

STUDY GUIDE:

Extraordinary Life Series in the Gospel of Mark

Like a Child | Mark 9:33-37 and Mark 10:13-16

The Servant Leader

Have you ever seen a leader, CEO, president, etc. go out their way to serve someone or lift someone up that was 'beneath them' in status? Share.

Who is the greatest?

Who are considered the greatest in our society?

What makes someone a model of greatness today?

The disciples are walking with Jesus and they begin talking about who will be great when Jesus takes over as King. They begin arguing about which one of them will higher or greater status in their concept of the coming kingdom... To their embarrassment, Jesus was overhearing. **Read Mark 9:33-37**

Why did the disciples go quiet when Jesus asked what they were arguing about? Clearly they thought their conversation was fine until they realized Jesus heard it. Do you ever think that some of your inner thoughts of greatness in your life would feel embarrassing if Jesus was hearing them?

Read Mark 9:35-37 again.
Compare to Mark 10:42-45.

Mark 10:45 has been called the key verse of God's Upside-Down Kingdom. Read this quote below and discuss it... Do we elect this type of 'greatness'?

In the Gospels, Jesus continually reframes the idea of greatness and His disciples understanding of success. He tells them the first shall be last and the greatest among them will be the servant. The Gospel is an entirely counter-cultural message. It's upside-down.

He knew that a desire for power leads to tyranny. Jesus always reframed success in terms of servanthood.

Success in this upside-down kingdom isn't always tangible. You can't measure a changed heart. You can't quantify grace. God doesn't run metrics on the performance, power or position of His children. Success in the kingdom is focused more on faithful obedience than it is on outcomes.

- From Relevant Magazine - "Success in the Upside Down Kingdom".

Has a religious person or a church ever pushed you away from Jesus?

Jesus was angry because right in front of him the disciples were giving a bad reflection of what Jesus followers were like. Jesus knew it would lead to quotes like this:

“I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians.
Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”
— Mahatma Gandhi

A Word about Children and ‘such as these’

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

Such as these... In other words, other people in the same situation as children.

I“*Such as these*” were the vulnerable, the voiceless, and the undervalued in society.

This is not about glorifying children. Have you heard that before?

It’s easy to go in the wrong direction here about being like a child. This moment is not about lifting up the virtues of children and telling us to act like them. In fact, to lift up virtues here as to why the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these is to miss the point entirely. That’s the opposite point Jesus is making.

Jesus’ point is that children come with nothing to offer at all.

Children had no rights, they were powerless, utterly dependent, and couldn’t even bring themselves to Jesus on their own.

That’s how you enter the Kingdom of God in faith. You receive it as a gift, you don’t earn it based on merit. And, in the Kingdom of God, there is no one insignificant and there is no one without value.

Who is devalued in our society? Have you devalued anyone in our community?
How can we lift up the low, embrace them, and bless them?

Shut that Voice Up

Just like an echo of the disciples that shushed away those trying to get to Jesus... Sometimes we have our own inner voice that whispers to us that Jesus is too busy, too important to care, or that we are too unimportant. Many times all we need is our own guilty conscience, sin, insecurity, trauma from childhood, some experience at an unhealthy church, or a misunderstanding of God that keeps us away.

Do you ever hear this voice?

If you ever hear the voice in your head that says you’re bothering Jesus, or, that your fears and desires are unimportant for God to bother with, then you need to shut that voice up. Rebuke it as Jesus did.

Hear Jesus’ voice that says come to me! Just as you are. I will lift you up, embrace you, and bless you. May we as a people of God see and value others the same way.