

GOOD NEWS FROM THE KING
A Study of the Gospel According to Mark
Mark 9:33–50
Holy Bible, New International Version ©2011

"Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all." Mark 9:35b

Pray for the Holy Spirit to open your heart to his word.

Read through this week's passage and jot down any thoughts and questions you may have.

Read Mark 9:33–37.

1. On the way to Capernaum the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest (v. 34).
 - a. Why might this question be on their minds? (Contrast Mark 9:2–4 and 9:14–18.)

- b. Why might they have "kept quiet" (v. 34) when Jesus asked them about it?

2. In contrast to what the disciples expected, what makes a person great to Jesus? (v. 35)

3. Jesus teaches his disciples that welcoming a "little child" (v. 36a) is equal to what? (v. 37)

Conversely, what are we doing when we are indifferent to or dismiss that same "child"?

"Children in Jesus' day lacked social status or rights of their own. They were wholly dependent on their parents. They were at the bottom of the social ladder. Jesus' point is that true greatness means caring about even the most insignificant people – like children – because Jesus himself is concerned about them."¹

4. Take some time to pray, asking God to reveal whom He wants you to welcome in His name.

Read Mark 9:38–41.

5. Why do you think John brings his concern to Jesus about another man he saw driving out demons? (Consider Numbers 11:27–29 and Mark 9:34.)
6. In contrast to the disciples' expectation that they alone should carry on God's mission, what does Jesus want His disciples to understand? (vv. 39–40)
7. In verse 41, Jesus tells the disciples that a small act of compassion done "in [His] name" has significant implications. Why does something so insignificant make such a big difference?

Read Mark 9:42–50.

8. Jesus continues this teaching moment with the disciples about their pride and arrogance.
 - a. What does He say would be better than causing even "the least of believers"² to sin? (v. 42)

b. Why do you think this would be better?

9. Fill in the chart below:

Cause for sin	Command	"It is better..."
v. 43		
v. 45		
v. 47		

10. Jesus knows hell is a real place. Take in the horror the phrases above and the description in verse 48. (📖* Isaiah 66:22–24) Then, express in your own words the seriousness of allowing sin to fester untreated in your life.
11. “The identification of sin with physical body parts – the hand (v.43), foot (v.45), and eye (v.47) – is meant to encompass all areas of life.”³ Jesus is not actually calling his disciples to physically mutilate their bodies to prevent sin, but how are his commands meant to change the way you think and act? (Romans 6:19–23; 12:1–2a)
12. How will the disciples of Jesus be “salted with fire” (v. 49)? (1 Peter 1:6–7; 4:12)
13. Read verse 50.
- a. What is salt good for if it has lost its saltiness?
 - b. What sacrifice is needed to “have salt among yourselves, and [to] be at peace with each other”? (Consider Philippians 2:3–7.)
14. This section begins with believers arguing among themselves and now culminates with the encouragement to “be at peace with each other” (v.50). Why do you think this is how Jesus chooses to end this teaching on the cost of discipleship? (Galatians 5:13–15)

This lesson on Mark’s Gospel is adapted from “Life of a Servant” by New Life Glenside Women’s Bible Study, 2002–2003. 📖* indicates the passage is for further study.

¹ Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Revised Edition*, ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (Zondervan, 2010), p 849.

² *The NIV Study Bible*, gen. ed. Kenneth Barker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 1510, (note on Mark 9:42).

³ Wessel and Strauss, p 853.