

What is discipleship? Following Jesus according to Mark

Steve Walton

Two key words

- ‘the way’

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, **who will prepare your way**; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!’” 1:2–3

Two key words

- ‘the way’

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about **on the way?**” But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. 9:33-34

As he was setting out **on a journey**, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 10:17

Two key words

- ‘the way’
- ‘follow’

And as he sat at dinner in Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—**for there were many who followed him.** 2:15

Two key words

- ‘the way’
- ‘follow’

And Jesus said to them, “**Follow me** and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately **they left their nets and followed him.** 1:17-18

Two key words

- ‘the way’
- ‘follow’

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become **my followers**, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and **follow me.**’ 8:34

Two key words

- 'the way'
- 'follow'

They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and **Jesus was walking ahead of them**; they were amazed, and **those who followed** were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him 10:32

What marks a disciple?

- Accepting the demands of Jesus
 - leaving everything 1:16-18; 2:14; 3:14, 16-17
 - fishing for people 1:17; 2:15-17; 3:13-15
 - using wealth in service of Jesus 10:17-22;
cf. 2:15-17
 - obedience to the will of God 3:31-35

What marks a disciple?

- The 'journey' section 8:27–10:52
 - the blind men 8:22-26; 10:46-52
 - three parts, each including
 - passion prediction
 - misguided response by disciples
 - discipleship teaching

8:27–9:29

- passion prediction 8:27-33
 - Peter recoils from this vv 32-33
- discipleship 8:34–9:29
 - 8:34-38 personal attachment to Jesus
 - suffering v 34
 - denying yourself v 34

8:27–9:29

- passion prediction 8:27-33
 - Peter recoils from this vv 32-33
- discipleship 8:34–9:29
 - 9:7 listen to Jesus
 - 9:29 the priority of prayer

9:30–10:31

- passion prediction 9:30-32
 - the disciples don't understand v 32
 - the disciples argue about who is greatest vv 33-37
 - how to treat the weakest v 37

9:30–10:31

- relationships with other disciples 9:38–10:31
 - who is included? 9:38-40
 - don't trip others up 9:42
 - beware tripping yourself up 9:43-48
 - call to peaceful relationships 9:49-50

‘Let your conversation be always full of grace,
seasoned with salt’

Colossians 4:6

9:30–10:31

- relationships with other disciples 9:38–10:31
 - who is included? 9:38-40
 - don't trip others up 9:42
 - beware tripping yourself up 9:43-48
 - call to peaceful relationships 9:49-50
 - marriage 10:10-12
 - children 10:13-16
 - wealth 10:17-31

10:32-52

- identify the pattern (passion prediction, misunderstanding, teaching about discipleship)
- what are the key lessons about discipleship which Jesus teaches here?
- what does the last story (vv 46-52) add to the picture of following Jesus?
- where does Jesus' teaching on discipleship challenge and reinforce your life at present?

Restoration after failure

- Peter in 14:27-31, 66-72—and 16:7

Jesus' promise of the restoration of the Twelve—even after their desertion and denial—is the message that Mark holds out to readers who, like Peter, may have failed under threats but may still experience forgiveness and restoration. In a first-century setting, where opposition from relatives and neighbours or intimidation from Jewish and Roman authorities might have led some Christians to compromise their witness, this hope would have been very meaningful.

(Larry W. Hurtado)

For reflection and discussion

- On a sheet of paper draw a timeline of 'My discipleship journey'
 - it may meander or go up and down
 - identify key events, both positive and negative
- Share your timeline with someone else: where are you seeing Jesus' teaching on discipleship worked out?

You can get these slides from:

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<http://steve walton.info>