

Today's Reading: Mark 8:34-38

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he [Jesus] said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Simple Summary (for Parents):

Jesus wanted His disciples and the crowds to know that following Him would be costly and unpopular. It would mean dying to your own sinful plans and desires and taking up your cross (an instrument of death). Trying to save your life (i.e., avoid the high cost of following Jesus) would mean losing it for eternity. Use today's reading to remind your children that following Jesus means giving our entire lives to Him and being willing to identify with Him even when others laugh at us or threaten to harm us. Even if we gain the whole world, it will prove to be disastrous in the end if we do not belong to Jesus. If we are ashamed to belong to Jesus now, then He will not claim us as His own when He turns. At the same time, remind your children that following Jesus is worth it because He gives us eternal life! He is worth following, regardless of the cost.

Discuss:

1. If you could get any gift that you wanted, what would be your first choice? Would you be willing to trade the rest of your toys for that one gift?

(Give your children time to come up with creative answers.)

2. What does Jesus mean by denying yourself and taking up your cross?

(Explain to your children that denying yourself and taking up your cross means being willing to say "no" to your sinful desires and plans so that you can follow Jesus; it's like saying, "Jesus, I don't want to be in charge of my life anymore—I want you to be King.")

3. Why is it better to belong to Jesus than to have everything this world offers?

(While God gives us many good gifts, His greatest gift is Jesus. If we don't trust in Jesus as our Savior, then regardless of what we have here on earth, we will be separated from God forever when we die. Those who belong to Jesus will get to enjoy Him forever, regardless of what they own—or

don't own—while on earth).

4. Jesus warns us not to be ashamed of saying that we belong to Him. Why shouldn't we be ashamed?

(Because Jesus is more glorious than anything or anyone else in the world! Point out that being a Christian isn't always easy because there are many people in the world who do not believe in Jesus and don't want others to follow Him. However, we shouldn't be ashamed of Jesus because being His disciple is more important than what other people think of us or what they do to us. Why would we be ashamed of the Son of God who loved us enough to die for us?)

5. We've learned today that following Jesus isn't always easy. What does God do to help us?

(Emphasize to your children that we can only follow Jesus faithfully with God's help. God gives us the Holy Spirit to strengthen us; He gives us His Word to teach us and guide us; He gives us other Christians to encourage us.)

Pray:

Ask God to help you follow Jesus, even when it is difficult. Pray that He would strengthen your faith and teach you from His Word.

Sing:

["A Mighty Fortress"](#) (See Week 2 Song Sheet for lyrics)