



You've Gotta Give it to Get it
Mark 8:34-38
February 17, 2019

Anything worthwhile will take effort and sacrifice. Many people today want to be great or do great things without paying the price. After all is said and done, a whole lot more is said than done. What will it take for our new vision of Developing Disciples to become reality?

In Mark 8, Jesus teaches that we must deny ourselves to be his disciple (v. 34). If we seek a great life in the secular realm, we will lose our souls, but if we forfeit that for him, we will find true, abundant life (v. 35). The principle of sacrificing to gain something greater is instructive for our vision. It will not be realized without self-denial and sacrifice. Individuals and churches alike are called to sacrifice "for me and for the gospel" (v. 35). You have to give it to get it. For our vision of developing disciples to become reality, we must give up...

1. Our kingdom and our agenda. We may not be seeking to gain the whole world (v. 36), but most of us try to eke out some sort of kingdom for ourselves. Even if what we seek is not wrong in itself, it becomes wrong if we make it our top priority. Such "idols" must be sacrificed. Sinful attitudes, words, and actions must be given up as well. Even our agenda for the church may have to go, or at least be relegated to a lower priority. By choosing a vision of developing disciples, our leaders are saying that is what they believe NorthWest should be about. That, in turn,

means other agenda for the church must be dropped or lowered. No church can do everything.

2. Complaining and comfort. We must support with our attitudes the new vision and the changes it entails. We will see new priorities, focus, talk, classes, themes in teaching, ways of reaching out, etc. The new vision will also be a primary factor in how we make decisions. We must deny ourselves and choose a positive attitude about such changes for the sake of the vision. We must be patient and supportive while we get the vision up and running and work out the bugs (cf. Designated Survivor). We must also give up talk about "the good old days." They're gone, and they weren't as good as we remember them to be now anyway. We must also give up any notion of a comfortable Christian life. Instead, we must continue on the journey personally, from phase to phase and within each phase. We must also reach out, share the vision with others and help them on the journey. This will require us to give up self-centeredness and comfort.
3. Pride and control. We must give up any notion that we can accomplish God's work of developing disciples by our own knowledge, ingenuity, and ability. Pride, self-reliance, and control all must go. We must genuinely trust in God and believe he will work through us and among us. Our faith will lead us to much authentic, humble prayer. It will also cause us to approach people, processes, and ministries in a way that leaves room for him to work. He is the one who calls, convicts, draws, saves, adds, indwells, sanctifies, matures, and develops people. He has chosen to do this work through human beings, but we must never do our part in a way that leads him to work around us instead of through us.

