

Bible Studies *On Mark*

These studies have been written to inspire each one of us to a deeper understanding of our relationship with God. It is my experience that we can never be encouraged enough in this and it is a great joy for me to take part in encouraging each of you. May God bless and strengthen each of you. And may He grant you fresh understanding and awakening as you take the time to study these lessons. It is my prayer that God would make use of this small attempt to spread His light and have requested that His life and wisdom be in these words for my words are nothing unless He is truly in them.

-Seth Petrofsky

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Written by a fellow servant of Jesus Christ
Seth Petrofsky

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Mark 1:21-27

Jesus' authority

Jesus is in command of the heavens and the earth. He is in command of the physical elements that make up the things around us as well as the spirits that inhabit them. What an exciting thought! Jesus is ruler of all. Whatever He says, it will be done according to His decree. The spirits must depart. The flesh must be healed. All that He declares must take place.

And we are His servants. His authority goes with us if we are doing what He has commanded us to do. So this means that if we are doing what He has commanded than there is nothing that will be too big or impossible to overcome in the job. Jesus' word is law and if we are ambassadors for Him than we carry His seal that gives us authority to pass through all check points and security that stands between us and our mission for Him. He gives us a key that allows us to open all doors through which the job takes us. All must let us through if we are about the Kings business.

However, this lesson is only exciting if you desire to be a doer of God's word and not just a hearer. If you are caught up in your own life than you will find that you have no desire to make use of this ability. Your desire to please yourself is all that is needed to hold you back from answering God's call for you to be doing His work. We really need to wake up and do the jobs that God has called us to do. We need to put ourselves aside so that we are able to quickly respond with no delay or hesitation. Our love for ourselves constantly gets in the way of our jobs for God. If we are presented with two things to do, one being for God and the other for us we prefer to do the one for us. We tend to view everything through the eyes of (how will it affect us?)

Do we get anything from doing it?

Does it hurt us in any way?

Is it going to be fun?

Does it get in the way of the things I want to do?

God is like the captain of a ship who knows that it is sinking and in an effort to get everybody to safety assigns His crew to getting people off the ship. If we get distracted by doing what we want to do we are like a crew, that while running down the hall making sure that people are getting away safely we spot some expensive jewelry that was left behind in the owners haste. So we disobey our orders to save lives and attempt to get something for ourselves as long as we are there. But now it occurs to us that there could be so much more if we start looking in other rooms. Instead of seeing how many people we can rescue we start seeing how much we might be able to take with us as we get off the boat. So not only are we not faithful to do what we have been told, but we run the risk of not even making it off the boat ourselves.

As Christians it is very important that we understand our situation here. We truly are trying to rescue as many people on this sinking ship as possible. The more anxious we are the more energy we will put into our effort to rescue people. We have no time for seeking our own wealth or even our own safety. If one of those crew ran to the deck and got on the boat seeking to save himself he would indeed get away alive, but with no honor or joy at having been part of getting others off as well. He rescued no one and ignored his captain's orders. People died because of his actions who might otherwise have been rescued.

We need to feel the stress of knowing the boat is going down. We need to feel the panic of not reaching everyone in time to be rescued. We need to be willing to risk our own lives to go to the lowest parts of the ship and to see that all get off safely. We are running out of time! Let us be already running as our Captain shouts His orders to us.

There is not much time, let us make the most of it. Let us pray for that fire to be burning in our hearts. We need to be consumed with love for our neighbor. May God bless each one of us with a new heart that cannot rest without doing all that is possible to rescue others.

Mark 2:1-12

Jesus sees their faith

And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "My son your sins are forgiven."

The story about the faith of a Paralytic and his persistent friends has been passed down from generation to generation and is just as powerful a witness now as it was then. What a lesson for us as Christians. There are a couple of things I would like to point out that should grab our attention. First, the faith of the men who carried the paralytic to Jesus had a big part in the outcome of the man being healed. It was their action of physically carrying him to Jesus that brought him there. If they had simply told the man that Jesus could heal but didn't bother to bring him to Jesus what good would it have done him? Could he have gotten up and walked to Jesus himself in order to be healed? No, he had to be carried. It was beyond his own ability to get himself to Jesus. Second, after getting all the way to the house where Jesus was they found that there was no way to get close to Him because of all the people. Can you imagine how discouraged they would have been at such a sight? They had carried this poor man all the way only to find that the last one hundred feet were going to be the hardest. Now here is the scary part. What if they had given up at this point and gone home? Would the man have been healed? He had gotten so close and yet not close enough. The story is well known because the men persisted and a way was made where there was none. It was faith in Jesus ability to heal the man that caused them to overcome the last one hundred feet.

What a lesson we have before us. It is our faith in action that will see God's hand so abundantly. Words of help and comfort are great, but it is the actions that do the job.

All men and women are like the paralytic, unable to bring themselves to Jesus. They can't carry themselves and must be carried. So how do we carry people to Jesus? There are a couple of parts to this equation, which need to be in place. First, they need to hear about Him, and second, they need to desire to be healed by Him. Our job

is to live in such a way that our actions glorify God so that people take note and desire to get to know Him. Turning people's eyes and hearts to Heaven is essentially carrying them to Jesus. If people see our deeds and are touched with a desire to be Holy than we have succeeded. But this is only the beginning to what God has called us to do. Jesus left us with the command to make disciples of all nations, which means that we must be training and teaching them after they have been healed like the paralytic. People who truly meet Jesus want to know what to do next. It is our job to work with them like a child being raised by older brothers and sisters or parents. The child needs protection and training. This is what we are called to be part of.

We have been called by God and no matter how little we feel we have to give, yet if we are faithful to make use of it, He will turn it into something greater. Let us pray for God's hand to be upon us so that we will be diligent to do all that we can for people. In our weakness He will be our strength.

Mark 4

The rocky soil and the thorny soil

I feel that we need to have a firm understanding of these two soils that Jesus tells us about. We can all understand that good soil yields good crops and the roadside soil yields no crops. However, most of us are in the category of rocky and thorny soil. We need to know what we are dealing with both in ourselves and in those that we want to help. Let me start by defining these two soils and also by saying that these soils can be fixed. The rocky soil can have the rocks picked out and the thorny soil can have the weeds pulled.

Rocky soil: Rocky soil is the soil that persecutes Christians. It does not desire to slowly choke out God's word, but tries to utterly destroy it before it gets any further out of hand. The rocks symbolize the hardness of the hearts in the people around a person who becomes a Christian. They will not support a person who converts and will do all they can to make sure that the newborn Christian has no room to grow. They will terrorize that convert till he lets go of God's word and becomes one of them again.

Thorny soil: Thorny soil is soil that seeks to corrupt God's word and to entangle a Christian so that his life never bears fruit. Thorny soil pretends to not mind that a person is a Christian and at the same time attach itself so firmly that the Christian does not even know that the thorns are not part of himself. Thorny soil desires to make sure that what a Christian says and what he does are two different things.

Both of these soils have one thing in common. A person who commits himself to Christ is going to have to cling firmly to Him to keep from being swept away by these two different forms of soil. These two types of soil either persecute or entice a Christian to give up their faith. We in the United States live in a nation of thorny soil. We easily get distracted by the enticement to relax and enjoy the world around us. When we get a night off we are rarely thinking about what we could do to help our neighbor. Instead we have made

plans to go out with friends, watch a movie, or work on our house. We talk about loving our neighbor, but when do we ever show our love. When does our love turn into actions? When is the last time we got up in the morning with the wonderful hope in our heart that today we could do something for someone? We need a love and passion in our hearts for being a servant to others, but thorns choke out all of our willpower! We just can't do it today. We're too tired, we have too many other responsibilities, we have plans. Let me ask us whose servant are we? Our own? If so then don't pretend to be God's!

It is time to get our lives straight before God. The commitment that we have given to God is just as hard for those who live with thorns as for those who live with rocks. God did not say that the people who would have to die for their faith or be beaten with whips had a harder road than those who would slowly die as they are choked to death by pleasures and temptations. The commitment is the same and don't expect your choices to be easier to make than theirs! To give up the passions of the flesh is like being beaten with whips. When God seeks to remove them from our lives we go through internal pain because those thorns were with us so long that we didn't even know that they weren't part of us. We yell and cry before God telling Him that we will die if He takes those pleasures from us. No my friends, just because there is no one pointing a gun to our head does not mean that we have an easier choice in whether or not we will be a Christian.

What are the weeds? -Anything that distracts us from God or keeps us from carrying out His word. (People, things, excitement, entertainment, work)

-Anything that we look forward to or desire more than our time in fellowship with God.

When the weeds and thorns become seen for what they are and we begin to get close to God to ask for them to be pulled we will find that our lives begin to bear fruit.

How to please God

God has told us that we must make him first in our lives and all other things second. That means that when you sit down to spend some time with Him that you put down all of you anxious thoughts and all of the other desires that are running through your head. He wants your heart to be fixed on Him, desiring to be nowhere else but with Him.

When you come before Him in this way here are the things that you will see starting to happen.

1. Your prayers will start to bear fruit
2. Joy will spring up inside your heart in spite of whatever hard things you are going through
3. A peace will be in your heart as you face your trials and tough times
4. Your trust in God's love for you will grow
5. You will begin to truly understand God's word and His ways
6. That understanding will bring about a true love for His laws
7. You will begin to truly love your neighbor
8. A whole new life of talents and fruit will open up before us and in us that we never saw before or even knew existed.

And to conclude, not only will God do all these things in your life, but you will find that whatever it was that you put aside in order to make time for Him whether it be jobs that needed to be taken care of or things you wanted to do with friends, you will find that the hard jobs get done in ways that you didn't expect and were taken care of quicker than you had thought possible and the time that you spend with your friends becomes more wonderful than usual. He wants to show us that if we give up all for Him than He will bless all that we do and give back more than we gave up. May God bless each one of you and may your lives bear fruit. Some thirty, some sixty and some one hundred fold.

Mark 5: 25-34

To touch the garment of Jesus

The faith that brings healing: This is the story of a woman who had endured 12 years of pain, made worse by the many attempts that physicians had made to cure her.

She had run out of hope. The doctors couldn't cure her and even if she could find another who would try, she had exhausted all of her means (money) with which to pay for it. Then, hearing about Jesus she set out to be healed by Him. She not only believed that He could heal her, but said in her heart that if she could just touch His garments she would be cured. Now, upon finding Him she was not discouraged by the crowds or the fact that He was not standing still or even facing her. He was actually in a hurry to the house of a man whose daughter was dying. When she touched Him she was cured. The power of God went forth without Jesus even turning around to see her. Jesus, turning around said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

There are three things that I would like to point out in this story. First, she heard about Jesus and the things that He did. Second, she believed that what she heard about Him was true. Third, she sought Him out and reached out to Him. She heard, believed and that belief brought action. All of these things were motivated by a real need that she had. She had been suffering for 12 years and until she heard about Jesus she had run out of hope for a cure.

This is a great lesson for us. As we read these stories and as people tell us about the things that Jesus has done in there lives we need to begin to believe the message of what Jesus has done. We need to reach out and touch Jesus. To often we go to God in prayer and feel like He is not listening or that He probably will say no to what we are asking for. Our hearts are full of doubt and we are discouraged before we even start to pray. We need to go to God in prayer as though we are going to touch Him. This woman demonstrates that even if Jesus is not facing you and is even hurrying away on important business, that your faith in Him will get an answer.

How do we touch God? At the risk of sounding foolish and elementary in the truths of God, we need to know and believe that He is real and can be touched. This touch can be accomplished through both prayer and praise. We need to understand that His Holy Spirit is in the room when we are in prayer so that we will begin searching for an even closer relationship. The Spirit of the Living God is in the room with us and we are content to just say a quick prayer and go to sleep? What are we doing? There is so much more to our relationship than just having a contentment in the knowledge that we are saved. Praise, God's Spirit rejoices in our praise especially when it comes from a heart that is truly thankful. All of this brings us closer to the understanding that God truly is there and that we can enjoy the pleasure of His company. He is delighted in our praises and will never fail to respond to our needs.

Let us cast our doubts in the goodness of our God aside and reach out for Him. Let us take hold of His hand and enjoy the pleasure of His company. He is our Heavenly Father and to borrow the words of our Savior, "if we being evil know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our Father in Heaven give what is good to us."

Mark 7:32-37

Jesus heals a man who cannot hear or speak

This man whom Jesus heals, has two obvious problems. He can't hear and can only speak with difficulty. This man was fortunate enough to have some wonderful friends who brought him to Jesus to be healed. This man who could not hear would have had no way of knowing about Jesus and unless there was someone who could interpret words to some kind of sign language, telling this person about Jesus could have been quite a challenge. So this mans friends bring him to Jesus to meet Him in person. Now once he met Jesus in person he still was not able to communicate and ask Jesus himself. His friends spoke to Jesus for him and entreated Jesus to lay His hands upon him.

This message shows us the example of what it means to truly care about someone. We are all deaf and cannot hear Jesus voice and we are all mute when it comes to truly making our requests known to God. It is Jesus compassion on us that causes Him to reach down and lay His hands upon us. Only then will our ears be awakened to hear His voice and only then will we be able to speak to Him and make our request to be healed. However, we have been healed before we spoke and instead of a request, all that is left for us is to rejoice in His love and mercy towards us.

When I say that this is an example of what it means to care for and love people, it is because it was the persistence of this mans friends that brought him to Jesus. It was men who could hear and speak who brought the one who could not. So we have our job before us. We need to have persistence with those we love that even if they can't understand (hear) what we have to say about Jesus, our efforts will be rewarded by Jesus Himself when we bring them to Him. This is wonderful hope to those who are weary in their efforts to see their friends get saved. Our prayers and persistence will be answered by Jesus Himself.

One more thing I would like to bring out. It says that this

mans friends entreated with Jesus to heal him. That means that they were earnest in their request for His healing touch. When we truly love someone it puts a seriousness and desperation in our prayers that is not there if in our hearts we don't truly care what happens to the person. Jesus knows the difference between prayers with our lips and prayers with our hearts. The (Heart) prayer will always get an answer. My advice- if you aren't willing to sacrifice a part of your life to see that person saved, then you are still praying with your lips. Are you willing to fast (go without eating) and pray for that person? Are you willing to be inconvenienced in any way to see that person saved? When we fast and pray before God on behalf of someone we show God a request that goes beyond the lips and into our actions. God will reward these prayers with answers.

May God encourage each one of you in your relationship with Him. He desires nothing more than to see our ears open to His voice and once we hear His voice clearly it is impossible to keep our tongue quiet. For God has healed that as well.

Mark 8:34-38

Unashamed of Jesus and the Gospel

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with His holy angels”. Mark 8:38

Why is it that we feel shame in being associated with Jesus and the gospel? Why are we so easily ashamed of Him and telling others about Him? Verses 34-37 give us some answers to this question. 34. And He summoned the multitudes with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s shall save it. 36. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 37. For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

What we should notice about these verses is that they carry a very unappealing message for our pursuit of ease and comfort. Jesus demonstrated what it means to carry a cross and it was anything but a relaxing experience. Each of us has spent many hours, days, and years trying to keep up with the world. Trying to do things that impress our friends or would cause people we walk by to envy us for what we have. Jesus did not demonstrate this type of living. Instead He tells us to give up that lifestyle or we will lose our souls to it. He does not tell us to mix with it, but to die to it.

This way of life is not only unappealing to our friends and the world around us, but they will look at us as though we were dead! How could we possibly enjoy a life that has no popularity and no worldly excitement attached to it? Where is the fun? Where is the excitement? This is a message that will not make us a big hit at the party. There is no glory or envy to be gained from our friends by living this way or telling them about living this way. It also stings their conscience causing them to not like having us around ruining

their party. So, rather than living for Christ in front of our friends we feel ashamed of even mentioning that we try to live this way. We live the Christian life in front of other Christians, but not in front of those who would think us foolish for doing so. We show ourselves unwilling to give up our lives for the gospel. We are unable to let go of their opinion of us and are ashamed of being a Christian in front of them.

But once we have become dead to the world and alive in Christ our joy and excitement has a new source, one that does not come from possessions and easy living. Our hearts burn with a new passion; a new fire that is bigger, stronger and more appealing than anything the world has ever offered us. Our Heavenly Father has the universe awaiting us. Truly our life is just beginning for in the same way that He is infinitely creative He wants to teach us to be infinitely creative.

So let us gladly give up our lives here on earth, embracing the humility Jesus has offered us and set our eyes on His return. Let us ask Jesus for help in being unashamed of Him so that in the day of His glorious return we will find Him unashamed of us.

Mark 9:42-50

Do not cause a little one to stumble

Verse 42: *“And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.”*

Strong words, but who do they apply to? Which of us considers himself to be someone else’s stumbling block? The truth is we are all guilty of this. We are all born with a selfish nature that likes to ignore that little pang of conscience that tries to bother us when seek our own pleasure even when it means that someone who looks up to us as an example could be harmed by our actions. We content ourselves by telling them that they should stay away from what we are doing and not to follow our example or even fooling ourselves into thinking that we have no one who looks up to us. In the madness of our desire to please ourselves we are often all too willing to ignore the consequences of our actions both to ourselves and to those around us. When others question us on how it could affect other people we use the excuse that we are not “our brother’s keeper.” We convince ourselves that everybody can think for himself or herself and that what we are doing shouldn’t affect them. They should know better than to let us lead them down the wrong road!

Like it or not much of what we do everyday can cause someone else to stumble. Why can I say this? I can say this because our sinful nature is very strong and whatever sin we have loved and taken pleasure in committing requires a strong discipline and the loving hand of our Heavenly Father in order to walk away from it. That sin will remain a challenge for us and as we try to stay away from it we will find that anyone who still indulges in what we have walked away from, could potentially cause us to stumble back into that sin. All of our brothers and sisters in Christ have sins that were a particular challenge to them and we need to be lovingly looking out for them and staying away from the things that could cause them to stumble back into those sins.

The next verses talk about the dangers of various parts of

our own bodies that would cause us to stumble and that it would be better to cut them off than to allow them to continually cause us to sin. So here we have the man who causes someone to stumble and the parts of our own body that cause us to stumble. The verdict is the same! Both would be better to be removed than to let them cause us to spend eternity in Hell. I don't think that we have a very firm grasp of just how bad Hell is. Jesus is teaching us in serious and not uncertain terms that it would be very bad to end up in Hell. And that the pain of losing someone or a part of our body is nothing compared to the pain of spending eternity in Hell.

So we need to take our role seriously and not be the ones who would cause our brothers and sisters to stumble, and to be willing to sacrifice things in our own lives that would be their stumbling blocks. For us, the author of Hebrew says it very well in chapter 12:4-13. "We have not yet resisted temptation to the point of shedding blood."

We are indeed our brother's keeper and all that we do should be for his good and the safety of his soul. However, apart from spending time with God there is nothing more wonderful than taking care of our brother. It is the most rewarding experience there is.

Mark 10:35-45

Our glorious reward

James and John, the two sons of Zebedee went to Jesus and requested that they might sit in His glory, one on His left and the other on His right. Jesus responds that these are positions that are not His to give but are for those whom they have been prepared for.

Then He proceeds to tell them that whoever wishes to become great must become a servant and whoever wishes to be first must be a slave of all. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

It is really good to take time and look at the reward for being obedient to Christ. Jesus tells James and John that there are wonderful places of honor that have been prepared for those who would be a servant and slave to all. So let us look at some of the character traits of a good servant and how he looks at others.

A good and faithful servant takes care of the need and does the job thus he becomes a very good teacher by his example.

A good and faithful servant will anticipate what his master needs and will do it even before he is asked.

A good and faithful servant does his jobs cheerfully and willingly and thoroughly.

A good and faithful servant does not complain or speak badly about his master.

A good and faithful servant loves his master and if he finds his master troubled he will go out of his way to cheer him up. It is his desire to fix his masters problems or share heartfelt sympathy if nothing can be done to change things.

A good and faithful servant will speak his master’s name with reverence and pride.

These are to be the things we would do for any man woman or child. We are to be the servants of all. Meekness, compassion and humility should be behind all that we do for everyone. Loving others the way Jesus has loved us. Jesus said that our Heavenly Father knows what

we need before we ask. Let us copy His example and seek out others needs before they ask us or even realize that they had a need.

One more thing I would like to leave us with. If a servant has a valiant and courageous master it is very easy to speak his name with pride because we share in his glory and fame as though we ourselves were part of what made our master so wonderful. However, if our master is looked down upon by others we won't like being associated with him for there is no glory and only shame from being his servant. Jesus has told us that men would hate Him and that He would not find honor from among His people and that He would be mistreated and killed. The earth is against our Master and His name is despised among the nations therefore we need to overcome our worldly and corrupt natures that do not like to be associated with His name. We must overcome our being ashamed of His name and speak it boldly and with pride so that in the day of His glorious return He will not be ashamed of us.

He is returning with glory and honor and every knee shall bow before Him. Then, the honor will be great when we are associated with Him! Let us pray for one another and encourage one another to put down our selfish and self-centered lives and look to the needs of others. We are to be servants of all. Let us rejoice in what Jesus has called us to do, knowing that the reward is great.

Mark 11:15-18

My house shall be a house of prayer

“Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for the nations? But you have made it a robbers den.”

Jesus went to the temple and began casting out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those selling doves. And He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. Jesus has come to cleanse us for He has called us to be the temple of His Holy Spirit. We are to be houses of prayer to the nations. This means that we are to be places of prayer and refuge to everyone around us. We are to be a comfort and help to our neighbor and a living example of God’s kingdom and power.

What a wonderful job. What a wonderful life to live, being places of refuge for those in distress and for those who desire to know our Lord and Savior. The world has no way to offer hope and comfort for it’s distressed people, but we carry that hope and comfort with us wherever we go.

As God works in our lives to clean out all of the corruption the His Holy Spirit will be pleased to dwell in us and we will find ourselves to truly be a place of prayer for people. It is the chaos of sin in our lives that keeps us from being effective houses of prayer. Our lives have been filled like the temple with selfish pursuits and greed making us more concerned with taking care of ourselves than of others. We cannot be houses of prayer and refuge for others if there is no room left in our lives for them to be able to enter into it. It is time to learn how to love.

Love gives us freedom. Love gives us the ability to pursue people with kindness and help with no thought of the pains and the time that it will take to see results for it’s labors. Love will pursue a person and even if it is rejected it will continue to love unconditionally. Love requires your whole heart. It has to give all of itself with no fear of rejection for if it is afraid of rejection it will not

be able to make it past the very shallowest form of love. The love of self. If we don't put all of our heart into it, it means that we are more concerned with our own well being than of the other persons. Love has no fear of rejection. Love has no fear of speaking the truth even if it means it will be ridiculed or tortured for it. Love has no fear of having wasted its time on someone it will pursue indefinitely. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)- Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek it's own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

Let us pray for true love for one another that we may indeed prove to be houses of prayer and refuge to our neighbor.
God bless, -Seth

Mark 13:23-37

The return of Christ

32). But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 33). Take heed; keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time is. 34). It is like a man, away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the door-keeper to stay on the alert. 35). Therefore, be on the alert for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrow, or in the morning- 36). Lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37). And what I say to you I say to all, Be on the alert!

I think that we as Christians need to stop hitting the snooze button on our alarm clocks. Jesus is definitely stressing the point about being awake and alert. I think that we need to be reminded that we will not be the only ones who will be affected if we are asleep at His return. Jesus tells us that He has left us with jobs to do while He is away and to the doorkeeper in particular to be doing his job. If the doorkeeper is asleep who will alert all the rest of the house to His return? We need to stay awake not only for our own safety but that others may benefit from us shaking them awake. We need to be alert and on edge so that we convey both to the ones we are trying to awaken.

So my focus with this message is to shake each one of us and to remind each one of us that our Master is coming. We know this because He has told us so that we would not be surprised by His return. My concern is that we live most of our time dreaming that we are awake and that we are prepared for His return. But it is a dream. As we all know, a person can have a dream that seems very real and it is not until he wakes up that he realizes that it was only a dream. Once he is awake it is easy to tell the difference there is no mistaking it for reality. However, falling back to sleep is something that happens without us even knowing when it happened. Countless people in car accidents have found this to be true. Every morning

when we awake we are only able to give an approximate time for when we actually drifted off.

My next point is that a sleeping person cannot intentionally wake another person up! Only someone who is awake can do it. Thus we can expect a lot of resistance from those we would awaken because most people naturally don't like to be woken up. We can expect that even our closest friends will complain about our efforts to reawaken them, how much more so when we try to awaken people who have never woken up before.

We need to stand guard with each other so that when one of us nods off the others can quickly awaken him. The world is forever lulling us to sleep with comforts and distractions and our bodies naturally betray us for they get tired and greatly desire to go to sleep. Now more than ever, we need to help keep each other awake. For each of us will drift off from time to time and never even realize when it happened until someone who is awake purposefully shakes us back out of our dreams.

May God bless each of us today with an extra measure of His Holy Spirit that He may wake us up on the inside and cause our senses to become fully awake and alert.

Mark 14:61-62

Jesus our Lord and Savior

61). But He kept silent and made no answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" 62). And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the Right Hand of Power, and coming with the Clouds of Heaven."

Let me ask us a question. Who are we expecting Jesus to be? As we are all eagerly awaiting His return each one of us has created, either consciously or unconsciously, a mental picture of what He will be like. Is He our loving Savior and Redeemer? Is He the Groom who is coming to collect His bride? Is He the Son of God whom we have read stories of from the Bible who is going to return someday? Let me ask the question "who is Jesus, the one who saved us from our sins and redeems our life from the pit"? (As it says in the Psalms)

I will start with what He is not. He will not tolerate sin, as we might feel inclined to believe as we constantly go back to Him for forgiveness for falling for the same temptations over and over again. That, combined with the constant teaching of His forgiveness, patience, and love for us might cause us to conclude that its not that bad if we sin once in awhile after all we're only human and He knows how hard it is for us. We must not mistake His patience with us as leniency towards sin. He has come and is coming again for the purpose of destroying sin and all of its deadly consequences. He is faithful to forgive us but He will not tolerate any sin in His home and if His home has been made in us He will personally make sure that our sinfulness is removed and it's rottenness cut out of us like a diseased arm or leg that must be amputated to save the rest of the body.

He is not going to be ruled by us. We often fall into thinking that He lives to serve us. He has told us to ask what we would of Him and that He would grant it for us but we have a tendency to lose sight of the fact that He is our Heavenly Father and as such He can

see our lives clearly and will always do what is truly the best thing for us even if our requests are delayed or answered with a no. He loves to answer our prayers but He will take care of us the way that He judges is the best for us.

He is not ignoring the way we and all those around us are continually breaking His laws. No one escapes His promise to punish and discipline those who break His laws and to bless and reward those who keep them. God always keeps His word. He lives by His word and He rules all things by that same word. He is faithful to His promises.

God says that He disciplines all those whom He loves and I think that it is important as Christians to understand that though He is faithful to forgive us for our sin and by that forgiveness our souls are safe from eternal punishment, yet we will still suffer the natural consequences for our actions. Example: if we commit murder God can forgive us, but we will still most likely end up with a life-sentence in prison. The person we killed will not recover and all those who were close to that person will be terribly affected as well. That death could potentially affect many lives over many generations of time. Better not to have even contemplated murdering someone than to find out the consequences the hard way.

Jesus is the King and ruler of all. There is justice in His hand and all power belongs to Him. He hates sin and it's deadly consequences and is coming in judgment to cleanse the whole earth from wickedness! It says that He is coming in judgment and will rule the nations with a rod of iron. Jesus loves us - but it is an intense love that will bring discipline to the wicked and justice to the oppressed. He is coming and will fill the earth with His Holiness for He desires for us to be able to enjoy the fruits of peace and joy that come from living in righteousness.

May God fill each one of us with a Holy dread at the awesomeness of His Holiness and Power so that we might strive with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength against the corruptions of our heart and its desires to fall for every temptation. Let us trim our lamps and make ourselves ready for His imminent return.

Mark 15:21

Carrying the Cross of Christ and applying it to our daily life

As Jesus is being lead to His death 21). And they pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene, to bear His cross.

I would like to focus on Simon's being pressed or drafted into carrying Jesus' cross. Jesus repeatedly tells us in the New Testament that if we are going to follow after Him, we must pick up our cross before we can do so. Each one of us has been pressed into service to carry that cross. It is not a choice or request but rather a requirement. The Roman soldier did not ask Simon if he would like to carry Jesus' cross, Simon was commanded to. Likewise, God has called upon each of us to take a turn in carrying that burden which represents the death of our life here on earth and its resurrection into a new and Heavenly life. It also serves as a reminder to us of the humiliating and painful price that Jesus paid for our sin. We are to carry that cross as a reminder that there is no sacrifice too great or too painful that we cannot bear it for the sake of rescuing our brothers and sisters from an eternal punishment.

So what is it to carry Jesus' cross in our daily life?

1. It is to bear the burden of being mocked and scorned for bringing Him into our daily conversations and activities.
2. It is to be accused for things that we didn't do and bear it patiently without getting upset with our accuser.
3. It is to sacrifice earthly comforts and pastimes so that we might be fully available at any time to help others.
4. It is to lead by example, showing the way that Jesus lived and how He sacrificed Himself for us.
5. It is to endure every trial, having no affections for earthly things that could tempt us or bribe us from speaking the truth.

If we bear the cross, then we are looking death in the face and thus are able to see clearly what truly matters here on earth. We will have a keen grasp on the fact that we are taking nothing with us except the

lives of others that we help lead to the safety of Jesus' arms.

Each person is far more precious than anything else here on earth. What price can you put on the value of one person being able to live for eternity! Jesus used Himself as the payment, both saving us and putting a value on us that far outweighs our selfish little world that we try and build around ourselves everyday, living for this thing or that vacation or a party this weekend. We need to drop our obsession with this life, gaze hard at the cross that we have been called to carry, and understand that it will make some dramatic changes in our lifestyle. It is time to remember that not all of us have been given the blessed call of carrying the cross. Our neighbors and entertainers and friends who are all around us will not simply start to do the right thing and obey God's laws. We cannot use them as our gauge of what is acceptable in how we live our lives. God's standards of right and wrong are much higher than that of those around us! By God's grace, we must put aside the world's standards and live by God's Holy standards and then we must begin calling to others to come and join us. God's standards are so much higher than our standards that even our Christian friends may think us foolish for how closely we try to adhere to them.

The cross is the refining fire that has been placed between us and the gates of Heaven. The cross is one of the requirements that Jesus laid before us and it is the ordeal we must bear if we love Him. But let me ask us, is there a military training camp or a muscle building workout where you get results by simply being casual and lazy in it? You won't be a quick and efficient soldier or achieve wonderful strength without pain and diligence. So also, the road of the refining fires of the cross is painful and requires diligence and persistence, but it will achieve wonderful results and bear good fruit. God's refinement works on our character; that is, who we are on the inside. He causes our pride to be broken and our envying hearts to be content with what we have. He causes our anger toward others to be replaced by the sorrow at our own guiltiness in hurting others. He allows us to be crushed and devastated until He has taken away everything in our lives that has not been built on His foundation, and when He has gotten to the bottom of each part of our lives, He replaces it with Himself and His own building materials.

It is a challenging road He has called us to walk but would we want something as valuable as the eternity He has for us to be the easy road? Our bodies need to be trained and transformed, and even though Jesus took upon Himself the hardest part, He has given each of us the task of joyfully following in His footsteps.

Finally, I will conclude with the wonderful truth that there is a joy that comes from sacrificing our lives for Jesus and our brothers and our sisters in Him that is very powerful and makes enduring the trials to be, as Jesus has told us in Matthew 11:30, “My burden is light and My yoke is easy.”

May God open our eyes to see past our daily routines and pleasures and into the Eternity He has called us to inherit.

Mark 16:15-18

Go into all the world and preach the Gospel

And Jesus said to them (His disciples), “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16. “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. 17. “And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; 18. They will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.

These few verses are very eye opening and they paint an amazing picture of how brightly we are to shine as Christians. By this description a follower of Jesus definitely stands out in a crowd. These are some very visible actions happening when we stand up and speak in Jesus’ name.

We are living in a dark world and the light of Christ is so visible that we are afraid to stand up because of our weak human nature, which is afraid to stand out. The question is, besides our natural shyness, and weak nature, why are we afraid to boldly stand up for Jesus and to speak His name? Or is it more than just being afraid?

Standing up requires effort! It requires us going out of our way to make it a point to be shining that light. Self-love is at the root of this lack of effort because our love, that is our hearts, get tied up in seeking to take care of our own needs and pleasures making anything else to be an inconvenience or annoying. So to stand up requires our love being completely fixed on Christ.

The *simplicity* of the message Jesus has instructed us to share should be our next focus. Jesus tells us to preach the gospel and baptize all who believe. Preaching the gospel is telling the world the Good News of Christ. We are to proclaim the wonderful testimony of our Heavenly Father sending His Son to rescue us from our sins, and redeeming our lives from eternal death. God’s Holy Spirit has

also been sent to testify to the truth of our words and to soften men's hearts so that they might repent and receive His forgiveness. That reception is then to be followed up with a water baptism, which represents our death and resurrection in Jesus. It is, I believe, the putting on of the wedding clothes that Jesus instructs us about in one of His parables (Matthew 22:1-14).

The power of God and of His loving kindness are to be demonstrated visibly as well as verbally. He wants our lives to be effective in taking care of the sick and bringing His words to all people so He has promised His Holy Spirit to take part in that testimony in very real and eye-opening ways. He is not Hiding Himself from those He would rescue, He wants to be seen and heard. We are His messengers, the bearers of His good works and words of hope! We are to shine His light brightly and not faint in this task. So with God's help and grace I want to speak these words with courage that I might be a blessing to each of you who are setting out on your road with Christ or have been with Him for many years; Jesus has called us to deny ourselves and put aside our earthly desires for gain here on earth, so if your walk with Christ is difficult and painful, just know that all who follow in Jesus footsteps have been through the same for none of us are immune to the painful effects of the cross we are to bear for His sake.