# Discussion Guide for Mark 8:34 – 9:34

**By: Pastor Tim Dodson**

**Part 1: The Cost of Discipleship (Mark 8:34–38)**

- **Denying Self:** Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself" (8:34). In a culture that promotes self-fulfillment and personal branding, what does daily "self-denial" look like practically in your life?

- **Taking Up the Cross:** To the first-century listeners, a cross wasn't a piece of jewelry—it was an instrument of execution and public shame. What does it mean for us to "take up our cross" today? How is it different from general life hardships or frustrations?

- **Losing vs. Finding Life:** Jesus flips the script by saying whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for Christ will save it (8:35). Where have you experienced true life or joy *only* after surrendering control or comfort to Jesus?

- **The Value of a Soul:** In verses 36–37, Jesus asks what it profits a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul. What "worldly gains" or distractions tempt you most to compromise your walk with Christ?

**Part 2: The Transfiguration & God's Glory (Mark 9:2–13)**

- **A Glimpse of Glory:** Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John, revealing His divine glory alongside Moses and Elijah (9:2–4). Why do you think Jesus gave these three disciples this specific preview of His kingdom power right after talking about the cross?

- **"Listen to Him":** The Father's voice from the cloud declares, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (9:7). In what areas of your life right now is it hardest to *listen* to Jesus rather than your own anxieties, culture, or desires?

- **Processing Doubt and Confusion:** The disciples were bewildered and didn't know what to say (9:6) or how to process the rising from the dead (9:10). How do you handle moments in your faith journey when God's path or timing doesn't make sense to you?

**Part 3: The Power of Faith & Prayer (Mark 9:14–24)**

- **The Frustration of Faithlessness:** Jesus steps down from the mountain into a chaotic scene where the disciples couldn't cast out an unclean spirit, leading Jesus to cry out, "O faithless generation, how long must I be with you?" (9:19). Where do you find yourself relying on your own strength rather than God's power in daily ministry or life?

- **"I Believe; Help My Unbelief!":** The father of the boy makes one of the most honest prayers in Scripture: *"I believe; help my unbelief!"* (9:24). Why is it safe to bring mixed faith or doubt to Jesus, and how can we be honest with God about our weaknesses today?

**8:34** Then Jesus **said to them** in effect, "I am going to suffer and die so that men might be saved. If you desire to **come after Me**, you must deny every selfish impulse, deliberately choose a pathway of reproach, suffering and death, **and follow Me**. You may have to forsake personal comforts, social enjoyments, earthly ties, grand ambitions, material riches, and even life itself." Words like these make us wonder how we can really believe that it is all right for us to live in luxury and ease. How can we justify the materialism, selfishness, and coldness of our hearts? His words call us to lives of self-denial, surrender, suffering, and sacrifice.

**8:35** There is always the temptation to **save** our **life**—to live comfortably, to provide for the future, to make one's own choices, with self as the center of everything. There is no surer way of losing one's life. Christ calls us to pour out our lives for His sake and the gospel's, dedicating ourselves to Him spirit, soul, and body. He asks us to spend and be spent in His holy service, laying down our lives, if necessary, for the evangelization of the world. That is what is meant by losing our lives. There is no surer way of saving them.

**8:36, 37** Even if a believer could gain all the world's wealth during his lifetime, what good would it do him? He would have missed the opportunity of using his life for the glory of God and the salvation of the lost. It would be a bad bargain. Our lives are worth more than all the world has to offer. Shall we use them for Christ or for self?

**8:38** Our Lord realized that some of His young disciples might be stumbled in the path of discipleship by the fear of shame. So He reminded them that those who seek to avoid reproach because of Him will suffer a greater shame when He returns to earth in power. What a thought! Soon our Lord is coming back to earth, this time not in humiliation, but in His own personal glory and in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels. It will be a scene of dazzling splendor. He will then be ashamed of those who are ashamed of Him now. May His words **"ashamed of Me … in this adulterous and sinful generation"** speak to our hearts. How incongruous to be ashamed of the sinless Savior in a world that is characterized by unfaithfulness and sinfulness!

## IV. THE SERVANT'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM (Chaps. 9, 10)

### A. The Servant Transfigured (9:1–13)

Having laid before the disciples the pathway of reproach, suffering, and death which He was to take, and having invited them to follow Him in lives of sacrifice and self-renunciation, the Lord now gives the other side of the picture. Though discipleship would cost them dearly in this life, it would be rewarded with glory by and by.

**9:1–7** The Lord began by saying that **some** of the disciples would **not taste death till they** saw **the kingdom of God present with power**. He was referring to **Peter, James, and John**. On the Mount of Transfiguration they saw **the kingdom of God** in **power**. The argument of the passage is that anything we suffer for Christ's sake now will be abundantly repaid when He returns and His servants appear with Him in glory. The conditions which prevailed on the Mount foreshadow the Millennial Reign of Christ.

1. Jesus **was transfigured**—dazzling splendor radiated from His Person. Even **His clothes** were **shining**, whiter than any bleach could make them.

   During His First Advent, the glory of Christ was veiled. He came in humiliation, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. But He will return in glory. No one will mistake Him then. He will be visibly the King of kings and Lord of lords.
2. **Elijah** and **Moses** were there. They represent: (a) OT saints, or (b) the law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah), or (c) saints who have died, and those who have been translated.
3. **Peter, James and John** were there. They may represent NT saints in general, or those who will be alive when the kingdom is set up.
4. **Jesus** was the central Person. Peter's suggestion of making **three tabernacles** was rebuked by the **cloud** and the **voice** from heaven. In all things Christ must have the pre-eminence. He will be the glory of Immanuel's land.

5. The **cloud** may have been the shekinah or glory cloud which stayed in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple in OT times. It was the visible expression of God's presence.
6. The **voice** was the voice of God the Father, acknowledging Christ as His **beloved Son.**

**9:8** When the cloud was lifted the disciples **saw no one anymore, but only Jesus**. It was a picture of the unique, glorious and pre-eminent place He will have when the kingdom comes in power, and which He should have in the hearts of His followers at the present time.

**9:9, 10 As they came down from the mountain, He commanded them** not to discuss what **they had seen till** after He **had risen from the dead**. This latter point puzzled them. Perhaps they still did not grasp that He was to be slain and rise again. They wondered about the expression **rising from the dead**. As Jews they knew the truth that all would be raised. But Jesus was speaking of a selective resurrection. He would be raised from among the dead ones—not all would be raised when He arose. This is a truth found only in the NT.

**9:11** The disciples had another problem. They had just had a preview of the kingdom. But hadn't Malachi predicted **that Elijah must come** as a forerunner of the Messiah, beginning the restitution of all things, and paving the way for setting up His universal reign (Mal. 4:5)? Where was Elijah? Would he **come first**, as **the scribes** said he would?

**9:12, 13** Jesus answered in effect, **"Indeed**, it is true that **Elijah** must come **first**. But a more important and immediate question is this: 'Don't the OT Scriptures predict that **the Son of Man** is to endure great sufferings and be treated with **contempt**?' As far as Elijah is concerned, **Elijah** did **come** (in the person and ministry of John the Baptist), but men treated him exactly as they wanted to—just as men treated Elijah. The death of John the Baptist was an advance token of what they would do to the Son of Man. They rejected the forerunner; they will reject the King."

**B. A Demon-Possessed Boy Healed (9:14–29)**

**9:14–16** The disciples were not permitted to remain on the mountain-top of glory. In the valley below was groaning, sobbing mankind. A world of need lay at their feet. When Jesus and the three disciples reached the base of the mountain, an animated discussion was going on among **the scribes**, the crowd, and **the** other **disciples**. As soon as the Lord appeared, the conversation broke up and the crowd rushed to Him. **"What are you discussing with** My disciples?" He inquired.

**9:17, 18** A distraught father excitedly told the Lord about his **son**, possessed with **a mute spirit**. The demon dashed the child to the ground, made him grind **his teeth** and foam **at the mouth**. These violent convulsions were causing the child to waste away. The father had asked the **disciples** to help, **but they could not**.

**9:19** Jesus chided the disciples for their unbelief. Had He not given them power to cast out demons? **How long** would He have to **be with** them before they would use the authority He had given them? **How long** would He have to put up with lives of powerlessness and defeat?

**9:20–23** As **they brought** the child to the Lord, the demon induced a particularly serious fit. The Lord **asked his father how long** this had been going on. It was **from childhood**, he explained. These spasms **often** had **thrown** the child **into the fire and into the water**. There had been narrow escapes from death. Then the father asked the Lord to please do something **if** He could—a heart-rending cry, wrung from years of desperation. **Jesus** told **him** that it was not a question of His ability to heal, but of the father's ability to **believe**. Faith in the living God is always rewarded. No case is too difficult for Him.

**9:24** The father expressed the paradox of faith and unbelief experienced by God's people in all ages. **"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"** We want to believe, yet find ourselves filled with doubt. We hate this inward, unreasonable contradiction, yet seem to fight it in vain.[1]

---

[1] William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1341–1343.