

STUDY GUIDE

August 23, 2026

START WITH PRAYER

Use this Prayer Prompt



Father, thank You for sending Jesus to us—not merely as the Messiah we might have expected, but as the Messiah we truly need. Help us to recognize where we have tried to make Jesus fit our plans, desires, and expectations. Give us courage to trust Him even when His way is difficult or unfamiliar. As we talk together, help us to be honest about where we are struggling, where we are holding back, and where You are calling us to surrender. Open our hearts to Your presence, and help us follow Jesus wherever He leads. Amen.

STUDY THE BIBLE

Think through and discuss your reactions as you read through Scripture:

- Mark 8:27–35
- Mark 9:2–8

STIR UP DISCUSSION

How does this week's teaching affect me personally?

1. What are some ways we tend to expect Jesus to make our lives easier or more comfortable? Where might those expectations actually be different from what Jesus has called us to?
2. Jesus says that following Him involves denying ourselves and taking up our cross. What do you think that looks like in ordinary life—not just in dramatic or extreme situations? What might “surrender” look like for someone in your current season of life?
3. Think about an area where you have been asking God to change your circumstances. What would it look like to ask a

different question: “God, how are You asking me to trust and follow You in these circumstances?” How might that change the way you approach the situation?

4. What are some “mountaintop” experiences that Christians can be tempted to hold onto? Why is it important that following Jesus eventually takes us back into the valley where people are hurting?
5. The sermon says, “The Messiah that we need is better than the Messiah that we expect.” Where have you experienced this personally? Can you think of a time when God's way turned out to be different from what you wanted, but ultimately led you somewhere deeper in faith?

STEP INTO ACTION

Let's try to apply this by taking some Next Steps.

1. Identify one expectation you're holding onto.

This week, identify one area where you've been telling God what you want Him to do—whether that's your family, career, finances, relationships, health, or future. Pray each day: “Jesus, You are the Messiah I need. Help me trust Your way rather than demand my way.”

2. Practice one concrete act of surrender.

Choose one area where following Jesus requires you to give up control, comfort, recognition, or your preferred outcome. Don't just think about surrender—do something that demonstrates it.

3. Leave the mountain and enter the valley.

Look for one person this week who is struggling, hurting, lonely, or spiritually discouraged. Rather than simply enjoying your own experience of God's presence, move toward them. Listen. Encourage them. Pray with them. Help them in a practical way. Let your experience of Jesus' presence move you toward the people who need His presence.