

Package deal

Mark 8.27-38

In this difficult passage, Jesus asks his disciples who they think he is. They tell him that he is the Messiah and his response is that, while this is wonderful, it also means there will be testing times ahead – both for him and for his followers.

Now read **Mark 8.27-38** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

The answer to the question Jesus asks in this passage, 'Who do you say that I am?', is both a celebration and a challenge. Jesus is the Messiah – the Saviour of the World, the one who will set us free, restore our relationship with God and bring us eternal life. But, if we believe that Jesus is the Messiah, there's also a cost. We have to accept the full package: the joy alongside the pain; God's love for us alongside us loving others, even those who are hard to love; making God – and not ourselves – the most important part of our lives.



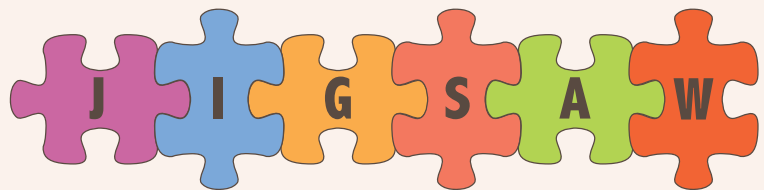
Ask yourself: What, for you, are the risks and rewards of following Jesus?



Play a game of Uno or Snakes and Ladders, or any game that has risks and rewards. Alternatively, use a pack of cards to build a tower. While you play/build, appreciate that, to progress, you may need to seemingly fail sometimes; to succeed, you'll need to accept risk. Embrace both the opportunities and the challenges, in order to complete the game or finish your structure.



Go on a walk – notice that some parts will be uphill, but these allow us to enjoy the view. Some parts are flat, and this gives us a chance to rest and notice what's around us. Are the leaves changing colour on the trees? Have flowers died? Without autumn, we can't have spring. For buds to reappear, fruit to grow and flowers to bloom again next year, they need to die. Just like in life, following Jesus includes highs and lows, challenges and rewards. But it is often through the difficult times that we grow, and it is the difficult times that make us appreciate the good times even more.



Do a jigsaw puzzle (you can do this online as well <https://www.jigsawplanet.com/>) – some pieces will be more difficult to slot into the puzzle than others, but they're all needed to create the full picture. Some parts of our Christian life will be easier than others, but they're all part of the big picture of who God is shaping us to be.



When people talk about 'the full package', they're generally referring to all of a person's positive attributes (their wealth, looks, success, humour, etc.). Jesus had amazing attributes, but not all of them were easy to live with (think of the money changers in the Temple and the ways Jesus often challenged people). Draw or write 'Jesus' on a large sheet of paper and, each day, write a different benefit or challenge to following Jesus – perhaps you could take it in turns with others or those you live with.

Pray

Talk together or think about what aspects of being a follower of Jesus you find most difficult. Pray for God to help you in these areas. If you're with others, perhaps you could pray for each other about these things.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.



Jesus and his disciples were walking along the road to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. As they walked, Jesus asked them questions. 'What do people say about me? Who do they think I am?'

The disciples thought a little and then began to answer: 'Some people think you are John the Baptist.' 'Others think you are Elijah.' 'I've heard someone saying you are one of the prophets.'

They walked a little more and Jesus asked another question: 'But what about you? Who do you think I am?'

This time Peter was quick to answer. 'You are the Messiah,' he declared.

Jesus began explaining to them that he would suffer, that he would be rejected, that he would be killed, and that after three days, he would rise again. Peter became angry when Jesus talked this way. But Jesus also got angry and said to him, 'No, Peter, you are talking like Satan.'

'These things must happen. It is important that you think in the way God does, and not the way that people do.'

Jesus then called the crowd together and started to teach them. 'If you want to be one of my followers, you will need to be prepared to do what I do,' Jesus said. He wanted them to understand that to be a follower of his means doing some difficult things.

Mark 8.27-38

Did you know?

- A prophet is someone who receives messages from God to pass on to the people.
- The word Messiah means the 'anointed one', someone chosen by God to save the Jewish people; also a title used for Jesus.
- Satan is a Hebrew word for one who tempts or obstructs people and draws them away from God; a personification of evil.

Mark 8.27-38 (NRSV)

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

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. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."