

**GAIN
THE WHOLE
WORLD?**

What *really*
matters in life

C.B.MARTIN

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DEDICATION

For all the helpers and leaders I've served with on
Colwyn Bay 2, Bruton 2 and Quantock 3.

Colossians 1:28,29




INTRODUCTION

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

(Mark 8:36)


Have you ever tried to catch a monkey? Apparently it's quite easy. Get yourself a glass jar with a narrow neck. Stick a nice tasty banana in the bottom and wait. Once the monkey sees the banana it will slide its hand into the jar, but the clever part is this: when the monkey grabs on to the banana, it can't get its fist out of the jar. The greedy monkey won't leave the banana, so it's trapped with a massive jar on its arm. Clinging on to a fairly mediocre banana has cost it its freedom.

We're not monkeys, but we can hold on to things just as tightly and stupidly. What gets in the way of you thinking about what's really important in life? A recent survey of teenagers rated schoolwork, Facebook




and the Internet as the top three distractions that stopped them focusing on God. Let's face it, nobody is going to die wishing they had got a better grade in GCSE geography, or had written just one or two more witty status updates.

What is life really about? Where did we come from? Where are we going? Jesus Christ claims to have all the answers, but like the foolish monkey, we're too busy hanging on to things which look attractive to take Him seriously.



This book will look at the things we set our hearts on instead of Jesus. Good things, some of them; things that the world around us prizes highly. But anything you put in God's place will ultimately let you down and destroy you. The Bible calls them idols. Idols aren't just disappointing, they can be deadly. We can 'gain the world' – live for pleasure, get rich, be popular – but if we lose our souls in the process we are as stuffed as that monkey. Jesus has come to set us free from the worthless fake gods, which can dominate our lives and trap us.



Take a look at Mark chapter 8.

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, 'Who do people say I am?'

They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.'

'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'

Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah.'

Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

**THE SON OF MAN
MUST SUFFER MANY
THINGS AND
BE REJECTED.**

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. 'Get behind me, Satan!' he said. 'You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.'

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life

for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.' (Mark 8:27–38)

HE IS MORE THAN
JUST A PROPHET,
A TEACHER OR A
GOOD MAN.

These verses are at the heart of Mark's Gospel and, indeed, the Christian faith. Up to this point, the disciples have been pretty slow to work out who Jesus is. But here Peter has finally begun to realise that He is more than just a prophet, a teacher or a good man. He's the Christ, the Messiah, God's King. This means He is at the centre of everything; He is indescribably significant and important. But what comes next?

Instead of a giant plan to overthrow the Roman oppressors and free God's people, Jesus says something altogether unexpected:

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the

law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. (v. 31)

You can understand Peter being a bit stunned. It doesn't sound like much of a plan. When the Prime Minister makes a victory speech after winning the election, they usually promise to improve education, create jobs and boost morale. Jesus is promising that He, the Son of Man, will face suffering, rejection and death.

But this is the type of King Christians follow. One who gave up everything for us. When we try to replace the God who made and loves us with other things, it's like a slap in His face. God is rightly angry with us. But Jesus saved us from the consequences of God's anger when He faced it, for us, on the cross. He deserves first place in our hearts because He put us first when He died for us.

Jesus outshines and out-performs any idol. He offers us life to the max; life as God intended. But if we are going to follow Him, it will be tough. It will mean giving up a 'do things my way' attitude and saying (as Jesus later did in the garden of Gethsemane) 'not my will, Lord, but yours' (Luke 22:42). That's what Jesus means by 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' in verse 34.