

# Deny, Take, Follow

Mark 8:34-38



Good Hope  
Baptist Church

Living Together In The Love Of God

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**FOCAL Read Together** Mark 8:34-38 <sup>(KJV)</sup> And when he had called the people [unto him] with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

**Opening Illustration** A little old granny called the “Visitor Information” desk at a local hospital. The attendant asked, “Can I help you?” The little old lady said, “I’m calling to check on how Myrtle Bea is doing”. The attendant said, “Ma’am, I’m sorry, but hospital regulations say that I’m not supposed to give out any personal information”. The little old lady said, “Please – she’s very close to me, and I won’t tell a soul what you told me”. Charmed by this precious grandmother the attendant relented. “Well, just this once”. Looking up her patient information on her computer, the attendant said “It looks like good news. She’s getting better every day, and the doctor thinks she may be released by the end of the week. Would you like to talk to Myrtle?” The little old lady replied, “No honey, I’m Myrtle. I called you because nobody ever tells me anything.”

People need to be told the truth in love. Jesus Christ always spoke the truth in love.

Several years ago Pastors across every denominational line began to do what they called “Seeker Sensitive” preaching. Much of what is called “Seeker Sensitive” actually only tells part of the Gospel, and some of this type of preaching is outright dishonest. Some “Seeker Sensitive” preachers tell you that once you come to **Christ as your Savior, that you become like a quarterback on a football team, with Jesus Christ running guard** for you, protecting you from all harm as you play the game of life. Other preachers tell you that **once you come to Jesus, that He becomes your own personal Accountant, insuring that you never run out of money.** They ignore Jesus' words that **“the poor you have with you always” (Matthew 26:11)**, and also ignore the fact that Jesus expects His own people to aid those in need **(Matthew 25:31-46)**. Others will say that our Lord came to this earth as **The Great Physician (Mark 2:16-17)**, and that those who **come to Christ as Savior will have their own built in Albert Schweitzer who will keep them from ever getting sick if only they believe hard enough.** Then there are those who try and make the Gospel something that *both Jesus and I must do together*, a works Gospel that says **“Jesus did it all – almost – all to Him I owe – most ways – sin left a crimson stain, but He and I are making it white as snow”**. The Apostle Paul marveled that the Galatian Christians **“would so easily be removed from the Lord Jesus Christ to another Gospel, a perverted Gospel”**. The Bible tells us that:

**1 Timothy 2:5-6 (KJV) For [there is] one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all...**

and again

**Titus 3:4-7 (KJV) ... the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**

What is the Gospel? Our Lord Jesus presented the Gospel in three very clear statements. He said:

**Focal Mark 8:34 (KJV) ... Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.**

We do not work for our salvation – it is a free gift from the Lord. But if we want to receive that Gift we must do as Jesus said:

1. Let him deny himself.
2. Let him take up his Cross.
3. Let him follow Jesus.

Let's prayerfully look at these three phrases.

## 1. The Christian Denies Himself

**Focal** Mark 8:34 <sup>(KJV)</sup> ... **Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself ....**

Saying “no” to self is the first step to salvation. We are all at heart prideful creatures. Pride is bound in our hearts – and often gets us in trouble.

**Illustrate** A Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) officer stops at a ranch in Montana and talks with an old rancher. He tells the rancher, **"I need to inspect your ranch for illegally grown drugs."** The old rancher says, **"Okay, but do not go in that field over there,"** as he points out the location. The DEA officer verbally explodes, saying, **"Mister, I have the authority of the federal government with me."** Reaching into his rear pants pocket, he removes his badge and proudly displays it to the farmer. **"See this badge? This badge means I am allowed to go wherever I wish, on any land. No questions asked or answers given. Have I made myself clear?"** The old rancher nods politely, apologizes, and goes about his chores. A short time later, the old rancher hears loud screams and sees the DEA officer running for his life, *chased close behind by the rancher's prize bull*. With every step, the bull is gaining ground on the officer, and it seems likely that he'll get "horned" before he reaches safety. The old rancher throws down his tools, runs to the fence, and yells at the top of his lungs, **"Your badge! Show him your badge!"**

Proverbs 16:18 <sup>(HCSB)</sup> **Pride comes before destruction,**

**and an arrogant spirit before a fall.**

When the devil told Adam and Eve that the reason the Lord didn't want them to eat of the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil* because **"in the day you eat of it, you shall become like Almighty God, knowing good and evil"** (Genesis 3:5), pride raised their hand to disobedience and their lips to that forbidden fruit. Pride led Satan himself to say **"I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High"** (Isaiah 14:14).

Denying oneself is the same as **repenting**. The word **"repent"** means **"to change the mind"**. As babies we believe ourselves to be the center of the world. As children we sneak into the kitchen to get cookies when momma says not to do so because we think "I deserve it". We are, in our natural state, **"me centered"**. We want to be the center of the universe. Our Lord Jesus came preaching:

Mark 1:15 <sup>(KJV)</sup> ... **The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.**

Repent and believe. I am not the center of the universe. Repent and believe. I cannot save myself, but I need to be saved. Repent and believe. I will stop trying to save myself, and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. I will do as the Scripture says:

Romans 10:8-11 <sup>(HCSB)</sup> ... **This is the message of faith that we proclaim: 9 If you confess with your mouth,**

**“Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. 11 Now the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on Him will not be put to shame ...**

**To deny yourself** is to turn away from what you want and to turn fully to Christ, trusting fully in Him.

**1 We Turn Our Possessions Over To Jesus.** A well to do young man came to the Lord Jesus one day and asked,

**Luke 18:18 (KJV) ... Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**

**“How can I be saved? How can I live forever?”** Jesus asked the young man if he had kept the Ten Commandments. The young man replied, **“All these I have kept from my youth up”**. Jesus replied:

**Luke 18:22 (KJV) ... Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me.**

The Bible tells us that the young man went away very sorrowful. Jesus said:

**Luke 18:24-27 (KJV) .... How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than**

**for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26 And they that heard [it] said, Who then can be saved? 27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.**

God can change the heart of a rich man to where his greatest treasure is in Heaven and not on this earth. Riches, however, often lead people away from God and into eternal death. Jesus said in our context:

**Context Mark 8:36-37 (KJV) For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**

Your soul is your greatest possession. Oh that people would understand that great truth!

**2 We Turn Our Pride Over To Jesus, glorifying Him alone.** To **“deny yourself”** is to remove yourself from the equation of life, and to give all that is you to God. The First Evangelist of the New Testament **John the Baptist** was preaching one day when his disciples came up and said, **“John, this Jesus you baptized, He's getting more followers than you. Why is that? (John 3:26)** John replied,

**John 3:30 (KJV) {Jesus} must increase, but I [must] decrease.**

We who are born into the Kingdom of God by faith in Christ live to glorify Christ. We are not ashamed of Him,

hiding Him, nor are we ashamed of His Gospel. The Apostle Paul said:

**Romans 1:16** <sup>(KJV)</sup> **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**

And Jesus said:

**Context** **Mark 8:38** <sup>(KJV)</sup> **Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.**

We who are saved live to glorify the Savior. We live for Him. We give all per-eminence to Christ.

**Luke 14:26-27** <sup>(KJV)</sup> **If any [man] come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.**

Some people are shocked at these words. “**Hate my father, my mother? Doesn't the fifth Commandment tell us to**

**Exodus 20:12** <sup>(KJV)</sup> **Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.**

Now Jesus is saying “**hate your father and mother. Hate your wife, your children, your brothers and sisters – even your own life**”. What did Jesus mean by this? Jesus didn't mean that you were to actively hate nor do hateful things to others.

Jesus meant that *when you compare the love you have for Him to the love you have for others or even for yourself, that the love you have for Jesus would dwarf all other loves. Jesus would be per-eminent even over your own life. You deny yourself and make Jesus first!*

## **2. The Christian Takes Up His Cross**

**FOCAL** **Mark 8:34** <sup>(KJV)</sup> **... Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross ...**

**Illustrate** There was a dear lady who was a member at a Church I served who had terrible diabetes. I remarked one day how well she kept her spirits up, though I knew she was suffering. She remarked, “**This is my Cross to bear**”. I've heard this before, but truthfully this isn't what Jesus was talking about. Think about the Cross for a moment.

**1** **The Cross is a Voluntary Death.** Sickness and human limitations are not “your Cross”, for these things are thrust on you by birth. The Cross of Calvary was not thrust upon Jesus, but He willingly went to that Cross. Jesus said:

**John 10:17-18** <sup>(HCSB)</sup> ... the Father loves Me, because I am laying down My life so I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again....

The Cross was not *thrust upon* Christ. He willingly took up the Cross.

**Mark 8:31** <sup>(KJV)</sup> {Jesus} began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and [of] the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

No one forced the Cross on Jesus. As a matter of fact, when Jesus began teaching that He “**must suffer many things and be rejected of men**” Peter spoke up and said, “**Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to You**” (Matthew 16:23). When Jesus heard that He rebuked Peter, saying ...

**Context** **Mark 8:33** <sup>(KJV)</sup> Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

The Cross was not thrust on Jesus, but it was something He willingly picked up. The Cross that the Christian carries is not thrust upon him, but it is something he willingly carries. “**Take up your Cross**”.

The “Cross” is not something that is thrust upon you

because you made a lawless or a bad mistake. **The two thieves that hung next to Jesus deserved their deaths.** One of the thieves said to the other:

**Luke 23:41** <sup>(HCSB)</sup> ... **We are punished justly, because we’re getting back what we deserve for the things we did, but this man has done nothing wrong.**

The Cross is something that you “take up” willingly, doing it because you love the Lord Jesus.

## **2 The Cross is a Public and Embarrassing Death.**

Jesus was not crucified at night, but in the morning hours. He was stripped naked, beaten, and then hung up like an old dish towel for the world to see. How did Jesus treat this? The Bible says:

**Hebrews 12:2-3** <sup>(HCSB)</sup> ... **keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God’s throne. 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, so that you won’t grow weary and lose heart.**

Jesus “despised the shame”, counting it nothing so that He could accomplish the greater work of God. Jesus knew that unless He went to that Cross we would never be saved. He knew that if He did go to that Cross, “despising the shame”, He would “**bring many sons unto glory**” (Hebrews 2:10).

**Illustrate** In his book *Not a Fan* author and Pastor Kyle

*Idleman* told about a shy woman who decided to speak up for Jesus. Though she had worked in the same small office for seven years, she had never shared her faith with anyone. That Sunday her Church – a rather large Church - was going to have an outreach Sunday. This dear lady decided to swallow her fears and speak to a co-worker, inviting her to Church that Sunday. She went to her friend and invited her to Church. Her friend laughed and replied, **“That’s where I go to Church, and I was going to invite you”**. Pastor Idleman wrote, **“What initially struck them as funny made them both sick. For seven years they worked next to each other, and neither of them realized the other was a Christian. They both called themselves followers, but they weren’t following at work”**.

Pastor John MacArthur writes:

**“it’s only when you get pass that shame, that fear, that embarrassment, whatever it is, that you become useful to God. Where there is boldness and courage and an unflinching conviction and commitment to proclaim Christ no matter what it costs, you have a useful servant of God.”**

The Lord told us that we would be hated for His sake. He said:

**Matthew 10:22 <sup>(KJV)</sup> ... ye shall be hated of all [men] for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.**

Like Peter, we sometimes heed fear, and try and fade into

the crowd (see Mark 14:66-72). Peter, the Bible says, **actually cursed so as to blend into the crowd, adopting the ways of the unsaved**. But in the end **“Peter wept”**. The South African Pastor **Andrew Murray** wrote in his book *Absolute Surrender*:

**“{Peter's denial of Christ} That was the turning point in the life of Peter. Christ had said to him: "Thou canst not follow me now" (John 13:36). Peter was not in a fit state to follow Christ, because he had not been brought to an end of himself. He did not know himself, and he therefore could not follow Christ. But when he went out and wept bitterly, then came the great change. Christ previously said to him: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). Here is the point Where Peter was converted from self to Christ. I thank God for the story of Peter. I do not know a man in the Bible who gives us greater comfort. When we look at his character, so full of failures, and at what Christ made him by the power of the Holy Spirit, there is hope for every one of us. But remember, before Christ could fill Peter with the Holy Spirit and make a new man of him, he had to go out and weep bitterly; he had to be humbled.”**

**3 The Cross is a Unique and Lonely Death.** No Roman citizen ever suffered the death of the Cross, and no Jew would ever inflict such a punishment on anyone. The Cross is one of the most prolonged and painful deaths imaginable. No one wanted to help Jesus carry His Cross. When Jesus dropped the Cross, **Simon of Cyrene** was compelled to help Jesus carry it (see **Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21**). The Cross is not

something that the world finds attractive. The Apostle said:

**1 Corinthians 1:18** <sup>(KJV)</sup> For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

No one but a Christian would find the Cross to be attractive. The world likes to think there are *many ways to God*, but the Christian says “**No, there is but one Way to the Father, and that is through the Cross of Christ**”. As C.S. Lewis once said,

“Christ died for men precisely because men are not worth dying for; to make them worth it”.

**Illustrate** In the 2004 Olympics **Matt Emmons** was competing in the 50 meter three position rifle event. He had already shot so well that he didn't need a bulls-eye to win – he just needed to hit the target. Matt hit the target – and lost. Why? *He fired at and hit the wrong target.* His score for hitting the wrong target was “0”, and he dropped from first place to eighth place, losing the medal. The world yells, “Shoot at this target. Shoot at that target. All targets are the same”. But God, the final Judge of all, the Lord of Heaven has said “**THIS is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.**” No others but Jesus. He has said,

**John 5:21-24** <sup>(KJV)</sup> For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth [them]; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. **22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the**

**Son: 23 That all [men] should honor the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.**

**4 The Cross is a Temporary Death.** Three days after Jesus was removed from the Cross and laid to rest, He resurrected from the grave.

**1 Thessalonians 4:14** <sup>(KJV)</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will **God bring with him.**

The promise of God is that all who believe on Jesus in this life will never lose life, but on leaving this life they will be with Jesus forever.

### **3. The Christian Lovingly Follows Jesus**

**FOCAL** **Mark 8:34** <sup>(KJV)</sup> ... he said unto them, **Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and Follow me.**

Are you following Jesus? Jesus made it clear that those who are saved follow Him. Does this mean that we don't err? Absolutely not! We all err. But we who are saved follow Jesus. We live for Him. We love Him. We want Him to be glorified. We do not want to do anything that will shame our Lord in the eyes of the world. The Apostle Paul said:

**1 Corinthians 15:31** <sup>(KJV)</sup> ... **I die daily.**

Every day that passes I may fail my Lord in one way or the other. But I – daily – put to death ME and let Christ live through me. When I fail, I confess my sins to the Father in the Name of Jesus. I stand back up in Christ and, **forgetting those things which are behind, I strive forward for the Lord.**

Pastor A.W. Tozer said:

**“Among the plastic saints of our times, Jesus has to do all the dying, and all we want to do is hear another sermon about His dying”.**

We who are saved by faith in Christ are called to **“walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4)**. We are to love the Lord and love one another. We are to be rays of Light, with Christ shining through our lives. We follow Jesus where ever He takes us. As the German Pastor **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** said, **“When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die”.**

What are YOU doing for your Lord?

**FOCAL Read Together** **Mark 8:34-38** <sup>(KJV)</sup> **And when he had called the people [unto him] with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.**

**Matthew 26:11; Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 2:16-17; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Titus 3:4-7; Mark 8:34**

### **1. The Christian Denies Himself**

**Mark 8:34; Proverbs 16:18; Genesis 3:5; Isaiah 14:14; Mark 1:15; Romans 10:8-11**

**1** We Turn Our \_\_\_\_\_ Over To Jesus.  
**Luke 18:18; Luke 18:22; Luke 18:24-27; Mark 8:36-37**

**2** We Turn Our \_\_\_\_\_ Over To Jesus, glorifying Him alone. **John 3:26; John 3:3; Romans 1:16; Mark 8:38; Luke 14:26-27; Exodus 20:12**

### **2. The Christian Takes Up His Cross**

**1** The Cross is a \_\_\_\_\_.

John 10:17-18; Mark 8:31; Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33; Luke 23:41

**2** The Cross is a \_\_\_\_\_.

Hebrews 12:2-3; Hebrews 2:10; Matthew 10:22; Mark 14:66-72; John 13:36; Luke 22:32

**3** The Cross is a \_\_\_\_\_.

Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; 1 Corinthians 1:18; John 5:21-24

**4** The Cross is a \_\_\_\_\_.

1 Thessalonians 4:14

### **3. The Christian Follows Jesus**

Mark 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:31

Pastor A.W. Tozer “Among the plastic saints of our times, Jesus has to do all the dying, and all we want to do is hear another sermon about His dying”.

