

**Introduction**

1. How many times do you need something explained before you understand it?
  - a. Sometimes I need something explained several times before I get it.
  - b. In this passage, Jesus again predicted His impending death and resurrection.
  - c. However, His disciples still did not understand even with His second explanation.
  - d. So, Jesus gave His disciples an object lesson on what it means to be one of His disciples.

**2. Read Mk 9:30-37.****A. The Second Prediction (30-32)**

1. Jesus and His disciples left the place where they were, which was most likely the region of Caesarea Philippi to the north of Galilee (cf., Mk 8:27ff).
  - a. They travelled south back through Galilee. (30a)
  - b. Jesus had begun His final journey to Jerusalem and passed through Galilee on the way.
2. Jesus “did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples” (30b-31a).
3. The centerpiece of His private teaching time was again His impending death and resurrection: “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” (31b).
  - a. This was essentially the same prediction that Jesus had first made in Mk 8:31.
  - b. In this prediction Jesus used the word “delivered” (Gk., *paradidomi*) which “. . . literally means to *give over* or *hand over* . . . . The Greek Old Testament used it with reference to the fate of the prophets . . . and it became an important term in the Jewish theology of martyrdom. . . . the word was often used by early Christians for what God and/or Jesus did to save the world . . .” (James Brooks, *Mark*, 148-49).
    - c. Jesus spoke plainly and clearly to His disciples about what was about to happen to Him.
4. As had happened with Jesus’ first prediction of His death, the disciples still “did not understand” (*agno* – root for our word agnostic). They didn’t know what to think about His words. They didn’t make sense.
  - a. The disciples were without knowledge when it came to understanding Jesus’ teaching about His passion.
  - b. Not only did they not understand, but they were also afraid (Gk., *phobo*) to ask Jesus about it. (32)
    - 1) Perhaps they feared Jesus would share more painful details about taking up their own crosses (cf., Mk 8:34).
    - 2) Perhaps they feared a rebuke from Jesus like the one Peter had received when he spoke up after Jesus’ first prediction of His death (cf., Mk 8:32-33).
  - c. While they did not talk directly with Jesus, they discussed the meaning of Jesus’ prediction among themselves, which led to an argument among them.

**B. Confronting the Disciples’ Misunderstanding (33-34)**

1. As Jesus and the disciples came to the familiar village of Capernaum, they went “in the house,” which was perhaps the home of Peter and Andrew (cf., Mk 1:29). (30)
2. Once in the house, Jesus again began a time of private teaching with His disciples.
  - a. Jesus confronted the argument that they had on the road as they discussed the meaning of Jesus’ prediction of His death.
  - b. Jesus asked, “What were you arguing about on the road?” (33b)
  - c. The disciples were too embarrassed by the question and all kept quiet.
3. Of course, Jesus knew what the argument was about—“who was the greatest?” (34)
  - a. The disciples believed that Jesus was the Messiah.
  - b. They knew that His death prediction had something to do with being the Messiah, but they did not understand what it meant.
  - c. They were focused on the Jewish understanding of the Messiah as the powerful vindicator of God’s people and the powerful King whom God would send to reign over the earth on the throne of David.
  - d. They wanted a share of Jesus’ power and glory for themselves, but each of them wanted to be the most favored and glorified disciple of all. They each wanted to be Jesus’ right-hand-man.
  - e. Peter, James, and John may have made an argument for that favored status since Jesus had asked them to join Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, but which one of them was the greatest of all?

4. Once again, the disciples had missed the point that Jesus made. He was not coming this time as the powerful King that they anticipated but as the humble Suffering Servant who would free them and all of humanity from sin through His sacrificial death and resurrection.
5. They had also missed the point that Jesus had made that His true disciples must “deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mk 8:34).
6. Jesus then gave them a powerful object lesson on what it means to be His disciple.

### C. The Meaning of Discipleship (35-37)

1. Jesus “sat down” and “called the Twelve” for a time of teaching.
  - a. Jewish rabbis would typically sit to teach their students.
  - b. Jesus taught them with both words and a powerful symbolic action or object lesson.
  - c. The old saying goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words.”
  - d. In these verses Jesus painted a picture for His disciples of what His words meant in regard to what they must do as His disciples.
2. First, Jesus spoke, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all” (35).
  - a. So, you want to be first in my kingdom, then you must be last.
  - b. This is another counter-intuitive statement much like the ones Jesus had made earlier.
    - 1) “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it” (Mk 8:35).
    - 2) “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? (Mk 8:36-37)
  - c. The world calls us to put self first; to seek personal pleasure and luxury; to have others serve us; to collect toys and control people. This is greatness in the eyes of the world. These are the things that matter to fallen, sinful human beings.
  - d. Akin notes, “Jesus does not repudiate greatness. He redefines it. Be great in things that matter to God not man” (Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 194).
    - 1) In God’s kingdom, others matter more than self, and the one wanting to be great must be “servant” (Gk., *diakonos* – root for our word deacon) of all (35).
    - 2) Greatness is not found by being served but by serving others; by being the one who cleans up after everyone else has been served, been satisfied, and gone home.
3. Second, Jesus by His actions illustrated what He had just said.
  - a. “He took a little child whom he placed among them” (36a).
  - b. “child” (Gk., *paidion*) – In Jesus’ day children were not the center of attention as they are in our culture today. They were considered the least.
    - 1) Akin observes, “The ancients, with high infant mortality rates, did not exalt the merits of children as do many modern cultures. A little child was an excellent example of the last or least” (Akin, 194).
    - 2) Brooks notes “A child in the Bible is both a symbol of innocence and of helplessness and vulnerability. . . . the child represents any helpless person but especially a humble fellow believer whom the true disciple is to receive . . . . To accept the outcasts and oppressed is a way of accepting both God and Jesus. Greatness in the kingdom consists not of position but of ministry” (Brooks, *Mark*, 150).
  - c. Warren Wiersbe writes, “True humility means knowing yourself, accepting yourself, being yourself—your *best* self—and giving of yourself for others. The world’s philosophy is that you are ‘great’ if others are working for you, but Christ’s message is that greatness comes from our serving others. Since the words *child* and *servant* are the same in the Aramaic language, it is easy to see why Jesus connected the two. If we have the heart of a child, we will have little difficulty being servants, and if we have the attitude of servants, we will welcome the children as the representatives of Jesus Christ and the Father” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 110).
  - d. Jesus then took the child into His arms. This action illustrated Jesus’ love, care, and concern for the child as lowly, humble one.

4. Third, Jesus reinforced His object lesson with a final statement, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me” (37).
  - a. “welcomes” (Gk., *dekseō*) means “to be concerned about, to care for, to show kindness to.”
  - b. God the Father is the one who sent Jesus. When we welcome one of the least, we welcome Jesus and God, the Father.

#### **D. Reflections**

1. Are there things that you don’t understand about Jesus and His kingdom? Come to His word and listen to His Spirit.
2. Are you caught up in the world’s call to selfish greatness? Redefine greatness using Jesus’ definition.
3. Who has served you this week? Have you shown thankfulness for their service to you?
4. Whom have you served today, this week, this month?
  - a. Were any of those whom you served among the least?
  - b. Did you serve them in Jesus’ name?
5. Who are “the least” in your world?
  - a. What are their needs?
  - b. How are you welcoming and serving them?
6. When you look at others do you see them as they really are? They are ones made in the image of God! As you welcome them, you must see them with God’s eyes as His beloved children made in His image.