

Grace Baptist Youth Camp
9 June 2000
NIV

Transformed Teens Series

Dr. Rick Griffith
Message 4 of 4
40 Minutes

Get Up Again

A Monologue to the Book of Mark (esp. Acts 13, 15)

Topic: Service
Subject: Be a person of action even though you fail
Complement: by selflessly serving others.
Purpose: The teens will show that Christ has transformed them by selflessly serving others.
Setting: A man in first-century garb walks onto the church platform

Introduction

1. **Interest:** Shalom, fellow saints of the Lord Jesus Christ. Please do not find it strange that I stand before you here. I come by the invitation of your speaker! Somehow, he and I bumped into each other not too long ago, and he told me that he would be speaking to you about transformed teenagers. Alas, since God did such a special work in my life when I was a teenager, he said that he would allow me to tell you about it myself...
2. **Identity:** Oh, I have not yet introduced myself, have I? The name is Mark, or, if you are fond of long names, John Mark. John is my Jewish name, and Mark is my surname.
3. Wealthy Family (Acts 12:12-18)
 - a) I come from a well-to-do family in Jerusalem, and I am privileged to be a child of Abraham. In fact, my mother's name is Mary—a distinguished name, you might say, since this also was the name of the mother of our Lord. Mother undoubtedly had the gift of service, for she constantly entertained the church of Jerusalem in our home since I was a young boy. And man, could she make great Jewish bagels!
 - b) Perhaps you've read about one particular time when the church was gathered together to pray for Peter, who at that time was in prison. Remember when the angel led him out of prison to a home where the servant girl Rhoda slammed the door in his face in amazement? Well, that was my home! Rhoda always got a bit flustered whenever a miracle happened. If only Rhoda could have seen *Jesus* perform all those miracles, she would have known better. Not that I got to see them a lot myself since I was so young when Jesus came to Jerusalem, but I sure have heard the stories! Although I did see Him on a few occasions...
4. Gethsemane (Mark 14:51)
 - a) I especially remember one time as a teenager when I got news of the search party on the way to Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. Boy, I didn't even finish getting dressed to get there as fast as I could! Since the servants had not yet done the wash, all I could find was a linen sheet, so I threw it over my body and rushed out to the olive grove.
 - b) Unfortunately, when the religious fanatics grabbed Jesus, all the disciples fled, and one of those cronies grabbed me, thinking I was one of the disciples. I couldn't get away from him—it was either death or leave the sheet behind. What

would you do? Well, I chose the latter, which was very embarrassing. Imagine the son of a respectable family running through the garden naked to get home. Good thing it was dark out. Good thing Mom never found out, too. That's why I didn't give my name in my gospel account. I just referred to myself as "a certain young man." Fairly good way to get in the action without undue embarrassment, don't you think?

I. First Missionary Journey

A. Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37; Col. 4:10)

1. Anyway, where was I? Oh, yes, my family. Perhaps you have also heard of a cousin of mine. He is the son of my aunt and uncle, who lived on that vacation spot out in the Mediterranean. It's a wonderful island called Cyprus. My cousin's name is Joseph.
2. What a great older cousin he is! So generous! In fact, one time he sold a piece of land and laid the entire amount at the apostles' feet! This encouraged everyone so much that from then on he was called "Bar-nabas," which means "son of encouragement"!
3. Once, Barnabas even arranged for me to accompany him and the Apostle Paul on their first missionary journey! I was elated! Think of it, the opportunity of a lifetime—traveling with the great apostles themselves, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing the sick, seeing churches pop up all throughout Asia Minor. What an adventure! I had never been more excited about anything in my life!
4. Do you like to go to new places by yourself? I didn't as a teenager! I never stepped out to do risky things, but this time was different. I had my older cousin with me.

B. Failure (Acts 13:13)

1. However, by the time we got only a quarter of the way through this short-term mission trip, I discovered it was no picnic. Some people on our team got sick and not everyone was super-excited to hear about Jesus. Not only that, but my cousin Barnabas discovered that Paul actually had more leadership gifts than he did and he let Paul lead our group. I thought we were going to spread the news of the Messiah to our Jewish brethren throughout the Roman Empire, but Paul had this passion about sharing Jesus with the Gentiles. I wasn't ready for all that cross-cultural evangelism stuff. I was from a nice Jewish home. Besides, I couldn't stand pork.
2. Anyway, when we got to the seaport city of Perga, I felt that this was my chance to return home. I knew that malaria was much more possible inland. I caught the next ship back to Israel and soon was home safe in Jerusalem. Paul said I was running home to Momma and needed a "bagel fix." That really hurt, but I must admit that in some respects he was right. Paul was very upset, but I just felt I couldn't go on any farther.
3. I hate to fail—don't you? What's worse is when I fail trying to serve the Lord. Why couldn't I be like David slaying Goliath, or Daniel standing up to the most powerful ruler of the day when he refused to eat defiling food? And even Mary, the mother of our Lord, had more guts than me. I felt miserable...

II. Second Missionary journey

A. Paul & Barnabas Split (Acts 15:36-41)

1. Believe it or not, that wasn't the end of hearing about my flunking out on this short-term mission trip. Two years later Paul and Barnabas were about to head out on another trip. My cousin Barnabas wanted to take me again...
2. But Paul wasn't so keen on the idea. In fact, he adamantly opposed it. He didn't forget too easily. I knew and Barnabas knew that this time I was ready, but Paul wasn't convinced. Those two men had such a sharp disagreement I thought they were going to fight! It ended up that Barnabas was willing to split up with Paul *over me*. What a guy! He had traveled hundreds of kilometers with Paul through thick and thin, and yet Barney really believed in me to the extent of jeopardizing his ministry relationship with Paul.
3. So what happened? Paul took Silas north by land and Barnabas sailed west with me.
4. I cannot tell you what it meant to me to have a friend like Barnabas. I learned how valuable it is to have just *one* person who believes in you. I *wanted* to go the right way and knew I was ready—but I was going against the opinions of *everyone*—except Barnabas. This “son of encouragement” sure lived up to his name. He built his life into me.

B. Paul Forgives Barnabas (1 Cor. 9:6; 2 Tim. 4:11)

1. Oh, do not think that the disagreement between Paul and us never was solved, though. Paul spoke very highly of Barnabas in his letter to the Corinthians a few years later.
2. In fact, twelve years later *I was helping out Paul* in his prison in Rome! He even wrote to our fellow worker Timothy that I was "useful" to him for ministry! Who knows what life would have been like if Barnabas did not stick with me?

III. Book of Mark

A. Peter's Influence

1. Eventually I got to know the Apostle Peter really well, too. Boy, did he have a lot to share with me! You see, Paul and Barnabas were not disciples with Jesus, but not so with Peter! Why, he was one of Jesus' top three men. He had lived with Christ day-in and day-out for over three years. I loved to sit under his teaching about Jesus...
2. About thirty years after Christ had ascended back to the Father one day the Spirit gave me an idea. I was listening to Peter preach in one of our worship services in Rome and I thought, "Wow! I've heard Peter tell this story of Christ healing the blind man so many times and yet so many still have never heard it *once*! Man, if only we could get Peter to travel around to get this message out to more people! But he's almost 70 years old now, and that's too old to be running around the Empire like he did in his younger years..."

B. Gospel Idea (Mark 10:45)

1. Then an idea hit me, “Hey! Why not write these stories down into a fast moving account of Christ's life? Not cover everything, but hit those topics that especially related to the Gentiles, showing Christ on the move. I could show Christ as the

Greatest Servant of all time, even use His well-known statement, ‘The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost’ as sort-of a theme verse!”

2. Well, Peter was elated about the prospect. Why hadn't we thought of this sooner? Within months I had Peter's words down in writing right there in Rome, and shortly afterwards he, like nearly all the apostles, died a martyr's death. The Romans crucified him upside-down. Peter requested to be upside-down thinking that he was not worthy of dying as our Lord had suffered.

C. Gospel Uniqueness

1. Since my gospel was written to Gentiles I left out many of the more Jewish elements: Christ's genealogy, fulfilled prophecies, references to the Law, and certain Jewish customs. I also translated some of the Aramaic words. Little did I know that before all the apostles passed into heaven mine would be one of four published gospel accounts.
2. Matthew wrote his own account of Christ's life, and even Luke and John did too. Rumor has it that the Holy Spirit has worked so that all of these gospels along with Luke's Acts of the Apostles, Paul's epistles, the Law, Writings, and Prophets, and some other epistles are all bound together! Man, I wish we had that back in the Roman Empire! I never even *dreamed* of being able to carry 66 scrolls to church!
3. Anyway, I'm glad to contribute what I know. Never did I realize my gospel would make such a contribution to Christianity! But I want people to see Jesus as one who served man, even to the point of sacrificing His own life for our sins.
 - a) That's why a full third of my book covers the last week of Christ's life. My book's not really a biography since I didn't include everything about Jesus.
 - b) It's more a topical arrangement, showing how Christ's works and teachings complement one another. This is the reason I included a whopping eighteen miracles in such a short, brief, account. Whereas some of the other gospels emphasize Christ's words, I showed Him as a man of *action*.
4. I wrote my gospel during perilous times. Nero took great delight in seeing my friends torn apart by beasts and gladiators, and many of my friends went into hiding or simply abandoned Christ. I felt that my book could help the believers see that Christ, too, was persecuted, but He served to the end. My goal in writing is that from reading my account all people everywhere will first come to know Christ as the Savior who serves, then follow in His steps as Lord by also being people who serve.

IV. Christ's Service

A. The Busiest Day In Jesus' Life (Mark 1:21-34)

1. Jesus was constantly giving Himself for other people—living the selfless life. Peter told me that it seemed like whenever Jesus wanted to get away by Himself or with the disciples for some time by themselves, crowds would pop up over the hill and find them.
2. I saw this firsthand once when I visited Jesus in Galilee. One Sabbath day Jesus was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum and He finished his sermon with quite an ending—he spoke to the demon inside this guy in the service and the demon came out!

3. That was an incredible adventure—but controlling the crowds after that was so exhausting! Late in the afternoon we got over to Peter and Andrew’s home to rest. But Peter’s wife was upset there over her mother, who had a fever. I remember thinking, “Man, when can we get some rest?” Jesus wasn’t upset though. People were always His priority. He just went over to her bed, took her hand, and helped her up. Then she fixed us a great meal—complete with bagels!
4. Well, I like to take a big nap after a big meal—or go to bed early—especially on a day like that. But guess what happened? As soon as we were going to retire after sunset, more people showed up at the door. Believe it or not, the whole town came! I was so upset! Why couldn’t they come back tomorrow? We’d taught at the synagogue, healed the crazy man, traveled on dusty roads, healed Peter’s mother-in-law, finally got some bagels in our tummies, and now people bring all their insane, demonized friends to the door! But Jesus just kept healing them, casting out their demons, and giving Himself.
5. The crowd didn’t even leave until after midnight, and I was bushed! Although Jesus had taught us all to pray in the morning when no one else was up so we wouldn’t be disturbed, if there ever was an exception, the next morning was it.

B. The Result the Next Day (Mark 1:35-39)

1. But what did Jesus do? “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed, ‘Everyone is looking for you!’” I would have responded, “Hey, leave me alone. Can’t I ever have some time to myself?” But “Jesus replied, ‘Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also.’”
2. I could hardly believe Him when he said that. Didn't He ever think of Himself? You know the answer to that question— Didn't He ever think of Himself? Do you? The answer is "No, He *didn't* ever think of Himself!" You see, Jesus came to *serve* people.

Conclusion

1. So how are *you* doing at serving others? I wonder if you have my tendency to push people out of the way to accomplish your projects? I think we all know that people are more important than projects, but it is easy to lose sight of this.
2. Are you a person of action for others? For Jesus, *people* took priority over “papyri.” He was a *people* person, not a “paper person.” He taught, but also “walked His talk.”
3. I really have no excuse not to sacrificially serve others. So many have served me.
 - a) I first learned service from my mother Mary.
 - b) But then Barnabas risked his relationship with Paul to serve me.
 - c) Paul himself became an example to me of selfless giving, and...
 - d) Peter modeled it to the point of death.
 - e) Most of all, though, was Jesus—the Greatest Servant.

4. Have others served you? Of course they have! But have you shown your gratitude for those who have served you by serving others?
5. Service is the natural result of first showing courage like David, or purity like Daniel, or the faith of Mary. Each was like a salmon swimming upstream to serve God—and they succeeded!
6. But maybe you are paralyzed by fear of failure. I can relate! I have *learned service* through failure. Three of the four times I appear in Scripture I failed at service. I failed to serve Christ at Gethsemane, I failed on the First Missionary Journey, I failed to keep Paul and Barnabas together for the Second Missionary Journey. But God helped me learn to give myself for others so that Paul finally called me “useful” before his death.
7. I hope you have genuinely learned to give yourself for others too.
 - a) Maybe it is time to teach that class of younger kids, do you think? Do not be as timid as I was! I regret it now.
 - b) Maybe the time has come for you to volunteer for a role here in your group without someone having twist your arm to do it.
 - c) Maybe your time has arrived to stop asking, “What’s in it for me? How much reward will I get?” and other questions that Jesus never asked.
 - d) Maybe it is time for you to register your commitment before these friends—to stand and say, “This is the commitment God has moved me to make...” or to register this on a card or sorts [allow them to do both].
 - e) (Sniffs the air.) Speaking of serving others, can you smell that? That smells like mom’s bagels beckoning me, so I better go—but I will do the washing up! Serve the One who served you. (Exits.)