations that were circulating at the time: “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah...” It’s a reminder that public speculation about Jesus is nothing new. People have always had their theories. Even today, bring up Jesus and you’ll quickly find confident takes from casual observers, internet experts, and conspiracy theorists.

It’s a comfortable question to answer because it creates distance. Talking about what “people” say feels safe and impersonal.

Then Jesus shifts the question: “But what about you?”

With that simple turn, the conversation changes entirely. The safety of generalities disappears, and the focus moves from public opinion to personal conviction. Jesus is no longer inviting commentary about the crowd; He is confronting the hearts of His followers. He is not asking for information, nor is He conducting a theological survey. He is drawing a line between curiosity and commitment, between admiration and allegiance.

Peter answers, “You are the Messiah,” and his response is exactly right. It is the kind of answer that would earn approval in any religious setting. Yet the story that follows makes something unmistakably clear: knowing the correct words about Jesus is not the same as living in faithful surrender to Him. Right belief and real discipleship, while deeply connected, are not automatically identical. The question Jesus asked then is the same question He asks now. It is not directed at the church as an institution, nor at pastors, authors, or cultural voices. It is intensely personal.

Who do you say He is?

However we answer that question, whether consciously or not, shapes the direction of our lives.

Theological Insight

This moment is the turning point of Mark’s Gospel. It’s the first clear confession of Jesus as Messiah, and from here on, Jesus points the disciples toward the cross. Identity precedes mission.

Reflection Questions

1. Who do YOU honestly say Jesus is right now—not who you want Him to be, but who He truly is?
2. What has shaped your view of Jesus most—Scripture, culture, church tradition, or opinion?
3. Where is God calling you to move from “fan” to “follower”?

Application Step

Write a one-sentence personal declaration of who Jesus is to you today.

Prayer

Jesus, silence all the outside opinions and speak clearly to my heart. Help me see You for who You truly are, and shape my life around that truth. Amen.



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

WEEK 1 — DAY 2

Mark 8:31–33

Devotional

Yesterday Peter was the star student. Today he gets spiritually put in time-out. Jesus starts explaining the cross—suffering, rejection, death. And Peter pulls Jesus aside like, “Hey Lord, don’t say stuff like that. It’s messing with the vibe.” Peter tries to correct the Messiah. Bold move, Peter.

Jesus responds with: “Get behind me, Satan!”
(Probably not the affirmation Peter hoped for.)

Why such a strong reaction? Because Peter wants a Messiah who fits his expectations. A Savior who wins without bleeding. A Jesus who brings victory without sacrifice.

In other words, Peter wants a Jesus who aligns with Peter’s agenda.

Sound familiar?

We often want a Jesus who improves our life but doesn’t interfere with it. A Jesus who comforts us but never confronts us. A cross-free Christianity that still feels spiritual enough to post about.

But Jesus says plainly: ***You can’t have the crown without the cross.***

The battle for your heart is always fought on the field of expectations. The moment Jesus doesn’t act the way we want, we’re tempted to “pull Him aside” and offer Him our plan. But following Jesus means surrendering the script, not editing it.

Theological Insight

Peter’s rebuke reveals the disciples’ deeply ingrained expectation of a political Messiah. Jesus’ suffering mission fulfills Isaiah’s Servant songs (Isaiah 52–53), redefining kingship through sacrifice.

Reflection Questions

1. Where are you tempted to reshape Jesus into something more comfortable?
2. What expectations of God do you need to release today?
3. How does embracing the cross reframe your understanding of discipleship?

Application Step

Write down one expectation you need to surrender to Jesus today—and actually release it.

Prayer

Lord, confront the places where my expectations limit Your work in my life. Help me trust Your plan over mine. Amen.



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

WEEK 1 — DAY 3

Mark 8:34

Devotional

Jesus gathers the crowd—yes, even the people who just came for the free miracles—and drops this line: “Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Me.”

Notice what Jesus *doesn't* say:

- “Whoever wants to be My disciple must attend when convenient.”
- “Must like a few Christian posts on Instagram.”
- “Must believe in Me privately but act however they want publicly.”

Nope. Cross. Self-denial. Following.

This isn't Jesus being dramatic. He's being honest.

The cross wasn't a cute symbol in the first century. It wasn't a necklace or a tattoo or wall décor at Hobby Lobby. It was an instrument of execution.

So when Jesus says, “Take up your cross,” He's not saying, “Carry your inconveniences.” He's saying, “Die to the version of you that keeps you from Me.”

Here's the good news:

The version of you that dies is the one that was never working anyway.

Theological Insight

Peter's rebuke reveals the disciples' deeply ingrained expectation of a political Messiah. Jesus' suffering mission fulfills Isaiah's Servant songs (Isaiah 52–53), redefining kingship through sacrifice.

Reflection Questions

1. Where are you tempted to reshape Jesus into something more comfortable?
2. What expectations of God do you need to release today?
3. How does embracing the cross reframe your understanding of discipleship?

Application Step

Write down one expectation you need to surrender to Jesus today—and actually release it.

Prayer

Lord, confront the places where my expectations limit Your work in my life. Help me trust Your plan over mine. Amen.



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

WEEK 1 — DAY 4

Mark 8:35

Devotional

“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me and the gospel will save it.”

Translation:

The tighter you hold onto your own agenda, the more miserable you become.

The more you release your life to Jesus, the more alive you become.

This is the upside-down kingdom.

It’s like Jesus says, “You can run your life—sure. But you won’t like the results.”

Or, “Let Me run your life—then watch what happens.”

People think surrender is weakness.

Actually, stubborn independence is a weakness.

It’s just a socially acceptable weakness.

Jesus teaches that real freedom comes from releasing control. And releasing control is hard, because we’re convinced we make great gods.

Spoiler: we don’t.

The places where you’re most frustrated are often the places where you’re still trying to “save your life.”

The places where you feel peace are often the places where you’ve surrendered.

Theological Insight

This verse echoes the paradox of Kingdom life: death leads to life. It foreshadows Christ’s own path—He loses His life and is raised in glory.

Reflection Questions

1. Where do you feel the tension of “saving your life” right now?
2. Where have you already surrendered and experienced peace?
3. What scares you about giving Jesus total control?

Application Step

Take one thing you’re gripping tightly—schedule, finances, relationship, image—and purposely place it in God’s hands today.

Prayer

Jesus, help me trust that losing my life to You is how I actually find it. I surrender again today. Amen.



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

WEEK 1 — DAY 5

Mark 8:36–38

Devotional

“What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”

Jesus is saying you can win at everything that doesn't matter and lose at the one thing that does.

You can gain:

- Success
- Comfort
- Applause
- Money
- Status
- Followers
- Influence

...but if your soul shrivels in the process, you've traded eternity for a coupon.

Let's be honest: our world is obsessed with “gaining.” Bigger. Better. Faster. More.

We chase things that will not matter five minutes after we stop breathing.

But Jesus offers something the world cannot offer: **a soul that is alive, anchored, and eternal.**

A soul that doesn't break when life breaks.

A soul that isn't for sale.

A soul that is steady because it's rooted in Someone unshakeable.

Today's devotional is a reminder.

Don't trade what's eternal for what's temporary.

Don't sacrifice your soul on the altar of “success.”

Jesus already paid for your soul—don't pawn it off for less.

Theological Insight

The “soul” in Scripture (psyche) refers to the deepest core of a person—their life, identity, and eternal essence. The world cannot satisfy or secure it.

Reflection Questions

1. What “worldly gains” tempt you the most?
2. Where do you feel your soul is healthiest?
3. What would it look like today to live with eternity in mind?

Application Step

Do one thing today that nourishes your soul instead of your schedule.

Prayer

Lord, anchor my soul in You. Protect me from chasing what does not last and help me live for what matters most. Amen.