



SHELBY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Before and After: The Road of Resistance – When the Way Gets Hard

Mark 8:31-35, Luke 22:39-46, Hebrews 12:11 * 3/22/2026

MAIN POINT

Obedience doesn't eliminate struggle—but it reveals trust.

INTRODUCTION

What is the most difficult decision you have ever faced? What made it especially challenging?

When you are confronted with a difficult choice, what factors do you consider most carefully?

For most people, the greater the decision, the more time they take to consider it. We examine our options, weigh the consequences, and think through the potential outcomes before moving forward. As Christians, one of the most important questions we must ask in any decision is, “What is God’s will?” Yet even when we understand God’s will, we may still feel the pull to choose another path—especially when obedience seems costly or difficult. Jesus, however, never turned away from the will of God. Though He faced temptation and knew the suffering ahead, He remained fully committed to fulfilling God’s plan, even when it led Him to the cross.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MARK 8:31-35

Why do you think the disciples struggled to accept Jesus’ prediction of His suffering and death?

What made Peter’s response understandable, yet wrong?

Why does Jesus speak so strongly when correcting Peter?

What does it mean to “deny yourself” in this context?

How does this passage redefine what it means to gain or lose one’s life?

This passage is a pivotal moment in Mark, where Jesus begins to prepare His disciples for the suffering, rejection, and death that lie ahead, and He clearly defines what it means to follow Him. This passage challenges believers to reconsider what it means to “gain” in life. Following Jesus is not about comfort or success in the world’s terms—it’s about surrender, obedience, and aligning with God’s purposes. When we deny ourselves and take up our cross, we participate in the life, mission, and ultimate victory of Christ. It invites us to live with an eternal perspective, trusting God even when the way is difficult.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 22:39-46

Why do you think Jesus chose to pray in a secluded place like the Mount of Olives?

What does Jesus' anguish in prayer teach us about His humanity? What physical reaction does Jesus experience during this time of prayer?

How does Jesus' prayer demonstrate both His dependence on God and His courage to face the cross?

Why is His submission—"not my will, but Yours be done"—so central to understanding obedience?

Are there situations in your life where you struggle to say, "Your will be done"? How can you grow in trust?

What role can God's encouragement—through Scripture, prayer, or the support of others—play in strengthening you during trials?

How can we remain alert and watchful spiritually when facing trials, unlike the disciples in this passage?

Luke 22:39–46 encourages believers to follow Jesus' example in prayer, obedience, and reliance on God. When facing fear, uncertainty, or suffering, we are called to bring our burdens to God, seek His strength, and submit to His will, trusting that He equips us for the challenges ahead. This passage also reminds us to remain spiritually awake and vigilant, relying on God's help in both small and significant trials.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 12:11

Why do you think discipline often feels unpleasant or painful at first?

What does it mean that discipline "produces a harvest of righteousness and peace" over time?

How does this verse connect God's discipline with His love for His children?

How might this verse shape our understanding of trials and challenges in life?

How does this verse encourage you to trust God's work in your life, even when it's painful?

Hebrews 12:11 offers a profound reflection on the purpose and effect of divine discipline, showing that God's correction, though often painful, is ultimately an expression of His loving plan to produce holiness, wisdom, and lasting peace. It invites us to trust God's guidance and submit to His training with hope and perseverance.

APPLICATION

Why is it sometimes difficult to accept God's will when it involves suffering or sacrifice?

What are some ways people try to "save their life" instead of surrendering to Christ?

When have you experienced growth through sacrifice or obedience?

What fears can keep people from fully surrendering their lives to Christ?

How do you handle times of deep anxiety, fear, or pressure? How does Jesus' example encourage you to trust God even when His plan is difficult?

In what ways can prayer help us submit to God's will during difficult seasons?

Are there situations in your life where you struggle to say, "Your will be done"? How can you grow in trust?

Can you think of a time when discipline—whether from God, a mentor, or life circumstances—helped you grow?

How can we learn to respond positively to correction or guidance, even when it feels uncomfortable?

What part of following Jesus am I tempted to avoid?

PRAYER

COMMENTARY

Mark 8:31-35

Jesus Predicts His Suffering (v. 31) - Jesus speaks openly about His impending suffering, rejection by religious leaders, death, and resurrection. This is the first time in Mark that He explicitly forecasts the cross. It shows that following God's plan often involves pain and misunderstanding, even for the Messiah. For the disciples, this was shocking because their expectation of the Messiah was largely political and triumphant.

Peter's Rebuke and Jesus' Response (vv. 32–33) - Peter reacts with surprise and opposition, saying that such a fate should never happen to Jesus. Peter's response is understandable—he loves Jesus and wants to protect Him—but it reflects a human perspective that cannot fully grasp God's plan. Jesus responds sharply, "Get behind me, Satan!" showing that opposition to God's purposes, even with good intentions, is ultimately dangerous. This moment underscores that God's ways often clash with human reasoning.

The Call to Discipleship (vv. 34–35) - Jesus then addresses the cost of following Him. He calls every follower to: Deny themselves: Surrender personal desires and ambitions in favor of God's will. Take up their cross: Accept suffering, sacrifice, and even persecution for the sake of Christ. Follow Him: Commit to a life fully oriented around Jesus and His mission. He warns that trying to "save your life" by clinging to comfort or worldly security ultimately leads to spiritual loss. Conversely, those who are willing to surrender their life for the gospel discover true, lasting life in Christ.

God's plan may involve suffering. Jesus' path to glory was through the cross. Discipleship often requires embracing hardship.

Human understanding is limited. Even well-meaning followers can misunderstand God's purposes.

True discipleship requires sacrifice. Following Jesus demands self-denial, commitment, and a willingness to face difficulty.

Eternal perspective transforms priorities. What may seem like loss in the present can result in eternal gain.

Luke 22:39-46

Jesus Withdraws to Pray (v. 39) - Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives, a place of seclusion, accompanied by His disciples. He intentionally withdraws to pray, showing the importance of private communion with God, especially in times of great trial. Prayer is His source of strength and guidance as He faces the impending suffering of the cross.

Jesus' Agony and Submission (vv. 40–42) - Jesus expresses deep anguish as He faces the reality of His coming suffering. He prays that, if possible, the cup of suffering might be removed, but ultimately submits, saying, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

Humanity: Jesus experiences fear, sorrow, and dread, demonstrating that He is fully human and feels the weight of what is coming. Obedience: Despite His anguish, He prioritizes the Father's will over His own desires, modeling perfect submission. Prayer as Strength: His honest dialogue with God shows that prayer is a means of coping with fear and preparing for difficult tasks.

Physical and Spiritual Intensity (v. 44) - The text notes that Jesus' agony is so intense that His sweat was like drops of blood. This emphasizes the extreme mental, emotional, and spiritual strain He endures in anticipation of the cross. Such detail highlights the cost of obedience and the seriousness of His mission to redeem humanity.

Divine Support (v. 43) - An angel from heaven strengthens Jesus, showing that God provides supernatural aid in times of extreme trial. Though Jesus is fully obedient, He does not rely on His own strength alone but receives divine support.

The Disciples' Weakness (vv. 44–46) - Jesus finds His disciples sleeping despite His repeated warnings to pray. Their weakness contrasts with His vigilance, illustrating human frailty and the importance of spiritual alertness in times of trial.

Hebrews 12:11

Discipline Feels Unpleasant - The verse begins by acknowledging a truth that resonates with every believer: "No discipline seems pleasant at the time." Human experience teaches that correction, whether from God, mentors, or life circumstances, often involves discomfort, frustration, or even suffering. This pain can feel discouraging or unfair in the moment, which is why many people resist it.

Discipline Produces Lasting Fruit- Despite its unpleasantness, the verse assures that discipline has a valuable outcome: it "produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." Righteousness: Discipline helps us align our thoughts, actions, and desires with God's will. It shapes our character to reflect holiness. Peace: Through correction and growth, we gain inner stability and harmony, both with God and with others. The peace comes from understanding that God's discipline is purposeful, not arbitrary.

Connection to God's Love- In the broader context of Hebrews 12, the author draws a parallel between God's discipline and the loving correction a parent gives a child. Just as earthly parents guide their children to maturity, God allows trials and challenges to teach, strengthen, and refine His people. Resistance or resentment toward discipline is often rooted in misunderstanding God's intentions.

Spiritual Insight- Hebrews 12:11 reminds us that trials and correction are not evidence of God's anger or abandonment but are opportunities for growth. Spiritual maturity comes not from avoiding difficulties but from responding faithfully to them. The "harvest" of righteousness and peace develops gradually as believers persevere under God's guidance.