

LESSON EIGHT

TITLE Following the Servant

SCRIPTURE Mark 10:1–52

MEMORY VERSE

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

MAIN IDEA OF TEXT

Jesus shows us that greatness is not about performance, possessions, or position. Greatness comes from childlike faith that trusts God for everything.

BEGIN this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of his Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study.

1 GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

TEACHER TIP

Start your lesson by telling a story that relates to the main idea of the lesson to grab the attention of your participants. In this section, we have provided you with two options, but feel free to develop your own.

OPTION 1: "NO LONGER SLAVES" BY ZACH WILLIAMS

The ultimate goal of the gospel is not that our sins are forgiven or that we are justified before God and not condemned. It is something even more amazing. The ultimate goal of the gospel is adoption. God's plan is to bring us into his family where he is our Father and we are his sons and daughters. This is why the Apostle John could exclaim, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1John 3:1).

One song that captures the father-heart of God and his great love for us is "No Longer Slaves," written by Bethel Music. Let's watch a version of the song by Zach Williams which he sang live at Harding Prison in partnership with Men of Valor, a ministry committed to winning men in prison to Jesus Christ and discipling them.

(Play video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDnA_coA168)

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. Think of the prisoners who heard this song performed. How might they hear the song's lyrics in a significant or different way given their circumstances?*
- 2. The Bible gives us many images of God including the Creator, Lord, King, Judge, etc. What about Father? What difference does it make to see God as a loving Father? How does that change the way we relate to him?*
- 3. In what ways have you recently experienced the Father's love toward you? How has he revealed it to you?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text: We were made to become children of God and live with God in a loving relationship with him. This relationship is built on a childlike faith that trusts God our Father without doubt or reservation. Like a child who is tossed up and down by his father and giggles the whole time because he feels safe and secure in his father's arms, so God asks us to trust him because there is no safer and more secure place to be than with him and inside his will.

This week we are going to look at Jesus' teaching on what it looks like to follow him as a disciple with childlike faith. The world teaches us that greatness comes from performance and position, but Jesus teaches us that greatness comes from following him with childlike faith.

OPTION 2: SCENE FROM WILLY WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

In the film *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, the reclusive and eccentric Willy Wonka shocks the world and causes a frenzied global search for five golden tickets. The chocolatier promises he will give a personal tour of his factory to whoever finds the tickets and will reveal the secrets of his amazing candy.

No one wants to find a golden ticket more than Charlie, but his family is so poor that buying one chocolate bar is considered a luxury. The odds are extremely unlikely, but, by chance, Charlie finds a golden ticket. Along with four other children, he is given access to the mysterious Wonka factory. What the children do not know is Wonka's real agenda: to find someone worthy enough to receive his great fortune and factory. As the day passes each child's greed gets the best of them and they fail the test...except for Charlie. But is it enough for Charlie to win the prize?

Let's watch the end of this beloved film when Wonka reveals his plan to Charlie and his uncle.

(Play scene: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvuoLlhaPs4>)

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *What was your favorite candy or chocolate as a child?*
2. *Wonka told Charlie that he chose him instead of a grownup because "a grownup would want to do everything his own way, not mine." How do Wonka's words relate to how God wants us, his children, to come to him as our Father?*
3. *How does it look when an adult has the faith of a child?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text: From the beginning, God's plan was to bring us into his family where he is our Father and we are his sons and daughters. That plan was challenged by sin which separated us from God, but Jesus came to accomplish God's plan and give us a golden ticket far more valuable than the one Charlie found. That golden ticket was himself—his life, death, and resurrection. Through Jesus, we gain access to God's family as sons or daughters. By following him as disciples, we experience life as it was meant to be lived. By having childlike faith, we discover that true greatness is found in trusting our Father to love and provide for us as we journey on the path of a disciple.

2

SET THE STAGE

TEACHER TIP

In this section, you will find the historical, cultural, and literary context you need to properly interpret and apply the text.

OUTLINE

1. Jesus Teaches His Disciples: Divorce (10:1-12)
 - A. The Pharisees come to test Jesus with a question about divorce (vv. 1-2)
 - B. Jesus declares that marriage is a permanent relationship designed by God and rebukes the Pharisees (vv. 3-9)
 - C. Jesus explains his teaching on divorce to his disciples (vv. 10-12)
2. Jesus Teaches His Disciples: Trust (10:13-16)
 - A. Little children are prohibited from coming to Jesus (v. 13)
 - B. Jesus welcomes the little children (v. 14)
 - C. Jesus declares the entrance into God's kingdom requires child-like faith and blesses the little children with him (vv. 15-16)
3. Jesus Teaches His Disciples: Wealth (10:17-31)
 - A. A wealthy man asks Jesus what he must do to gain eternal life (v. 17)
 - B. The man is convinced that he has kept the commands Jesus told him to obey since childhood (vv. 18-20)
 - C. Jesus commands the man to give up his wealth and possessions and follow him (v. 21)
 - D. The man refuses to do as Jesus commands and Jesus teaches his disciples about the dangers of wealth (vv. 22-25)
 - E. Jesus declares that anything is possible with God, even the rich to be saved (vv. 26-27)
 - F. Jesus assures Peter and his disciples that their commitment to follow him will be rewarded (vv. 28-31)
4. Jesus Teaches His Disciples: His Death and Resurrection (10:32-34)
 - A. Jesus and his disciples travel toward Jerusalem (v. 32)
 - B. Jesus reveals that their journey will end with his arrest, death and resurrection (vv. 33-34)
5. Jesus Teaches His Disciples: Humility (10:35-45)
 - A. James and John make a request to be honored by Jesus (vv. 35-37)
 - B. Jesus answers that his disciples must suffer like him and that he cannot grant their request (vv. 38-40)
 - C. Jesus teaches his disciples that a disciple must be a servant (vv. 41-45)
6. Jesus Heals a Blind Man (10:46-52)
 - A. On the way to Jerusalem Jesus meets Bartimaeus, a blind man, who asks him to have mercy on him (vv. 46-47)
 - B. Many rebuked Bartimaeus for his request but Jesus calls him over (vv. 48-49)
 - C. Jesus restores Bartimaeus' sight (vv. 50-52)

CONTEXT

The true identity of Jesus as the God-sent Messiah has been revealed through Peter's confession and Jesus's transfiguration, but other things have also come to light, namely that Jesus must give his life, suffer, and die for the sake of others. Jesus has called his disciples to be like him and accept the way of the cross and the suffering and death it requires.

FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS

We think that our power, possessions, and position make us great.

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Jesus gave everything—his power, possessions, and position—to serve others. We need childlike faith that trusts God for everything to know and experience true greatness in God's kingdom.

TEACHER TIP

In this section, you will find exercises you can use to lead your class through the process of Observation, Interpretation, and Application. As the teacher, work through all the exercises below to ensure you gain a good understanding of the text.

Chapter 10 of Mark's gospel is filled with invaluable teaching from Jesus on a variety of topics. When we put all his teaching together, we see a clearer portrait of what it looks like to follow him as a disciple and live as he did—to serve and give his life for the sake of others with humility and child-like faith. Jesus tackles the controversial topic of divorce with his opponents and reveals the dangers of wealth through his encounter with a rich young ruler.

The suspense of the story builds as Jesus once again makes clear the path that he and his disciples are on. They are traveling to Jerusalem and there Jesus will be turned over to the authorities to suffer and die, but he will rise from the grave after three days.

Jesus not only teaches his disciples with words but models his teaching for them with actions that they are to emulate in their lives. Jesus shows his disciples—and us—that greatness is not about performance, possessions, or position. Greatness comes from childlike faith that trusts God for everything.

10 Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

2 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

3 "What did Moses command you?" he replied.

4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

28 Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!"

29 "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

32 They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. 33 "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, 34 who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

39 "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. 42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

49 Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." 50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to

Jesus.

51 “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

52 “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: CHART THE PASSAGE

This passage contains significant words and actions of Jesus. Read through the passage and make a list of the things Jesus says and does.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: CROSS-REFERENCING SCRIPTURE

Look up the following passages that reference the humility of Jesus: Isaiah 53:3–5, 7–8, Luke 22:24–26, John 13:1–17 and 2 Corinthians 8:9. Note the similarities you see in these passages.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: FOLLOWING THE PLOT

Read the passage again and write down who are the characters involved in the story and how they move the plot forward.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: CHART THE PASSAGE

Go back to your list. What do the significant things Jesus said and did reveal about the nature of discipleship and what it means to follow him?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: CROSS-REFERENCING SCRIPTURE

What do these passages reveal to you about the humble character of Jesus and his mission, as the God-sent Messiah, to serve others and give his life for their sake?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: FROM PLOT TO EMPHASIS

Based on your reading of the passage, how would you summarize what Jesus is trying to communicate to his disciples and to his opponents?

What does the climax of the plot tell us about Mark's emphasis?

TEACHER TIP

In this section, you will find questions to choose from that will help your group consider how God is calling them to respond to the text. Help your group set measurable action steps.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

QUESTION 1: Many put a high value on their power, possessions, and position. What are some ways that we can be tempted to put our value in those things?

QUESTION 2: How can we protect ourselves and one another from valuing these things over the kingdom values that Jesus calls us to live by?

QUESTION 3: How would it look for you personally to live with childlike faith that trusts God for everything? How would you be different if you lived this way?

QUESTION 4: Think about the relationships in your life. In which relationship would having the attitude of a humble servant, as Jesus modeled, have the biggest impact right now? Explain why.

QUESTION 5: As disciples, we are to walk the same path Jesus did through suffering. Where are you experiencing suffering in your life? If you were to imagine Jesus responding with his words to your suffering, what would he say?

4

CHALLENGE

TEACHER TIP

End your time of study with one final challenge and prayer. Your final challenge should pull together everything you covered in this lesson and call your participants to action.

The draw of power, wealth, and status in our culture are incredibly strong. It is easy to be lured in and taken by the idea that greatness in life can be achieved by how many people we have leadership over, by the size of our bank account, what neighborhood we live in, or by a job title or position that impresses others. This is how the kingdoms of this world work, but it is not the way that God's kingdom works; and it is not the life that Jesus calls us to live as his disciples.

Jesus not only told us about God's kingdom but lived in such a way to show us that there is a different and better way to live. Instead of finding greatness in who we are, what we do and what we have, he invites us to find greatness by following him with childlike faith and living by his ways which lead to the life we were always meant to live.

God's kingdom is truly an upside-down kingdom. It is a kingdom where we seek to serve rather than be served. It is a kingdom where being humble is more desired than being honored. It is a kingdom where we trust our Father with childlike faith for everything. It is a kingdom where suffering and death lead to true joy and life.

As we finish our time together, reflect on the words of the Apostle Paul regarding the humility of Jesus and let these words encourage us to live as humble servants also:

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-11).

LET'S PRAY

COMMENTARY

MARK 10:1-12

There is no shortage of debate when it comes to Jesus's stance on divorce. James A. Brooks, in *The New American Commentary*, parses the words of Jesus to give the reader a clear understanding of what Jesus was communicating to the Pharisees about God's views on divorce.

10:1 The expression "that place" must refer to Galilee and/or Capernaum, the last places mentioned (9:30, 33). Where Jesus went is complicated by a textual problem. The best attested text is that translated by the NIV, "the region of Judea and across the Jordan" (the same Greek text lies behind the other translations cited in this commentary except for the KJV and NKJV). On first reading at least this translation seems to suggest that Jesus went first to Judea (via Samaria?) and then to Perea (the territory on the east side of the Jordan River). One gets the impression from the account as a whole, however, that Mark intended to describe a continuous journey to Jerusalem and the cross. It is unlikely he intended to say that Jesus approached Jerusalem and then detoured to Perea.

A variant reading with fair to good attestation omits the word "and" so that the reference is to "Judea beyond the Jordan." This reading is almost certainly a secondary assimilation to Matt 19:1. The third reading is that of the majority of medieval manuscripts, "to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan" (NKJV, similarly KJV). It successfully solves the problem but for just that reason is also suspect. Scribes tended to eliminate difficulties, not create them. The best procedure is to accept the best attested text and to take the position that Mark made no attempt to list the places in the order Jesus went through them. He did a similar thing in 11:1, where he mentioned Jerusalem before Bethphage and Bethany, although the real order was Bethany, Bethphage, and Jerusalem. Claiming that Mark had little knowledge of Palestinian geography is unnecessary. Jesus probably did go down the east side of the Jordan and then cross into Judea, as the medieval text suggests. Here and in what follows, Mark indicated that after leaving Galilee, Jesus resumed public ministry.

10:2 Some witnesses of medium value omit "some Pharisees came" and read simply "they tested him by asking." The word "tested" indicates that the question was hostile and had Jesus' entrapment as its object. The fact that the question was asked in Perea, part of the territory of Herod Antipas, may be significant. Perhaps the Pharisees hoped Jesus would offend Herod, even as John had done, and that he would meet the same fate at the hands of Herod as John did. If not that, he would surely alienate one or both of the rabbinical schools—one if he opted for either strict or lax rules for divorce, both if he disallowed all divorce.

10:3-4 Instead of a direct answer, Jesus asked a counterquestion: "What did Moses command you?" The allusion in v. 4 is to Deut 24:1. Prior to Moses' time, a man apparently could divorce his wife by a mere word. Although it did not constitute God's ultimate intention for marriage, Deut 24:1 offered some protection for the helpless wife. A husband had to go to the trouble of getting a bill of divorce drawn up and witnessed and formally presenting it to her.

10:5 First, Jesus indicated that provision for divorce was due to human rebellion against the divine ideal ("because your hearts were hard"). The provision was an attempt to limit the effects of human sinfulness. Distinguishing between God's ultimate intention for the human race, more particularly his

own people, and his temporary accommodation to human inability or unwillingness to accept his high standards is important. Moses did not command or encourage divorce. He merely permitted it.

10:6 Second, Jesus moved the discussion to a higher plane by going beyond interpreting Moses' legislation to God's original intention for marriage as seen in the creation. The quotation is from Gen 1:27. The entire verse reads: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Just as God is inseparably one being, so he intended for a male and a female in marriage to become one being who would not be divided.

10:7-8 The second quotation is from Gen 2:24. The key terms are "united," "one flesh," and "one." The words "and be united to his wife" are omitted from the two earliest Greek manuscripts and a few other good quality textual witnesses (and from the NASB). The textual problem is whether the words were added by copyists to conform Mark to Gen 2:24 and/or Matt 19:5 or whether they were accidentally omitted when an early scribe skipped from the second "and" in v. 7 to "and" at the beginning of v. 8. It is impossible to say with confidence.

The divine ideal as seen in creation is the permanent union of a man and a woman in marriage and no divorce whatsoever.

10:9 The "man" of this verse is a husband and not a judicial authority. In first-century Jewish and pagan society, divorce was not effected by courts but by individuals.

10:10 For instruction of the disciples in a house, see the comments on 7:17.

10:11 The word "her" refers to the first wife, the one who was divorced. The teaching of Jesus was quite contrary to that of Judaism. According to Jewish law, a wife could commit adultery against her husband by having relations with another man; and a man, whether or not married, could commit adultery against another man by having relations with that man's wife. But a husband could not commit adultery against his own wife by being unfaithful to her. By insisting that a husband could commit adultery against his own wife, Jesus greatly elevated the status of wives and women in general.

10:12 This verse is found only in Mark. In ancient Jewish society a wife did not have the right to divorce her husband.¹³ The claim has often been made that Jesus did not speak the words in v. 12 but that they reflect the situation of the early Gentile church. In Roman society men and women had equal rights of divorce. A student of the Gospels must allow for the possibility that the Evangelists adapted the words of Jesus to make them relevant to their situation. This in no way denies that Jesus actually spoke the words. Roman law and Jewish law functioned side by side in first-century Palestine, and within limits a person could be governed by either. If a Jewish woman demanded a divorce, she could get one on the basis of Roman law, although this might cut her off from Jewish society. Furthermore, it is not impossible that Jesus foresaw the extension of his teachings beyond the bounds of Palestine.

The interpretation of v. 12 is complicated somewhat by a textual problem. One variant reading with fair support substitutes a verb meaning to separate for the one meaning to divorce. The reference could be to a wife separating from her husband without formally divorcing him, as the Herodias of 6:17-28 seems to have done. This reading, however, is probably a scribal attempt to alleviate the difficulty of the original text.

The effect of Jesus' teaching is to condemn all divorce as contrary to God's will and to set forth the highest standards of marriage for his disciples. Christians of all eras have often fallen short of

the ideal just as ancient Jews did, and there is no reason to think the same provision for human imperfection that existed in Moses' day does not still exist today. God can forgive divorce as well as other sins. Divorce may sometimes be the lesser of two evils, but it is never pleasing to God or good in itself. It should not be looked upon by conscientious Christians as the preferred option.

MARK 10:13-16

In typical winsome fashion, Warren W. Wiersbe, in his commentary in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, explains how Jesus showed mastery as a teacher in using a child as an example of how someone in God's kingdom is to live.

First marriage, then children; the sequence is logical. Unlike many "moderns" today, the Jews of that day looked on children as a blessing and not a burden, a rich treasure from God and not a liability (Pss. 127-128). To be without children brought a couple both sorrow and disgrace.

It was customary for parents to bring their children to the rabbis for a blessing, and so it was reasonable that they would bring the little ones to Jesus. Some were infants in arms (Luke 18:15), while others were young children able to walk; and He welcomed them all.

Why would the disciples rebuke the people and try to keep the children away from Jesus? (See Matt. 15:23 and Mark 6:36 for other instances of the disciples' seeming hardness of heart.) They probably thought they were doing Him a favor by helping Him protect His time and conserve His strength. In other words, they did not consider the children to be important! Their attitude was strange, because Jesus had already taught them to receive the children in His name and to be careful not to cause any of them to stumble (Mark 9:36ff). Once again, they forgot what He had taught them.

The phrase much displeased is too tame. Our Lord actually became indignant as He openly rebuked His disciples for standing in the way. Then He announced that the children were better kingdom examples than were the adults. We tell the children to behave like adults, but Jesus tells the adults to model themselves after the children!

In what ways are children a pattern? In their humble dependence on others, their receptivity, their acceptance of themselves and their position in life. Of course, Jesus was speaking about an unspoiled child, not one who was trying to act like an adult. A child enjoys much but can explain very little. Children live by faith. By faith they accept their lot, trusting others to care for them and see them through.

We enter God's kingdom by faith, like little children: helpless, unable to save ourselves, totally dependent on the mercy and grace of God. We enjoy God's kingdom by faith, believing that the Father loves us and will care for our daily needs. What does a child do when he or she has a hurt or a problem? Take it to Father and Mother! What an example for us to follow in our relationship with our Heavenly Father! Yes, God wants us to be childlike, but not childish!

There is no suggestion here that Jesus baptized these children, for Jesus did not even baptize adults (John 4:1-2). If the disciples had been accustomed to baptizing infants, they certainly would not have turned the people away. Jesus took these precious little ones in His loving arms and blessed them—and what a blessing that must have been!

MARK 10:17-31

The exchange between Jesus and the rich young ruler is a tragic one because Jesus gave him an answer to his question (“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”). The young man walked away because it was not the answer he wanted to hear. In his commentary in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, John D. Grassmick examines this exchange and what it teaches us about the cost and reward of discipleship.

This event probably took place as Jesus was leaving the house (cf. Mark 10:10) somewhere in Perea. The rich man illustrated those who fail to acknowledge their own inability to gain eternal life and to receive it as God’s gift (cf. vv. 13-16).

10:17. As Jesus was setting out on His way (cf. comments on 8:27) to Jerusalem (10:32) a man, influential, wealthy, and young (cf. Matt. 19:20, 22; Luke 18:18), came running to Him. His eager approach, kneeling posture, sincere form of address (Good Teacher, not used by Jews to address a Rabbi), and profound question revealed his earnestness and respect for Jesus as a spiritual Guide. This man’s question indicated that he viewed eternal life as something to be achieved by doing good (in contrast with Mark 10:15; cf. Matt. 19:16) and also that he felt insecure about his future destiny. References to eternal life (mentioned in Mark only in 10:17, 30), “entering God’s kingdom” (vv. 23-25), and being “saved” (v. 26) all focus on the future possession of life with God, though a person enters it now by accepting God’s rule in his earthly life. John’s Gospel emphasizes the present possession of eternal life.

10:18. Jesus challenged the man’s faulty perception of good as something measured by human achievement. No one is good, absolutely perfect, except God alone, the true Source and Standard of goodness. The man needed to see himself in the context of God’s perfect character. Jesus’ response did not deny His own deity but was a veiled claim to it. The man, unwittingly calling Him “good,” needed to perceive Jesus’ true identity. (Later, however, he dropped the word “good,” v. 20.)

10:19-20. In answering the man’s question directly, Jesus quoted five commandments from the so-called “second table” of the Decalogue (cf. Ex. 20:12-16; Deut. 5:16-20) but in a different order. Obedience to those commands dealing with human relationships are more easily verified in a person’s conduct than are the earlier commands (Ex. 20:3-8). The command, Do not defraud, not a part of the Decalogue and occurring only in Mark, may represent the 10th commandment (Ex. 20:17). But more likely, it is an appropriate supplement to the 8th and/or 9th commandments (Ex. 20:15-16) applicable to a wealthy person (cf. Lev. 6:2-5; Mal. 3:5).

The man’s reply shows he firmly believed he had kept these commandments perfectly (cf. Phil. 3:6) since he was a boy, since age 12 when he assumed personal responsibility for keeping the Law as a “son of the Law” (bar Mitzvah; cf. Luke 2:42-47). Perhaps he had expected Jesus to prescribe something meritorious that he needed to do to make up for any lack.

10:21-22. With a penetrating look (from emblem ; cf. 3:5), Jesus saw beneath the rich man’s religious devotion to his deepest need and loved him, something mentioned only in Mark (cf. comment on 10:14). The one necessary thing he lacked was unrivaled allegiance to God, since wealth was his god (v. 22). He was devoted to it rather than God, thereby breaking the first commandment (Ex. 20:3).

Jesus commanded two things: (1) The man was to go, sell all his assets, and give to the poor, thereby removing the obstacle blocking him from eternal life, namely, self-righteous achievement coupled with a love for money. (2) Also Jesus told him to follow (pres. imper.) Him to Jerusalem and the

Cross. The way to eternal life was in turning from trust in self-attainments and earthly securities to trust in Jesus (cf. Mark 10:14-15).

The man, saddened by Jesus' directives, went away. This particular form of self-denial—to sell all—was appropriate in this situation but is not a requirement for all prospective disciples.

10:23-25. When Jesus told the disciples that it is hard ... for the rich to enter God's kingdom, they were amazed (ethambounto, "surprised"; cf. 1:27; 10:32) because in Judaism riches were a mark of God's favor and thus an advantage, not a barrier, in relation to God's kingdom. Only here in the Synoptic Gospels did Jesus address the Twelve as children (cf. John 13:33), reflecting their spiritual immaturity.

In light of their surprise Jesus repeated and clarified His original statement. If the words "for those who trust in riches" (NIV marg.) are omitted, Mark 10:24 (which is unique to Mark) applies to everybody who is confronted with the demands of God's kingdom. If included, they explain the rich man's difficulty and expose the danger of trusting in riches.

The humorous comparison (v. 25) employs a memorable Jewish proverb to depict the impossible. It is easier by comparison for a camel, the largest animal in Palestine at that time, to go through the eye of a common sewing needle (the smallest opening) than for a rich man who trusts in his riches to enter God's kingdom.

10:26-27. Jesus' statement (v. 25) greatly amazed (exempl ssonto, "astounded, struck out of their senses, overwhelmed"; cf. 1:22; 6:2; 7:37; 11:18) the disciples. They carried it to its logical conclusion: If it is impossible for a rich man to enter God's kingdom, Who then can be saved? (delivered to life eternal; cf. 10:17, 30)

Jesus offset their concern by declaring that salvation is impossible with men—beyond their human merit or achievement—but not with God. It is not beyond His power to bring about because all things necessary for people's salvation—rich and poor alike—are possible with God (cf. Job 42:2). What people cannot effect, God can and does by His grace (cf. Eph. 2:8-10).

10:28. Acting as spokesman (cf. 8:29) Peter presumptuously reminded Jesus that the Twelve, unlike the rich man (we is emphatic in Gr., suggesting the contrast), had left everything to follow Him (cf. 1:16-20; 2:14; 10:21-22). The implication was, "What recompense shall we get?" (cf. Matt. 19:27) Again this reflected the disciples' tendency to think of material honors in God's kingdom (cf. Mark 9:33-34; 10:35-37; Matt. 19:28-29).

10:29-30. In another solemn affirmation (I tell you the truth; cf. v. 15; 3:28) Jesus acknowledged that their allegiance to Him and the gospel (cf. 1:1; 8:35) entailed a break with old ties—home, loved ones, or property (fields), as the case may be (cf. 13:11-13; Luke 9:59-62). But to everyone who makes the break Jesus promised that all these things will be replaced a hundredfold by new ties with fellow disciples (cf. Mark 3:31-35; Acts 2:41-47; 1 Tim. 5:1-2) in this present Age, the time period between Jesus' First and Second Advents. Then in the Age to come, the future Age following Jesus' return (from a NT viewpoint), each will receive the ultimate recompense—eternal life (cf. Mark 10:17).

In verse 30 the word "father" (cf. v. 29) is omitted since God is the Father of the new spiritual family (cf. 11:25). The words with them (the rewards), persecutions are added realistically by Mark alone. As Jesus said later (10:43-45) discipleship involves service, which often includes suffering. This was relevant to Mark's Roman readers who faced persecution. This fact helped remove the temptation to

associate with Jesus simply for the rewards (cf. v. 31).

10:31. This “floating saying” (cf. these same words in other contexts: Matt. 20:16; Luke 13:30) could be intended as (a) a warning against Peter’s presumption (Mark 10:28), (b) a confirmation of Jesus’ promise (vv. 29–30), or most likely, (c) a summary of Jesus’ teaching about the servant nature of discipleship (cf. 9:35; 10:43–45). Rewards in God’s kingdom are not based on earthly standards such as rank, priority, or duration of time served, personal merit, or sacrifice (cf. Matt. 20:1–16), but on commitment to Jesus and following Him faithfully.

MARK 19:32–34

Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, in their commentary in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, point out how Mark strategically placed this passage where he did in his gospel.

This passion prediction initiates the third cycle of episodes, which follow a similar pattern: Jesus predicts his death (8:31–32; 9:30–31; 10:32–34), the disciples respond with ignorance and pride (8:32; 9:32–34; 10:35–41), and Jesus teaches them concerning humility, sacrifice, and servant leadership (8:33–38; 9:35–37; 10:32–45). This last triad forms the climax, concluding with the key “ransom saying,” which for the first time identifies the purpose of the passion: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:45). Many commentators justifiably treat this as the thematic verse of Mark’s gospel, both because of its important place in the narrative and because of its profound theological content. It summarizes the theme of suffering and sacrifice, which characterizes the second part of Mark’s narrative and prepares the reader for Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem (11:1–11). Jesus’ ministry is about to reach its climax and denouement.

MARK 10:35–45

In his commentary in the *Focus on the Bible Commentary*, Geoffrey Grogan helps the reader see through the disciples’ lack of understanding and how Jesus’s climactic statement in 10:45 is Jesus’s central declaration in Mark’s gospel.

The understanding gulf strongly suggested in verse 32 is starkly presented in the shocking request of the sons of Zebedee, prompted perhaps by the answer of Jesus to Peter (vv. 28–31). We should remember that James and John and Simon Peter had worked together in the fishing business and that Zebedee, the father of James and John, had presumably been the head of the firm. Perhaps they imagined they should have been preferred to their father’s employee.

Jesus teaches them that willingness to suffer and to take the lowly place make for spiritual greatness, which has no connection with pride in status. Little did they know it, but there certainly would be men on either side of Jesus, when he hung on the cross (15:32), but they would not have wished for such places!

The cup and the baptism were standard terms for the wrath of God and for suffering, and they have a background in the Old Testament (Pss. 75:8 and 69:1, 2). Jesus was in fact to endure penal suffering as a substitute for sinners, as he would soon teach his disciples (10:45). That they too would receive a cup and undergo a baptism meant that they would themselves be called on to suffer for his sake, as he had already indicated to them (8:34f), although not, of course, with an atoning purpose, for that

could be his alone. 'There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin; he only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.'

The other ten disciples were actually no better than these two brothers, for they too were motivated by the same desire for places of authority and privilege. Jesus therefore calls them all together to teach them. No doubt they will have seen something of the pomp and ceremony surrounding those reckoned important among their Gentile rulers. They were to be completely different, says Jesus. In this, as in so many other ways, the values of the kingdom of God are quite different from those of the world. The use of the term 'minister' by churches, and its meaning, 'servant', should be a constant reminder of this. Luke also records for us a saying of Jesus spoken at the Last Supper, 'I am among you as one who serves' (Luke 22:27). He suited his actions to his words, for he is himself as ever the supreme example of his own teaching as the story of the washing of the disciples' feet in John 13 shows us.

The great saying of 10:45, which many have regarded as the central declaration of Jesus in this Gospel, is remarkable for the clarity with which it interprets his death in terms of substitutionary atonement. The preposition translated 'for' in verse 45, has the force, 'in place of'. The use of the word 'many' in this connection is probably an echo of Isaiah 53:11, 12 and the picture there of the Servant of God bearing sin and its penalty as a Substitute for sinners.

Geoffrey Grogan, *Mark: Good News from Jerusalem, Focus on the Bible Commentary* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 190-191.

MARK 10:46-52

Hans F. Bayer, in his commentary in the *ESV Study Bible*, gives the reader more insight into why Jesus welcomed an interruption to his journey to Jerusalem to heal the blind Bartimaeus.

10:46 The old Jericho near the pilgrimage path to Jerusalem may no longer have been populated at the time of Jesus. The newer, Herodian Jericho was situated southeast of the pilgrimage path, serving as a meeting place for pilgrims. To reach this new Jericho from the pilgrimage road, one had to travel the same road there and back. This might explain the slight differences between Mark's account and those of Matt. 20:29 and Luke 18:35 (see also the notes on Matt. 20:29 and Luke 19:1). The healing occurs when Jesus heads back to the pilgrimage road from Jericho (cf. Matt. 20:29; Luke 18:38).

10:47 Jesus will later identify the cry of the blind man (Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me) as expressing "faith" (v. 52; Matthew notes there were actually two blind men, but Mark and Luke [Luke 18:35-43] only tell about one of them; see note on Matt. 20:30-31). "Son of David" is a messianic acclamation (see Mark 12:35-37).

10:48 many rebuked him. Given the popularity of Jesus, a socially insignificant blind man is considered an interruption.

10:49 The attitude of some in the crowd changes from rebuke (v. 48) to encouragement (Take heart) as soon as Jesus pays attention to Bartimaeus. Though Jesus himself is facing suffering in Jerusalem, he still considers the marginalized (cf. vv. 43-45).

10:51 What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asks the obvious question in order to give the blind man the opportunity to express his trust in Jesus.

10:52 Your faith has made you well also hints at spiritual salvation; see note on the same expression in 5:34. and followed him. Bartimaeus joins Jesus and the other pilgrims on their final journey to Jerusalem, indicating that he has become one of Jesus' disciples.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Hans F. Bayer, *Mark*, The ESV Study Bible.

James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary.

D.A. Carson, *Mark*, The NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible.

Rodney L. Cooper, *Mark*, Holman New Testament Commentary.

Donald English, *The Message of Mark*, The Bible Speaks Today.

Timothy Gombis, *Mark*, The Story of God Bible Commentary.

Geoffrey Grogan, *Mark: Good News from Jerusalem*, Focus on the Bible Commentary.

Grant Osborne, *Mark*, Teach the Text Commentary Series.

Leland Ryken, Introduction to *Mark: Literary Features*, The ESV Study Bible.

R.C. Sproul, *Mark*, The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version.

Charles Swindoll, *Mark*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary.

Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Mark*, The Bible Exposition Commentary.