

Group Study Guide

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

Back to School – Part 2

Mark 8:22-33

June 17th, 2018

Main Point

Jesus's opening of our eyes happens at once and in stages. We learn from the blind man and from the Apostle Peter the importance of staying in Jesus's school.

Getting Started

When Jesus and the disciples arrived in Bethsaida on the eastern edge of the Sea of Galilee, He healed a blind man (Mark 8:22-26). This illustrated the disciples' need to be healed of their spiritual blindness. Such healing would take place in stages for the disciples. After healing the blind man, Jesus led the Twelve to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. There Jesus enlightened the disciples further, but not before he examined their thoughts and ideas concerning Himself. He sternly corrected Peter for focusing on his own agenda and not on God's. As you read this passage, ask Jesus to enlighten the eyes of your heart through the power of the Holy Spirit so you see him clearly. Allow Jesus to take you back to school to reflect on who He is and what He can do in your life!

Observation

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says and means.

Have a volunteer read Mark 8:22-26.

This miracle and its structural parallel (7:31-37) are the only miracles recorded in the book of Mark alone. Additionally, this is the only two-stage miracle which Jesus performed. Sight was a widely used metaphor for understanding. This miracle depicts the correct but incomplete understanding of the disciples.

Where did Jesus and the disciples arrive at the beginning of this story?

Who brought to Jesus a blind man? How did those who brought the blind man to Jesus approach him?

What did Jesus do in response to their begging? Where did he lead the blind man?

How did the blind man respond after Jesus spit on his eyes? What did he tell Jesus he saw?

What did Jesus do to restore his sight fully?

What did Jesus tell the man not to do?

Read Mark 8:27-29.

As they journeyed, Jesus questioned the disciples. He used this occasion to instruct them more specifically about His future and how it affected them. First Jesus asked, “*Who do people say that I am?*” Most people who encountered Jesus had an opinion about Him.

Why is that answer not a sufficient one for Jesus? Why does He always ask the additional question, “Who do you say that I am?”

Jesus moved to the real teaching moment. “But you,” Jesus said. He wanted their opinion of His identity. The answers of others to that question fell short of the whole truth. So, Jesus got more personal in a probe of the disciples’ understanding. Jesus knew already that they needed a clarification of His genuine identity.

Do you think Peter fully understood the implications of what he was saying? Why or why not?

Read Mark 8:30-33.

Why do you think Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone about His identity? How would their description of the Messiah at this time have fallen short of Jesus’ identity and mission?

How does this scene help you understand all of Jesus’ previous commands to keep His healings and miracles a secret?

Jesus did not refute the disciples’ identification of Him as the Messiah. He strictly warned them, however, not to use this title related to Him. Why? The title “Messiah” meant different things to different people. Even the disciples misunderstood its full implications for Jesus. He preferred to privately teach them its meaning as it related to Him and His purpose from God. Before they could tell the world the good news about Him, they had to live it first, and this meant telling no one until they had the complete picture of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

What four things does Jesus prophesy about Himself in verses 31-32?

How might the disciples have felt about this teaching? How might this have altered their understanding of Jesus’ mission and their part in it?

Peter was understandably shocked by the insight Jesus gave them into His mission. Why do you think Jesus reacted so strongly to Peter?

A combination of denial, spiritual immaturity, and love motivated Peter to correct Jesus. Peter’s confrontation provided further opportunity for Jesus to teach. He could not allow the rebuke to go unchallenged. No doubt the other disciples felt the same

way. While Peter apparently spoke privately, Jesus turned to the group and rebuked Peter in front of them. Just as Satan worked throughout Jesus' ministry to divert Him from His purpose, Peter now provided the same kind of interference. Peter put human preference above God's will. Jesus' death was not something any of them wanted to consider. But He taught the truth that the cross could not be avoided, and it was not to be feared.

Application

How might Jesus' partial healing of the blind man parallel the disciple's understanding at this time of who Jesus is? Do you sometimes have a partial understanding of Jesus' identity? How is your understanding of him growing? What are you doing to grow in your understanding of who Jesus is and what he can do in your life? Read 2 Peter 3:18.

Spend some time in prayer, asking Jesus to open your eyes to who He is and what He wants to do in your life. Reflecting on these passages on the identity of Jesus may help: John 1:14-18, 14:6, Philippians 2:5-10 and Hebrews 13:8.

As for your understanding of Jesus, are you (1) almost blind, (2) seeing in blurred shapes or (3) enjoying 20/20 vision? Please explain in your group.

If Jesus asked you the same question He asked His early disciples, "Who do people say that I am?", how would you respond? Why is your answer important?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, please help me see you clearly. Open my eyes, ears and mind to truly learn from you and about you. Please do not let me settle for mere head knowledge about you. I want to know you! Increase my hunger for you. Cause me to long to know you more and trust you more deeply.

Commentary

8:22 Bethsaida is on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was the hometown of Philip, Andrew and Peter. Mark did not record Jesus' previous visit to Bethsaida, but Luke associated it with feeding of the 5,000. Friends of the blind most likely brought him to Jesus. They begged Jesus to heal him. This recalls the faith of some friends who brought a lame man to Jesus (Luke 5:19-26) by cutting a hole in the roof to let him down to see Jesus in a crowded house.

8:23 Jesus taking the blind man out of the village and spitting on him recalls 7:33. Laying his hands on him recalls 5:23 and 6:2, 5.

8:24 After Jesus' first action, the man's vision was only partially restored. This is the only miracle of Jesus in which healing did not occur immediately and completely.

8:26 No reason is given for why Jesus commanded the man to not return to the village. Perhaps he did not want to make a spectacle of the healing of the blind man.

8:27-29. As Jesus and the disciples traveled to Caesarea Philippi, He questioned them about His identity. Their knowledge of Him was growing, their understanding becoming greater. As foreshadowed in chapter 6, the disciples recited the list of popular opinions about Jesus. Our knowledge of others' beliefs, however, is never good enough. We must form our own opinions. We must come to Christ for ourselves. Peter, the spokesperson of the group, replied that Jesus was the Messiah. Matthew gives Peter's fuller response and Jesus' full response to Peter (Matt. 16:17-18). Many scholars believe that Peter dictated the Gospel of Mark to John Mark. If this is indeed Peter's account of these events, it is possible that he did not want the praise of himself recorded here. He wanted only his Savior glorified.

8:30-31. Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone about this event. He knew the disciples did not have a full understanding of who the Messiah was or what He would suffer. For the first time Jesus spoke plainly about His upcoming passion and death. Note that this prediction came immediately after Peter's confession of Him as the Christ. He wanted to emphasize to the disciples that He had not come to establish a political kingdom. His victory would be that of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53.

The Messiah must suffer many things. While the crucifixion is the culmination of Jesus' suffering, He suffered other things. He suffered the rejection of His family and the continuous rejection of His teaching and His miracles by the religious leaders. Their attribution of His compassion and good works to the works of the devil was a source of further suffering. Jesus listed three categories of people in this verse: the elders, the chief priests, and teachers of the law. These three groups made up the Sanhedrin. These groups would be the ones that demanded His death.

8:32. Jesus spoke plainly to the disciples. He revealed the full truth about His suffering and death. Peter expressed horror at what Jesus was saying. He allowed his own wishes to cloud the truth of Jesus' words.

8:33. Jesus' temptation in the wilderness was not the end of Satan's attempts. Satan tried to present another opportunity to Jesus—the opportunity to avoid His painful crucifixion and separation from the Father. Jesus' stern rebuke came on two levels. First, He rebuked Satan. Peter's suggestion represented a very real temptation for Jesus—one that must be rejected forcefully. Second, Jesus rebuked Peter and the disciples. Mark alone records that Jesus looked around at all the disciples. Although Peter was the spokesman for the group, all the disciples agreed with Him in His protest of Jesus' statement about His forthcoming death. Jesus' condemnation of Peter was meant for all the disciples because they were unwilling to accept a suffering Messiah. Jesus demanded that they accept His mission and His demands for discipleship. While Peter was not “possessed” by Satan, he was used as an instrument of Satan in this instance, even though he seemed to have Jesus' best interests in mind.

