



**A BETTER
WORD**

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

Serious Responsibilities and Serious Battles

Mark 9:42–50

THE BIG IDEA

Seriously kill the sin in your life before it seriously kills you.

SERMON SUMMARY

Marius Els adopted a hippo named Humphrey, called him a son, rode on his back, and insisted he was a lovable gentle giant — even after Humphrey treed a grandfather and his grandson, chased golfers, and killed a partner's calves. In 2011, Humphrey mauled Els to death and left him submerged in a river. He did not take his pet seriously enough, and it cost him his life.

Sitting privately with his disciples, Jesus turns to the seriousness of their mission. First a serious responsibility: whoever causes one of these little ones to stumble would be better off drowned with a millstone around his neck. Then a serious battle, and it is intensely personal — your hand, your foot, your eye; what you do, where you go, what you see and desire. Better to enter life maimed than to keep both and be thrown into Gehenna, where the fire is not quenched.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Jesus speaks of “these little ones who believe in me.” Pastor Nick noted that new believers are secure eternally yet vulnerable temporarily — they don't yet know what they don't know. What responsibility does that place on those who have followed Jesus for a while?
2. Hands, feet, and eyes represent what we do, where we go, and what we see and desire. Walk through each honestly. What are your hands accomplishing with your days? Where do your feet take you that tempts you? What does your eye keep returning to?
3. Pastor Nick recalled a slaughterhouse's design. There is no yelling, only gentle pressure like a mother's nuzzle, a curving path with no sharp turns, and cattle that are never alarmed enough to notice their hooves have left the ground. It's called the “stairway to heaven.” How does this design describe how we get comfortable with our sin?
4. Notice how relentlessly personal Jesus is: your hand, your foot, your eye. He never makes this command communal. Why does it matter that you are called to kill the sin in you and not to hunt for it in others?
5. We assume growth means addition — more discipline, more fruit of the Spirit, one more book or skill. Jesus prescribes subtraction: war, fighting, cutting off. What is one thing that needs to be removed rather than balanced by something added?

LIVING IT OUT

Sin is so common to us that we assume it can't be serious — things that are really common rarely are. Jesus makes no bones about it. Killing sin sounds simple even if it is hard: confess it to God, who already knows but looks for a contrite heart. Bring it into the light, where it can no longer fester unseen. Eliminate what facilitates it. God replaces guilt with righteousness, purpose, and joy.

Heart Check: What sins have become so comfortable that you no longer feel the sting of conviction? Is your honest reaction “I need to take this far more seriously,” or “I’d rather keep it at arm’s distance and treat my hippo as my pet”?

This Week: Pick the one sin you would least like to name out loud. Confess it to God specifically, then bring it into the light by telling one trusted person this week. Then change one concrete thing — what you do, where you go, what you look at — that gives it opportunity.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

“Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

— **Mark 9:50**

Ask God for deeper conviction of sin — that his Spirit would prick your conscience more quickly as you approach the danger zone — and for courage to run the other way.

Your Prayer:

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