

The Road to Calvary Lesson 2

How to Become Great?

A Bible Study Lesson of the Mount Zion Church

3801 McKelvey Rd., Bridgeton, MO

Written by: Dr. Ken Patterson



We Have the Vision to be a LEARNING Church!



Introduction: We often struggle with issues of self-importance. Perhaps it is the world we live in which presents the idea that we must strive to be number one in all that we do. One can observe that in sports the goal is to be shown on the daily highlight reel. In business the winner is the one with the most money and the trappings of success. In academia the winner is the one who has the most letters behind their name. Even in religious circles we find people clamoring for position and for their name to be called first. This issue of pride is not a new challenge. Within scriptures we find numerous passages which warn us against the danger of pride (Isaiah 2: 12, James 4: 10, Jeremiah 9:23, Philippians 2:3). The current lesson is designed to help students to realize that the concept of greatness in Jesus' kingdom is represented by humility and service towards others.



Key Scripture:

Mark 9: 30-35 and Matthew 18: 1-4

Supporting Passages:

Isaiah 2: 12, James 4: 10, Jeremiah 9:23, Philippians 2:3, Isaiah 14: 15-17, Proverbs 1: 8

I. I AM So Confused!—Mark 9: 30-32

The two main passages used in this lesson point to a debate among the disciples regarding greatness. Mark places the debate during a time when Jesus isolates His disciples to teach them once again about the role of the Messiah. Readers should not separate 30-32 from 33-36 because the verses represent the writer Mark presenting a fundamental problem in the theology of the disciples. In verses 30-32, Jesus again presents His ultimate mission. ““The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.”

- What can you assume was on Jesus' mind?
- Why do you think the disciples were “afraid to ask” what Jesus meant (verse 32)?

One might wonder why the disciples struggled to understand Jesus and even why they kept their questions to themselves. Jesus' purpose was to help them understand, yet we often find them engaging in arguments about their positions, confused, and wondering exactly what Jesus meant.

Their confusion related to what they viewed as Jesus' function. They saw Jesus being followed by the big crowds. They saw Jesus' teaching in the synagogue. They saw the focus on Jesus. Perhaps, their misunderstanding related to them thinking that being the center of attention is a life of luxury and ease.

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS IS ABOUT SERVICE AND WORK. HE DID NOT COME TO RELAX, NOR ARE WE AS HIS FOLLOWERS TO LOOK FOR THE COMFORTS OF POSITION AND PRESTIGE.

In Mark 6: 1-3 Jesus declared that a prophet had honor everywhere except among those who were his family and hometown friends. The disciples missed that truth. In Mark 6: 30-44, Jesus performs a miracle but before he does, proclaims that the disciples should have been the ones feeding the people. Yet, their inability to do forces Him to have to do work that they could have done. In these and other instances, the disciples misunderstand that the role of the Messiah included crowds of people and prominence but what happened in those crowds and during the focus on Jesus was work.

Jesus' disciples lacked understanding when He declared for a second time that He would be killed and raised on the third day. This is similar to our misunderstandings of what Jesus came to accomplish and how ministry is to be conducted. Simply put, the ministry of Jesus was about work and service. He did not come to relax, nor are we as His followers to look for the comforts of position and prestige.

- How does this change or stretch your view of ministry?
- How have you seen Jesus' ministry be misrepresented today?

II. Greatness Requires Change—Matthew 18:1-3

Matthew records that Jesus' response to the disciples was to bring a child to them and tells them they must change and become like a child. The transformation Jesus requires for us to get into heaven relates to at least two changes/conversions.

- I must change/transform my size

1. A size transformation means that each of us must decrease our bigness in our own eyes. To declare that one wants to be great suggests a desire to be important. The size issue is really man's desire to be central in importance, status, position, direction, and focus. It is the same PRIDE issue that caused God to remove Satan from Heaven (Isaiah 14: 15-17). Therefore, when Jesus states you cannot enter Heaven unless we reduce our "size", He is not suggesting, rather He is imploring the disciples to see that one's view of themselves must match the position that children held in their society. Children were important, but they were always in a learner-follower role and not in the leader role.

- I must change/transform my center

2. To transform one's center means to change the focus of one's life. How often has your focus been on you and your desires? Children in Jesus' day did not dictate to adults what they would or should do. Children were considered a blessing, but were taught to "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, And do not ignore your mother's teaching" (Proverbs 1:8). By moving themselves from the "center" role, they positioned themselves for success because they grew from the adults who were instructing them.

- Why do you think it might be hard for people to change their size and their center?
- What is the danger of not making these changes?
- How did Jesus exemplify what He was asking the disciples to do?

Activity

Directions: Answer the following questions and discuss these with a group.

1. How do you struggle with wanting to be the most important or the center of attention? If you do not struggle with this, do you potentially struggle with not taking responsibility?
2. What has been the result of you choosing your desires for importance over Jesus' plan for your life?

Conclusion: Jesus ends his conversation with the disciples by stating that greatness is really a result of serving others. This returns the focus to Mark 9: 30 where Jesus was teaching His disciples about His mission. Service from Jesus meant the ultimate sacrifice of His life to save the entire world. How can you follow His example?