

The Gospel According to Mark - One Verse Five Principles

One Verse Five Principles Mark 8:34

"I'm not enough unless you come, will you meet me here again Cause all I want is all you are, will you meet me here again"

Two beautiful confessions and a question! Confession: "I'm not enough unless You come!" Are we willing to confess that? Question: "Will You meet me here again?" God's answer is a resounding yes! The second Confession: "Cause all I want is all You are!" Does that confession speak your heart? It is followed up with the same question: "Will You meet me here again?" And I can tell you again, God's answer is a resounding yes! Today we're going to look at just one verse of Mark's Gospel and from this one verse we will discover 5 principles and they have much to do with what we just confessed in a song. Let's pray and I'll help you see what I'm talking about. Pray!

Take your Bibles and turn with me to our text: Mark 8:34

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Before we look at our five principles, I want to point out a powerful truth that really sets the stage for the five principles we will look at today. It's found in what Mark says before he quotes Jesus...

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples...

Jesus called! God takes the initiative in pursuing a relationship with you!

This could be a whole sermon right here! You and I have been called by God. He took the initiative! He reached out to you! He drew you before you even thought about accepting or loving Him! In fact if He had not called we would never come to Him. Jesus said this...

John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them..."

We are so caught up in our busy lives, so distracted from spiritual things, and sometimes so bound up by the things of this world, if God didn't call out to us and get our attention with His precious Holy Spirit we would just remain hopelessly lost, wondering aimlessly, blinded to our perilous condition!

But God has called and offered to us His grace and mercy! In our small group Thursday night, Jim Chester, our small group leader put it this way...

Grace is when you get what you don't deserve!

Mercy is when you don't get what you do deserve!

So powerful. And God has taken the first step by inviting you, yes you, to have a personal relationship with Him. Why? Check this out...

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

You will see this "God initiative" throughout our message today. So with this in mind, let's look at this...

One Verse, Five Principles!

Principle One

For Everyone!

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me..."

Jesus put it this way in Luke 11:10...

Luke 11:10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

And He said this in the passage from John's Gospel I just quoted about God taking the initiative in pursuing a relationship with us...

John 6:40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

The writer of Romans said this...

Rom 10:4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

And then this verse we read last week...

Rom 10:11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

Rom 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

The writer of Hebrews said this...

Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Of course we know that not everyone accepts God's love and offer to forgive...

We must remember this powerful truth:

"Not received does not mean not offered!"

Isaiah quoted God in Isaiah 65:2 saying...

Isaiah 65:2 "All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—"

What does this mean?

Principle Two

For Everyone Who Chooses

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me,

"If anyone would" means it's for everyone who will!

Now you may have never heard me read the following passage of Scripture before, and if that's the case then this is your first time here because it's sort of a life long theme for me and it's something that just comes out in many of my messages whether planned or not. Today it is planned...

Jesus said...

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

The Psalmist said...

Psa 86:5 You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you.

The Psalmist also said...

Psa 145:18 The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

Moses said it with great conviction...

Deu 30:19 This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live

Deu 30:20 and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life...

You might be thinking this seems to be a theme of this series on the Gospel According to Mark! It is! It was Mark's theme because it was Jesus' theme, and so I guess it's not a bad theme to have for one's life. You see, I know there are people here today who are on the precipice, on the edge, on the cusp, on the verge of making a decision one way or the other about God and whether you will choose to trust him with your life or walk away from His gracious offer to be your Savior, Lord, and best friend. I want you to make the right choice, God wants you to make the right choice. In fact, one of the most powerful passages of Scripture in the whole Bible on this subject can be found in Isaiah 55 where God gives an impassioned plea for the people of Israel to turn away from their sin and turn to Him! Here we see again sovereign God taking the initiative in the relationship...

Isaiah 55:3 "Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David."

And then Isaiah makes this statement...

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Now having said that, what I'm about to tell you next would be considered ludicrous by any salesman! It would be deemed utter foolishness to bring up something negative with anyone who is trying to make a decision to purchase something. But you must remember, Jesus isn't a salesman, He is a Savior and He knows the only way to salvation is through truth. So He's not going to lie to you. You might remember that Jesus had said this to His disciples...

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

So Jesus would not lie to someone or sugar coat things just to get more followers. He wants true disciples, people who want a relationship with Him and are willing to sacrifice self in order to find that ultimate relationship. Listen to the words of Jesus to the Samaritan Woman at the well...

John 4:23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

John 4:24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

So what is it Jesus is about to say that would possibly turn people away?

Principle Three

For Everyone Who Chooses Must Deny Himself

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself..."

Now this is where it gets really hard and quite unpopular! There was crowd of people and the disciples might have wondered why Jesus would bring up such a subject right now! It just didn't seem like the way to close the deal! "Deny yourself?" We live in a culture that is very much about self! Self-absorbed/Self-made/Self-indulgent/Self-centered/Self-gratifying/Self-obsessed/Self-pleasing/Self-serving/and sometimes Self-righteous! What word would sum up all of these? How about "Selfish"? And Jesus knows the first step to defeating selfishness is to deny ourselves. In other words we have to be willing to tell our self, no! I don't know about you, but I don't typically like to hear the word no! I didn't like that word when I was a child and I still don't like it!

But here's the thing we must never forget, and we talked about it just a little bit last week: You always come out the winner when you say no to self and yes to God! Why? Because He always has your best interest at heart and He always knows what is truly best for you! But it's so hard to accept that because we want what we want and we think we know what's best for ourselves! But Jesus said we must deny ourselves and trust Him with what's best! Let me remind you of something. God is a good God and the things He wants you to

deny are things that are bad for you! Selfishness never helped anyone achieve good things in life! Why? Because self is never satisfied and always wants more and that's what leads to addiction, abuse, anger, greed, theft, dishonesty, dissatisfaction, jealousy, and the list goes on! Jesus was telling people to deny self these horrible things. Self may want them, and even enjoy them for a season, but these things destroy, hurt and cause pain to others.

Paul said it this way...

Eph 4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

Eph 4:23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds;

Eph 4:24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Luke remembered Jesus saying the same thing as Mark, but Luke remembered an extra word that is significant...

Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

Did you catch the word "daily"? The old self is going to constantly try to get you to indulge self and you must constantly say "no," "denied!"

John Wesley stated this about self-denial...

"If we do not continually deny ourselves, we do not learn of Him, but of other masters. If we do not take up our cross daily, we do not come after Him, but after the world, or the prince of the world, or our own fleshly mind. If we are not walking in the way of the cross, we are not following Him; we are not treading in his steps; but going back from, or at least wide of, Him."

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Henry Turlington stated it this way...

"The either/or is before men: one either chooses to deny himself and walk in the way of the Son of man; or one compromises with this adulterous and sinful generation, hopelessly lost while trying to preserve his own hollow life."

And this leads us to...

Principle Four

For Everyone Who Chooses Must Deny Himself and Take Up His Cross

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross . . ."

Here's some questions you might have. Can't we put the cross behind us? Can't we just acknowledge that Christ died on the cross and let that be that? Do we each have a cross to bear? Why do I need a cross? Here's why you need a cross . . .

You need the Cross to Remember

Remember what? The price Jesus paid for our salvation!

Mat 26:67 Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him

Mat 26:68 and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?"

Mat 27:30 They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.

Mat 27:31 After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

The Cross helps me remember, but there's more...

You need a cross to Realize

Realize what? When you accept Jesus as your Savior by calling upon His Name your past is forgiven and you're new life has begun! Exactly what our folks who were baptized this morning painted a picture of! The writer of Hebrews paints a beautiful word picture of what the Cross helps us realize...

Heb 10:15 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

Heb 10:16 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

Heb 10:17 Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

Heb 10:18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Heb 10:19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,

Heb 10:20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,

Heb 10:21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

Heb 10:22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Heb 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

So the Cross helps us to remember, and to realize, but there's more...

You need a Cross to Receive!

Receive what? Power

1 Cor 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Power For What?

Power over temptation

Power over discouragement

Power over selfishness

Power over anger

Power over bitterness

Power to forgive

Power to overcome circumstances

Power to succeed God's way

Power to love

And this takes us to our final principle for today...

Principle Five

For everyone who chooses must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Christ

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

A true disciple is one who follows Jesus in His teachings and actions. Peter, one of those early disciples who was trying to understand all of this, would later write in his first letter this explanation of principle five...

1 Pet 2:21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 Pet 2:22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

1 Pet 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Pet 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Now notice what Peter just said: "That we might die to sins and live for righteousness!" When we follow Jesus we begin to see His example and follow that example! We begin living like Christ! Having His mind, His attitude, and His actions! Remember I said that Jesus wants us to deny self all of the negative, sinful, hurtful things self sometimes wants. Instead we are to embrace the things that are righteous and good. Remember this list found in Philippians 4:8?

Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things."

So that has to do with a disciple's spiritual character and attitude, but a follower of Jesus, a true disciple also has a new mission, the mission of Jesus. And what was that mission?

Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

And we know that Jesus would later leave His disciples the following instructions...

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Matthew 28:20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Famous English Preacher, Charles Spurgeon said this...

"The Making of men catchers: — Conversion is most fully displayed when it leads converts to seek the conversion of others: We most truly follow Christ when we become fishers of men. The great question is not so much what we are naturally, as what Jesus makes us by His grace: whoever we may be of ourselves, we can, by following Jesus, be made useful in His kingdom. Our desire should be to be man catchers; and the way to attain to that sacred art is to be ourselves thoroughly captured by the great Head of the college of fishermen. When Jesus draws us we shall draw men."

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For everyone

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Let's pray!