

The Gospel of Mark

Part 36


The Measure of True Greatness

TALKING WALKING POINTS

Leaders' Guide

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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

Suggested Starter Question

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

Questions for Reflection or Discussion


Observation

- 2 Read Mark 10:35-41. Could you see yourself requesting what James and John did? Why or why not?
- 3 { What embarrassing detail does Matthew's account of this incident add (Matthew 20:20)?
What dynamic do you think was going on here between mom and boys? Who instigated this event?
- 4 Political power struggles were not unheard of in the early church. The small book of 3 John was written in response to one such event. Read 3 John 9-11. What had Diotrephes been doing (v. 9-10)? What did Diotrephes love (v. 9)? What Diotrephes did was "evil"—what is true of evil-doers (v. 11)?

Interpretation

- 5 Clearly Apostles and church leaders are sinners too! Does this shock you? Why or why not?
- 6 What do the following passages teach about the maturity, character, and responsibilities of leaders? Review Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-11 and Acts 20:17-35 and make a list of godly attributes and actions.

Application

- 7 What does 1 Corinthians 11:1 command of each believer?
- 8 Review your list of godly attributes and actions. In which ones are you making steady progress? In which ones, "not so much"?
- 9 If Diotrephes represents the epitome of hypocritical self-love, Paul the mature, self-giving servant, and James and John the in-process disciple, where do you **currently** stand on this spectrum?

Diotrephes **James & John** **Paul**
- 10 OK—what's your **next** step?

1 Standard “starter question”—you know what to do. Or, you can skip this and go to the next question.

2 This also is a form of a “discussion starter”. Don’t spend too much time on this question.

3 Grown men use their mom to broach the subject! Or, maybe she’s a “tiger mom” who took the lead.

4 **What had Diotrephes been doing?**

- He reject the Apostle John’s instruction regarding welcoming travelling missionaries (v. 9).
- He unjustly disparaged the Apostle John with wicked words (v. 10).
- He forbade other church members from supporting travelling missionaries (v. 10).
- He excommunicated church members who obeyed the Apostle John’s instructions (v. 10).

What did Diotrephes love?

- He “loved to have first place in the church” (v. 9)

What is true of evil-doers, such as Diotrephes?

- They are not “of God” and will not “see God”—ie., **they are not saved!**
(Yes—church leaders **can be** unregenerate!)

5 You likely will 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!)

6 **Titus 1:5-9**

- **above reproach** = blameless, the “umbrella term” covering all following qualifications
- **husband of one wife** = literally a “one woman man”; faithful, not flirtatious; blameless reputation sexually and maritally
- **children who believe/obey** = guides his children to obey and respect his leadership in the home
- **not self-willed** = not arrogant, prompting him to use—rather than to serve—others
- **not quick-tempered** = slow to anger, predisposed toward grace, compassion, and forgiveness
- **not a drunkard** = not controlled by alcohol, or drinking in excess, nor given to any other substance abuse
- **not violent** = does not use extreme anger to get his way
- **not greedy** = avoids love of money because it robs the Lord’s people of his shepherding care, time and energy
- **hospitable** = includes others into his life and family circle, not just his friends
- **lover of good** = life is dominated by good thoughts, good priorities and good activities
- **prudent/sensible** = controls his thought life, emotions and actions in his posture towards self and others
- **upright** = the fruits of justification and sanctification are manifested in his manner of life
- **devout** = holiness is evidenced throughout his life
- **self-controlled** = controls his behavior, especially as an example for other believers
- **faithful to the Word** = not blown about by the many winds of false doctrine
- **able to exhort** = ready to proclaim and teach core Christian doctrines
- **able to refute** = ready to identify and oppose doctrinal error in all its forms

(Do the same thing for 1 Peter 5:1-11 and Acts 20:17-35.)

7 Imitate Paul’s example, as he imitates Christ.

8 You likely will 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!)

9 Give folks time to mark their graph—but then you should first to tell/explain yours (then urge, but don’t pressure, everyone to tell theirs).

10 Ditto—you lead off, then invite others to share their thoughts.

Sermon Summary Mark 10:32-45

In our study of Jesus' life from Mark's gospel we are constantly amazed and surprised because in Jesus, we are observing a perfect person. We have never seen a perfect person before. We observe Jesus in various settings, and what he does and says is shocking and amazing and surprising! He convicts, comforts, and perplexes. By the time the events of Mark chapter 10 take place, the disciples had been living and traveling with this perfect man for three years, and it had made an indelible impact on their lives. If you are not struck with a sense of fear and amazement (see v. 32), then you don't know Him very well! They were constantly forced to ask themselves—who is this man who says these things, and knows these things and does these things?

Jesus is in absolute control. As we read this text, he tells them for the third time that he is on his way to Jerusalem to be executed (Mark 8:31 & 9:31). In this third announcement he divulged that Gentiles would play a role in his trial and death. This must have been shocking to his disciples—why would Israel's Messiah be handed over to non-Jews? (This also is the fourth time Jesus promised that he would rise from the dead; 8:31; 9:9 & 31 and 10:34.) Jesus knew all these things both because he is God and also because he had meditated on passages such as Psalm 22:6-8 and Isaiah 50:6 & 53:1-12. These passages prophetically detail the suffering the Messiah would experience.

Now you would think that his disciples would have responded by saying something like, "Oh no, Jesus! Say it isn't so. You must be in great emotional pain as you anticipate what is to come. Come, let us comfort you and pray for you!" Jesus has just told them that he is about to be betrayed and murdered—and they want to know what he is going to do for them! After hearing this tragic news, all they could think about was their future status in his administration (v. 35-37)! They wanted to sit at Jesus' right and left sides when he was glorified. But Jesus' greatest moment of glory was when he willingly went to the cross to pay for our sins! (And the irony of the situation is that at that moment of glory, two others were at his right and left hands—two criminals who were being crucified with him!)

Jesus knew that—regardless of their insistence otherwise (v. 38)—James and John had no idea what they were asking for. In the Old Testament "the cup" is often a symbol of trouble and suffering (also see Mark 14:36). And "the baptism" with which Jesus was about to be baptized was not in the River Jordan but rather about being flooded by the fury of God's wrath against sin and evil. But James and John were sure that they were up for the task. Jesus agreed that they would indeed suffer because of their association with Him—but they would not suffer to the degree that he would suffer. Jesus suffered God's wrath so they would not have to. (The other disciples were indignant—jealous that they hadn't thought of it first! v. 41) Jesus' disciples were not super-spiritual-dudes who were always considering others to be more important than themselves. They were in process, just as we are. And all of this learning and growing and changing took place in community with one another. This kind of growth never happens in isolation. In isolation we can convince ourselves that we are more spiritual than we really are. In community our true selves come to light—and that is a good thing!

Jesus took this opportunity to teach about true greatness. Too often we think that political power is the route to societal change (v. 42-44). As we represent Christ in the world, there will be a cup that we must drink, and a baptism that we must undergo. Jesus said that he would give his life as a "ransom" for us (v. 45). In the New Testament world, a "ransom" described the money paid for the release of a slave. We all are slaves to sin (John 8:34). Jesus died as our substitute, bearing sin's penalty so that we would not have to. The Bible teaches that our sins must be paid for—either by us or by a qualified substitute. When we really understand the cross our lives look radically different from everyone else's. Every other worldview sees human greatness in terms of pride, prestige and power, but the cross shows us that human greatness is a matter of humility and service to others. The disciples were indignant. Instead, we need to define greatness through the lens of the cross, not through the lens of the world.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

**God commanded his people to "seek the welfare of the city to which he'd sent them".
The following study will help you know how to be useful to those around you...**

According to the following verses, what must be foundational to a truly useful, meaningful life?

- Joshua 1:8 _____
- Psalm 1:1-3 _____
- Psalm 37:31 & 34 _____
- Proverbs 15:16 _____
- Matthew 7:24-25 _____
- John 13:17 _____
- 1 Timothy 4:15 _____

According to Luke 12:15, what is often mistaken as an indication of true success? _____

From Proverbs 6:13-18, consider the following questions of impact:

- What does God value more than financial success? _____

- What is your definition of wisdom? _____

- List at least seven benefits derived from daily application of Scripture. _____

- Now, review your own life and consider where you may be stressing unbiblical values and goals.

According to the following passages, **why** should we aim at being a useful blessing to others?

- Proverbs 31:27 _____
- Matthew 25:14-46 _____
- John 15:11 _____
- Romans :11 _____
- Romans 126:1-2 _____
- 1 Corinthians 9:22 _____
- Philippians 1:19-20 _____
- 1 Peter 4:10 _____
- 1 Timothy 1:16 & 5:8 _____