



Growth Group Questions
February 23, 2025
“Who Do You Say I Am?”

CONTEXT

In Mark 8:22-26, Jesus healed a blind man in stages. Commentators have wondered why Jesus did not heal the man completely the first time he touched his eyes. It has been suggested Jesus was helping the disciples to see that their own understanding of who he was might come in stages and not happen all at once. Over time, the disciples will move from not understanding, to misunderstanding, to eventually understanding.

The phrase “on the way” will occur nine times in chapters 8-12. In the midst of a journey, Jesus wants to know what people, as well as the disciples, think about him. He wants to know if they will follow him in his way and not the ways of the world.

Jesus reverses the expected order of things between rabbis and disciples. The expectation was that disciples would ask questions of their rabbis, not the other way around. The disciples are put on the spot and must answer who they think Jesus is. Up to this point the only people who have recognized Jesus as the Messiah are God and the demons. Peter is the first human voice in the gospel of Mark to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah or Savior.

The Hebrew word Messiah is translated as Christ in the Greek. It means anointed. The most common expectation of the Messiah before Jesus arrived was some sort of end of times king. God would bring his everlasting kingdom through this king or Messiah who would be holy and would not know sin. He would deliver Jerusalem from the Gentiles and have more of a warrior mentality. Jesus turned much of this type of thinking upside down which is one of the reasons Jewish leaders had such a problem with him.

The words of Jesus in verse 31 had to be troubling. It was never conceived that the Messiah would suffer. His life was supposed to be one of victory and success. Jesus then goes on to talk about not only his own suffering, but also the suffering of those who will follow him. Jesus’ expectation is not that we will carry his cross, but that we will each have to carry our own cross and bear the burdens that come with following him.

SCRIPTURE

Mark 8:27-37

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” ²⁸ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.” ³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man 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. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

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^(b) 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.”

QUESTIONS

1. In Mark 8:29, Jesus asks the disciples the simple, yet thoughtful question: “Who do you say that I am?”. Why do you think he chose this time to ask that question?
2. Why is Jesus’ question “Who do you say that I am?” such an important one for each of us to be able to answer?
3. Sophie said that the disciples understood the person of Jesus, but they failed to understand the purpose of Jesus. What do you think she meant by this?
4. What do you think was so significant about Peter’s declaration that Jesus was the Messiah?
5. What do you think Jesus meant when he said to Peter: “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”? (Mark 8:33)
6. How are we in danger today of falling into the same trap as Peter, and focusing on earthly things rather than the things of God?
7. As Sophie pointed out, Peter was very far from perfect, yet he was the one who recognized Jesus’ true identity. What can we learn from this?

8. In Mark 8:34, Jesus said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” What does it mean to “deny yourself” and “take up your cross” to follow Jesus?
9. This week’s sermon focused on Mark 8:27-37. As you read through the entire chapter during the week, was there anything else in Chapter 8 that particularly spoke to you?

SERMON QUESTIONS

1. What or who has shaped your answer to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say I am?”
2. How does Jesus’ guidance in this passage reform your understanding of following Jesus?