

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" Volume III Number 1

"Get Out of Your Rut"

The blind man of Mark 10 teaches us valuable lessons.

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the 1st email sermon of 2004 in a series that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers and Christian workers around the world. The New Year has come! This message develops the idea of responding to Christ in such a way as to leave the undesirable past in the past! Credit is given to Mark Richison for the basic outline and some of the illustrations. It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach. Use it as a devotional, edit it, share it, use it or components of it! May God bless your labors!

-- Rod Farthing, Development Director

"Get Out of Your Rut"

Mark 10:46-52

The boy grew up in the "city." One of his first driving experiences came on a Sunday afternoon with Grandpa. When the road turned to mud he said, "Just get in the ruts and don't stop." The sign at the beginning of a muddy road should read: "Choose your ruts carefully, you're going to be in them awhile." Such is the nature of a rut. It's easier to get into than out of! Ruts in life are like that too. We feel locked into a behavior. Stuck in a rut!

January has a way of making us aware of ruts that we have been in during the past year and the opportunity to make some changes.

I spent a fortune on a trampoline, A stationary bike And a rowing machine.
Complete with gadgets to read my pulse, And gadgets to prove my progress results,
With others to show the miles I've charted-- But they left off the gadget to get me started!

Classified Ad- Will trade exercise bike for scales that go up to 300 lbs.

Maybe you have fallen into one of these ruts:

- Plopping on the couch after work or school
- No time to read the Bible or get to church. Too busy!
- Taking for granted your family.
- Not staying in touch with extended family.
- Eating too much.
- Spending too much money.
- Yelling at the kids, or Smarting off to your parents.
- Being silent when you could speak up for Jesus.
- Procrastination- Right aim in life, but can't pull the trigger

Somebody said, "A rut is just a grave with the ends kicked out...." HOW can you get out of a rut? Consider Mark 10:46-52-- a great story of a man in a deep rut and how he got out. His rut? Vs. 46

- **Blind- No Braille, no work, no seeing eye dog**
- **Beggar- this was the only way he could make a living.**
- **Sitting by the road was his rut, but it all changed one day.**
- **You too can get out of your rut- 7 steps out of your rut.**

I. ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN LIFE. Vs. 47: He took the initiative to cry out.

One reason that ruts are hard to break out of is that they are safe and secure. At least you know what to expect.

I.E. After the civil war many slaves were afraid to break out of the rut of slavery.

Bartimaeus faced with a huge decision- would he continue to be dependent on others or assume the risk and step out of the rut? Don't blame anybody else for your rut! Not your Parents, Society, Luck, "Fat genes," Lack of self discipline, Nationality. Jesus said, "Whosoever will..."

II. BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN CHANGE. Vs. 52 It took faith for him to change! "Your faith has made you well."

Romans 10:17 Faith comes from hearing.

It wasn't blind faith, it was faith based on the testimony he had heard about Jesus. (Had he heard about the 5,000, the dead being raised, other blind men?)

Do you believe that Jesus can change you today? 2 Corinthians 5:17 "new creature- all things have become new."

III. CLARIFY WHAT YOU REALLY NEED. Vs. 51 Why did Jesus ask this?

The question was for Bartimaeus' sake, "Spell out your goal." Some quit making New Years' Resolutions because they seldom last until February and then we feel like failures. But a life without goals is destined to be spent in the ruts. It would be good to sit down this week and spell out how you'd like for this year to be better than last.

IV. STOP WORRYING ABOUT WHAT OTHER PEOPLE WILL SAY. Vs. 48. Bartimaeus met resistance from the crowd.

We worry too much about what others say and think. Lots of middle aged men with the spread will buy health club memberships this month. Then they will go buy the clothes to sweat in. But when they arrive at the gym with all the muscular, young men showing off their muscles, they will be too intimidated to work out. (That is why you must pay in advance at the health club!)

We must get beyond what other people say and think. The world is full of pessimists! In Num 13,14, all pessimists were disqualified for Canaan. In Jud 7:3 God had Gideon send all the pessimists home.

Vs. 49 Now the fickle crowd cheers him on! Acts 14 the crowd wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas, but the very next day they drug them out of town and stoned them. If you listen to the crowd you will stay in your rut.

V. STOP WAITING FOR IDEAL CIRCUMSTANCES. Vs. 46 What chance would a blind man

have in this kind of crowd? But he seized the opportunity and so should we.

The following short article appeared back in 1985 in the LA Times:

"This," he said, "is not a slip. This is lingerie." He discarded the tissue and handed me a slip. It was exquisite; silk, handmade and trimmed with a cobweb of lace. The price tag with an astronomical figure on it was still attached. "Jan bought this the first time we went to New York, at least eight or nine years ago. She never wore it. She was saving it for a special occasion. Well, I guess this is the occasion." He took the slip from me and put it on the bed with the other clothes we were taking to the mortician. His hands lingered on the soft material for a moment, then he slammed the drawer shut and turned to me. "Don't ever save anything for a special occasion. Every day you're alive is a special occasion."

Don't wait for the ideal circumstance-- begin now to get out of your rut.

VI. DO SOMETHING BOLD AND DRAMATIC. Vs. 50 Bold? This cloak was his coat AND sleeping bag probably --yea, even his home! If he wasn't healed, he was never going to find his cloak!

Slogan- "We're going to try something so big, that if God isn't in it we are destined to fail." That kind of faith honors God.

For you that bold dramatic move:

- Maybe admitting your rut to a small group, or class and ask them to pray for you.
- Maybe it means coming forward and confessing sin.
- Maybe it is sharing a goal with those who will ask you about it later, keeping you accountable.

MAKE YOUR MOVE NOW. God calls, stands by ready to help... but we must "just do it."

Author James Herriot writes the following about the difficulty of getting out of a rut that kept him from beginning his writing career: "After talking about writing a book for a long time my wife finally said. "Jim, you are never going to write a book." She said it kindly, but nevertheless, I was aghast. "Whatever do you mean?" I said. "Well," she replied, "You have been talking about this book for twenty-five years "Don't take it to heart, Jim. You are only one of thousands of people who think they are going to write a book, but they never do it." "But I will, I will," I protested. She smiled again with a touch of sadness. "You must realize that is impossible. Old vets of fifty don't suddenly start writing books." That did it. I went straight out, bought a lot of paper and got down to the job.

Conclusion: Do any of your ruts lead you away from Christ? Any make you less of a disciple? The most dangerous rut a person can be in is one that leads away from God. Most of those I know who have fallen away from the Lord did not intend for that to happen; they just got into a rut. This poem summarizes well.

- I looked upon a farm one day that once I used to own;
- The barn had fallen to the ground. The fields were overgrown.
- The house in which my children grew. Where we had lived for years--
- I turned to see it broken down. And brushed aside the tears.
- I looked upon my soul one day. To find it too had grown
- With thorns and nettles everywhere. The seeds neglect had sown.
- The years had passed while I had cared for things of lesser worth:
- The things of Heaven I let go. When minding things of Earth.
- To Christ I turned with bitter tears. And cried, "O Lord, forgive!
- I haven't much time left for Thee, Not many years to live."
- The wasted years forever gone. The days I can't recall;
- If I could live those days again. I'd make Him Lord of all.

May God bless you in 2004. May this be the day that you break out of whatever rut is holding you hostage. Would you start today? Isn't this the time to start climbing out of that rut? With God's Help?