

THE BLACKLIST | THE STUMBLER | Week 4 March 31, 2019

Matt 16:13-24; Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 4:7-11

Opening: During the Lenten season we are reflecting on the opposition that Jesus encounters on the way to the cross. We have discussed the Chief Priests and the Pharisees, Caiaphas and last week we discussed Herod. It's extremely helpful for our own spiritual formation to understand what motivated their hostilities, perhaps what blinded them, from the very Truth in their midst. And once we understand we can prayerfully ask, *"Are we doing anything like that?"*

Context: Psychologists describe life as behavior which is the result of what we think, how we feel and what we believe. Sociologists describe life as our network of relationships and the fabric of our interactions. Anthropologists describe life in terms of races, origin and culture. *How do we describe life; a series of behaviors, a network of relationships or a background of culture? Talk about what characterizes life most fundamentally in your mind. What part of life is choice? What part is pre-set? Can life be changed in our living it out?*

The ROCK building block: Read Matt 16:13-19. Simon Peter was an exceptional disciple. Pastor Meyer starts with his declaration of Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus responds to that with the statement "on this Rock I will build my church". Peter clearly knew the truth. He was not blind to the Truth in their midst. So what happens? Read Matt 16:21-23. *Peter, fresh from Jesus' encouragement, could not envision Jesus being killed. He had a different plan. Are we, like Peter, hampered in our vision because we have our own plan? Talk about a time when your plan was wrong.*

Setting your mind: Look closely at vs. 23. Jesus challenges Peter's mind-set. Peter is concerned about Jesus and his plan of Jesus' future. For all the things going down around Jesus—tension with the religious leaders, adoration from the people as he healed them and fed them—Peter saw a future of triumph and salvation for the people with Jesus as their leader. *What did Peter miss in his boldness? How could he go from "building block ROCK" to "stumbling block obstacle"? What perspective did he miss? Do we miss the same perspective? What is it?*

Maximization of life: Pastor Meyer describes the perspective that Jesus called the "things of man". Our quality of life as defined by our culture is maximization of the "enhancements we have secured", the "pleasures and privileges we enjoy" and the "titles and trophies" we have collected. This is the perspective we are taught—immersed in—from childhood in our culture. Read Matt 16:23-25. *What comes up in you as you read this? Where do you feel resistance?*



Humility of Dying: If life is about behavior, relationships and culture, what do we need to be aware of? *What could our plan (and our success at that plan) do to our vision of life? Do we consider the role of enhancements, pleasures, privileges, titles, trophies in our plan?*

New life comes: The process of dying is sprinkled throughout the New Testament and the language is instructive to amplify what Jesus means when he says lose your life to find life. Read Rom 12:1-2 and 2Cor 4:7-11. Compare this with losing life to find it from Matthew. No longer conformed (lose life) but transformed (find life). Given over to death (lose life)...so that the life of Jesus (find life) may shine through (vs.11). *Look back at some way you have changed as a believer, something you have died to. What changed? What shift in perspective do you recognize? Jesus calls us to continue "losing and dying" so we can continue "finding and shining". Each part taken away as we die to it is replaced with a true part, a shining part. Do you agree with this description? Why or why not.*

A price worth paying: Pastor Dan concludes with this: "This death Christ calls for is a price entirely worth paying. It is the path to communion with God himself. It is the road to an eternal peace and prosperity". *Are you committed to the path? Have you decided to take the road? The decision, the commitment to start is the beginning. The lifelong process of losing life and finding it follows. Talk about your decision to trust Christ and to follow the path. What new life have you found? What is your vision as you look down the road?*

Practice of the Week: Monitor your Losing and Finding

This week try to set 3 or 4 moments aside each day to prayerfully ask "Was I losing or finding?". Re-count briefly the events you remember and quickly classify them into two categories—lose or find. Ask God if there is something you need to lose. Thank God for the life you have found.

Family Formation: Which counts most?

What can we pray about? Give an example of something that happened to you today—what you were thinking, feeling and believing (TFB). This is an example for the kids. Then ask the kids to relate something that happened to them. Ask them about their TFB and try to relate it to their behavior. Then, hypothetically, what would happen to their behavior if one of the TFB changed? What is most important, thinking, feeling or believing?

Additional Resources: [Unspoken Sermons](#) by George MacDonald

We'd love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you and your group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these scriptures and study guides in your lives.

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