



Today, we're continuing our study of the book of Mark. We've named the series "Unreasonable God" because God has done the unreasonable by going above and beyond in giving us Jesus. Furthermore, God calls us to unreasonable obedience as we follow Him. Throughout the book of Mark, we see God doing amazing - unreasonable things. Today, in Mark 9:33-37, Jesus uses a moment of discord among His disciples to teach a lesson on unreasonable servanthood. The disciples, debating who among them was the greatest, reveal a common desire for recognition and status. Jesus responds by redefining greatness, declaring that true significance comes through serving others and placing oneself last. By placing a child before them, Jesus illustrates the importance of serving even the seemingly insignificant.

Key Passage: Mark 9:33-37

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Proverbs 11:2 and James 4:6. What do these verses teach us about humility and pride?

When we are proud, we set ourselves up for downfall, but humility opens the door to wisdom and understanding. Pride harms our relationships with others and hinders our relationship with God. In contrast, humility attracts God's favor and grace.

2. In what situations today might we find ourselves struggling with the same desire for recognition and status that the disciples faced in Mark 9:33-34? How does this temptation show up in our lives?

Let's take a "painful pride" test:

- 1) Am I upset if I am not praised for my work?
- 2) Do I like and even long to sit at the head table in the seat of honor?
- 3) Do I seek credit for what others have done?
- 4) Do honorary titles pump me up?
- 5) Is popularity crucial to my sense of self-worth?
- 6) Am I a name dropper of those I know (or pretend to know?!)
- 7) Do I think I have something valuable to say about almost everything?

(Akin, 2014, p. 194)

3. What does Jesus' teaching in Mark 9:35 reveal about true greatness in God's kingdom? How did the disciples' desire for greatness contradict Jesus' teaching?

The disciples' desire for status and recognition conflicts with Jesus' mission of humility, service, and sacrificial love. In His response in Mark 9:35, Jesus taught that true greatness in God's kingdom is not

about status but humility, service, and self-sacrifice, which contrasts with worldly ideas of power and rank. See Matthew 20:25-28.

4. How does Jesus use a child in His teaching to illustrate His point about true greatness (Mark 9:36-37)? Who are the people we most likely overlook in our pursuit of worldly greatness?

In their culture, children had little status, so Jesus' action highlighted that true greatness involves embracing and serving even the least. To “welcome” a child means showing care, compassion, and value to those considered insignificant or powerless. It’s an act of humility that reflects the nature of Jesus' ministry and reveals a heart aligned with God’s Kingdom. By placing a child in their midst, Jesus emphasized the importance of welcoming and caring for those we are most likely to overlook in our pursuit of recognition and status.

5. How does this passage challenge our cultural views of success and status?

Our culture often measures success by power, status, and wealth. However, this passage challenges us to redefine greatness as selflessness, service, and humility. It calls us to counter-cultural norms by valuing relationships, compassion, and service over personal ambition.

6. How can believers demonstrate the humility and service Jesus describes daily?

Believers can demonstrate humility and service by prioritizing others’ needs, volunteering time and resources to help the marginalized, treating everyone with respect, and putting aside personal ambition to serve others in their families, workplaces, and communities.

7. How does welcoming “the least” reflect a person’s relationship with God?

Welcoming “the least” shows a heart that aligns with God’s compassion and values. It reflects an understanding of God’s grace and a commitment to mirror His love for others. Believers demonstrate Christ's transformative love and character by serving and valuing everyone, especially those often overlooked.

8. What about this study has challenged you most? What's your biggest takeaway?