



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2017-18 Leader Commentary

Unit 2: Spiritual Checkup
Session 3: How's Your Serve? (see pp. 128-131)

The Question: Whom are you serving?

The Point: We serve Jesus by serving others.

Background Passage: Mark 10:35-45

Focal Passage: Mark 10:35-45

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "Whom are you serving?" and drive home this one truth: We serve Jesus by serving others.

Focus on These Points

Are You Simply Serving Self?
(Mark 10:35-41)

In verses 32-34, Jesus presented the third prediction of His coming suffering and death. This led to a conversation among the disciples. The conversation that comes after Jesus' prediction demonstrates how those closest to Jesus still misunderstood His purpose.

James and John, sons of Zebedee [ZEB uh dee], came with a request of Jesus. The parallel account in Matthew's Gospel reveals the two disciples also got their mother involved in making this request of Jesus (Matt. 20:20-21). The two said, "Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask you." Their bold request seems to desire that Jesus would grant anything they would ask of Him. In verse 36, Jesus patiently responded, "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus would use this opportunity to turn their hearts outward rather than inward.

James and John asked for the places on Jesus' "right" and "left" in His "glory." In Jewish culture the seat to the right of a king represented the place of highest honor. The next best place was on the left. The two disciples requested the positions of highest recognition for themselves, apparently without regard to the other disciples. Some believe Jesus' "glory" refers to the earthly kingdom the Jews believed the Messiah would establish. Others argue, however, that "glory" refers to the eternal kingdom in heaven. The two disciples desired to be at Jesus' right and left when He assumed His position on the throne as the eternal Judge.

The request reveals the true heart of James and John. They expressed a selfish concern for personal greatness. This desire exposed their shallow, shortsighted spirits. There is great danger when we seek only to serve our own interests and ourselves.

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In verse 38, Jesus sought to inform. He asked if they could “drink the cup” He drank. For the disciples to drink from that cup meant they accepted the same fate. Jesus questioned the disciples further as to whether they could be “baptized with the baptism” He would endure.

Baptism, being fully immersed in water, represented in Greek culture the idea of being overwhelmed by disaster. Again Jesus confronted James and John with their willingness to suffer and die as He would.

James and John proclaimed, “We are able” (v. 39). Their immediate answer exposed their lack of understanding of this sacrificial requirement. If they remained true to Jesus in the future, they would share His fate. Following Jesus has its price.

Jesus denied His authority to assign such places of honor. He readily submitted to God’s decisions on such matters. The larger group of disciples became indignant with the other two. This anger and resentment revealed an inappropriate attitude on their part as well. All twelve of the disciples showed an insensitive mindset toward the dire predictions Jesus made. Again, self-concern reigned over spiritual understanding.

Are You Serving Others? (Mark 10:42-44)

Jesus saw the dissension among the disciples as an opportunity to instruct them further. He reminded them of what they saw played out in the Roman world among the rulers of the day. Those leaders exerted an authoritarian domination over those they ruled. The Roman emperor claimed to be divine and demanded that people worship him. Such rulers lorded their authority over the people as a means to promote selfish advantage.

Additionally, Jesus mentioned the men of “high positions.” This probably referred to those who flaunted their status. Thus, Jesus accused the disciples of thinking like everyone else in the world. They anticipated Jesus would become a dominant Ruler who subjugated others. The disciples viewed themselves as the “right-hand men” of their powerful Lord. Jesus exposed their selfish desires.

Pointedly Jesus told the disciples these things must not be so among them (v. 43). Greatness as Jesus defined it ran “contrary” to what the disciples believed. Jesus insisted on “servant” leadership as the primary character of a disciple. The Greek word for *servant* might also be translated as “table waiter.” Servant leadership is the key to serving others and serving Jesus.

Jesus said those who want to be “first” or great do so by becoming a “slave.” A slave in Roman culture was owned and controlled by another person. Slaves had no personal rights. They served at the discretion of the person who owned them for the purpose of advancing the owner’s interests. Similarly, believers serve at God’s direction and work to advance His cause.

Why Do You Serve? (Mark 10:45)

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Jesus referred to Himself as the “Son of Man.” According to the Holman Bible Dictionary, this term reflected “a strong incarnational emphasis on His real flesh and blood, a vivid depiction of His representative suffering, and the note that by that suffering He acquires His glory and honor and leads many to glory.”

Jesus accepted the role of service too. He “did not come to be served, but to serve.” Throughout His ministry, Jesus modeled humble service to others without any attempt to lift up Himself. Jesus went even further by saying that greatness meant to “give his life.” The word *give* indicates a voluntary submission to whatever God required of Him even to the point of death.

Giving is the essence of servanthood and Jesus gave His life as a ransom to demonstrate His giving on behalf of others. This sacrificial self-giving represented a “ransom for many.” Jesus willingly offered up His life to set people free from the devastation of sin.