


The Gospel of Mark
Part 31
The Secret of True Greatness

TALKING WALKING POINTS

Leaders' Guide

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A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Since "Talking Points, Walking Points" is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to "dive deep" too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time", are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1 What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?

• Read Luke 14:25-35. What are the "demands of discipleship"?

2 v. 26 _____

What does that text appear to mean?

3 v. 27 _____

What does that text appear to mean?

4 v. 33 _____

What does that text appear to mean?

5 What rationale does Jesus give for these demands (v. 28-32 & 34-35)? _____

6 Pastor Doug noted that the disciples **did not want to** believe in a suffering Messiah.
What are some of the demands of discipleship that **we** don't want to believe mean what they say?

7 Which of those demands of discipleship do **you personally** resist? Tell us about it.

8 Are you **willing** to repent, grow and change in that area? **How** can we as a group be of help?

1 Standard “starter question”—you know what to do.

2 In order to be Jesus’ disciple we must **hate all of the people we currently love** (namely: father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and our own self).

What does this appear to mean? I’ll let you and your group wrestle with that! Sorry.

3 In order to be Jesus’ disciple we must **carry our own cross and come after him**.

What does this appear to mean? Jesus’ cross *killed* him. What would ours do to us?

4 In order to be Jesus’ disciple we must **give up all our own possessions**.

What does this appear to mean? What is the plain sense of that statement?

5 v. 28-32 — It’s shameful to start something because you say it’s valuable, but then not finish.

v. 34-35 — You’re useless if you cannot perform your intended function.

6 Look over your answers to 2, 3, and 4. Wrestle with the actual wording of Jesus’ statements. This should be a “no spin zone”!

7 You *may* need to “prime the pump”, so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!)

8 ditto

Sermon Summary Mark 9:30-37

Mark 9:30-37 is the third time Mark records Jesus plainly revealing to his disciples that he would be killed and would rise from the dead three days later (8:31 & 9:9). They didn't understand it any better this time. Was the root of that inability to understand spiritual or conceptual? Were the disciples spiritually blind (2 Corinthians 4:4) or did their conception of a conquering Messiah prevent them from understanding? The idea of a suffering Messiah was so unsettling that they were afraid to ask Jesus about it—it might confirm their fears. And worse—how often have we been guilty of understanding spiritual truth but refusing to do it! Many see Jesus' death as a tragic twist of fate, but his death was no accident—he predicted it! It was predicted in the Old Testament; it was God's plan that Jesus be delivered over to death (Acts 2:22-23). On the cross He bore the penalty of sin so that we would not have to! But in the moment, a dead Messiah made no sense to the disciples. And Jesus insists that just as he had a cross to endure, so do we. If you want to be Jesus' disciple, you must die to your own selfish desires and follow him (Mark 8:34–36). Jesus talked about self-sacrifice, but what are they focused on? Look at v. 33-34. They were arguing over which of them was the greatest! So misdirected was their understanding, so focused were they on their own dreams and desires, that despite Jesus just telling them for the third time that He was on His way to the cross, they are focused on their status relative to one another.

How do we explain the disciples' cluelessness? Only Peter, James and John witnessed the Transfiguration; the other nine did not. I can see them saying, "There must be a reason Jesus chose us to accompany Him up on the mountain. We must be special!" When you begin thinking this way, pride slips in. You begin to think of yourself more highly than you should. Jesus asked, "Guys, just wondering, what were you talking about on the way?" But they didn't say a word; they were embarrassed—and they should have been! I think that conversation was not only fueled by their presence at Jesus' transfiguration, but also by their perception of the Messiah as a military leader who was going to end the Roman occupation and restore Israel to global greatness. They want to rule with him, thus the question, "Which one of us is the greatest? What will my position be relative to yours?" The disciples had adopted a leadership model that was very much like that of the world. They were into power and self-promotion. They conceived of greatness the same way the Pharisees did. But that is not God's way (1 Peter 5:1-3).

Jesus explained what true greatness looks like—and the good news is that this kind of greatness is available to all of us. You don't have to be super talented or extra smart or have other-worldly social skills. You simply must be willing to humbly serve others in Jesus' name. And all of us can do that. When Jesus said, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all," he turned this world's values upside down. If you want to be truly great, if you aspire to significance, if you want your life to count, if you really want to be first in the kingdom, you must choose to be last. To make his point, Jesus brought a little child into their midst. The Bible teaches that all of us have been created in God's image. That is the source of our value and significance. No one is disposable. We are all divine image-bearers. Throughout history we have sought to dehumanize certain segments of the population to further our own self-interests. Slavery and genocide only find broad social acceptance by dehumanizing its victims. Abortion is doing the same today. True greatness involves caring about people whom our society considers to be insignificant. True greatness is linked to servanthood, and we are to be servants of all—especially the least of these. We have all been guilty of prejudicial behavior. But it is wrong. To mistreat an image bearer is to spit in the face of God. It is to reject Him. That is what Jesus is saying here. True greatness has nothing to do with worldly wealth and worldly honors. Rather it reveals itself in a generosity of spirit that renders humble service to all, regardless of their social status.

Are you modeling the heart of a servant in your home, at work, and in society? How do we apply what we have learned today? [1] We must seek daily to die to self, so that we can live fully for Christ. [2] Seek the greatness that comes to those who humbly serve others. [3] Reserve a special place in your heart for the least of these—those whom society disregards and disrespects. [4] Seek to share God's love, wherever you go.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Where does pride come from—and how can we overcome this sin?

Monday—Where did pride come from?

- How do you see pride in Adam's and Eve's actions in Genesis 3:1-6?
- What effect do the following passages say pride had on man's spiritual condition?

Genesis 6:5

Romans 8:5-7

Colossians 1:21

Jeremiah 17:9

1 Corinthians 2:15

Titus 3:3

Mark 7:21-22

Ephesians 2:3 & 4:17-19

1 Peter 4:2-4

Tuesday—Before a person can have the ability to overcome the sin of pride, what must take place?

Psalms 51:10

Ezekiel 36:27

1 Corinthians 2:12

Isaiah 57:15

John 3:3

2 Corinthians 5:17

Wednesday—According to the following passages, why should you care about overcoming pride?

Mark 7:22

Titus 3:3

Thursday—Study the following passages to discover the various forms of pride.

Genesis 11:4

Psalms 10:4

Psalms 101:5

Exodus 5:2

Psalms 12:3-4

Psalms 131:1

Judges 9:28-29

Psalms 73:3-6

Proverbs 13:10

Friday— Study the following passages to discover the various forms of pride.

Proverbs 13:18

Isaiah 3:16

Ezekiel 28:2

Proverbs 25:6

Jeremiah 48:29

Daniel 5:20

Proverbs 25:14

Jeremiah 45:5a

Isaiah 14:13-14

Saturday—Review what you learned Thursday and Friday. List the manifestations of pride which you exhibit.

Now, write a prayer of confession, repentance and petition: _____
