



Island Groups

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Week of June 22, 2025

BOOK OF MARK – WEEK 31

UPSIDE-DOWN GREATNESS

(MARK 10:32-45)

OPENING PRAYER TIME

As we continue our journey through the Gospel of Mark, examining Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem and His teachings about true greatness, let's make sure we are anchoring everything in prayer. You might guide the group through prayer by offering these prompts, pausing for 30-60 seconds between each one to allow time for silent or spoken prayer:

- Thank God for Jesus' courage in walking ahead of us into suffering, showing us the way to true life
- Praise Jesus for being the King who goes to the back of the line to serve rather than demanding to be served
- Confess any ways we've been seeking recognition and reward rather than sacrifice and service
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand what it means to drink Christ's cup and share in His baptism of suffering
- Pray for humility to see greatness through God's eyes rather than the world's definition of success
- Invite Jesus to show us specific ways we can serve like Him this week, putting others first instead of ourselves

You may want to incorporate a time of silence for personal reflection and listening, or to encourage members to voice simple one-word prayers of praise and gratitude.

Remember, **PRAYER IS THE WORK** that empowers everything else! So let's commit to pursuing Him wholeheartedly as we gather.



DISCUSSION

Begin by asking, "**Have you ever felt discouraged or slipped into 'woe-is-me-ism' when facing difficult circumstances? How did you handle that situation?**"

Ask someone to read **Mark 10:32**. What strikes you about Jesus' demeanor as He leads the journey to Jerusalem? Pastor Charlie emphasized that Jesus ***"knows what's coming... and still walks out front."*** How does this contrast with how we might expect someone to act when facing suffering?

Pastor Charlie pointed out that Jesus is ***"intense, focused, and determined. He's not dragging His feet... He's walking with resolve toward pain and purpose."*** What does this teach us about how to approach difficult situations in our own lives? How can we follow Jesus' example when we know hard times are ahead?

Have someone read **Mark 10:33-34**. This is the third time Jesus predicts His death (the first two were in **Mark 8:31-33** and **Mark 9:30-32**). Why do you think Jesus kept repeating this message to His disciples? What specific details does He include this time that He hadn't mentioned before?

Pastor Charlie emphasized that ***"Jesus didn't get caught up in an evil plan. He was the plan!"*** What does this tell us about God's sovereignty? How does understanding that Jesus was fulfilling God's redemptive plan rather than being trapped by circumstances change how we view suffering in our own lives?

Read **Mark 10:35-37**. James and John come asking for places of glory right after Jesus speaks of suffering. Pastor Charlie noted they ***"want power and position"*** and are ***"still thinking about thrones, not crosses."*** Can you relate to their misunderstanding? When have you found yourself focusing on the benefits of following Jesus while resisting the cost?

Pastor Charlie said, ***"We are James and John!"*** and that we often ***"seek recognition & reward rather than sacrifice & service."*** How do we sometimes try to get ***"the benefits of Jesus without the cost of obedience"***? What would it look like to ask for the cup instead of the crown?

Ask someone to read **Mark 10:38-40**. Jesus asks if they can drink His cup or undergo His baptism. What is Jesus referring to when He talks about His "cup" and "baptism"? (Pastor Charlie explained the cup as "the wrath of God" and baptism as "being overwhelmed by grief and pain.")

How does Jesus respond to James and John's ignorant request? Pastor Charlie pointed out that ***"Jesus doesn't shame them... He responds with patience... not sarcasm or rebuke."*** What does this teach us about how to respond when others don't understand spiritual truths?

Pastor Charlie warned about Christians who become ***"gatekeepers of grace"*** who ***"condemn others instead of loving them."*** How can we avoid this trap and instead ***"teach with compassion and truth"*** like Jesus?

Have someone read **Mark 10:41**. The other ten disciples become indignant, but not for the right reasons. Pastor Charlie explained they're upset ***"because they didn't think of it first"*** rather than out of principle. What does this reveal about the human heart? How do we sometimes ***"compare, compete, and crave"*** rather than genuinely care about righteousness?

Read **Mark 10:42-44**. Jesus contrasts Roman leadership with kingdom leadership. How does worldly power operate differently from kingdom greatness? What does it mean that ***"leadership in the Kingdom of God starts at the back of the line"***?

Pastor Charlie noted that in our culture, ***"we value independence... personal choice... being right"*** and that sometimes ***"our love of independence... our pride in our own pride... is our stumbling block to God's Kingdom."*** How might American cultural values sometimes conflict with kingdom values?

Ask someone to read **Mark 10:45**. Pastor Charlie said, ***"The hands that formed the universe washed feet and carried a cross."*** How should this reality affect our pride? How should it ***"fuel our worship"***?

What does it mean that Jesus gave His life ***"as a ransom"***? Pastor Charlie explained that a ransom is ***"paying to get back what already belonged to Him."*** How does understanding that we already belonged to Jesus change how we view His sacrifice?

APPLICATION

Identify one area where you've been seeking recognition or position rather than opportunities to serve. Ask God to help you see that situation through kingdom eyes and look for ways to serve others instead.

Examine your response to people who don't understand spiritual truths. Are you more likely to respond with patience and compassion like Jesus, or with judgment and condemnation? Commit to following Jesus' example this week in at least one relationship.

Consider the question Pastor Charlie asked: ***"What does 'serving like Jesus' look like in your everyday life?"*** Choose one specific way you can serve someone this week, and ask someone in your group to hold you accountable.

Reflect on areas where your pride in independence or personal rights might be hindering your ability to embrace kingdom values. What needs to be ***"flipped in your thinking - from 'me first' to 'others first'"***?

CLOSING PRAYER TIME

Take time to share prayer requests. Write these down and distribute them so the group can be praying throughout the week. In addition to the prayer requests, include the following in your prayers:

- Praise Jesus for being the King of Kings who chose to take the lowest place and serve rather than be served
- Thank God for His sovereignty even in difficult circumstances, knowing that He works through all things to accomplish His redemptive purposes
- Confess the ways we've been drawn to worldly definitions of success and greatness rather than embracing kingdom values
- Ask for wisdom to know when to speak truth with compassion and when to simply walk away from those who aren't genuinely seeking
- Pray for strength to overcome our natural tendency to compare ourselves with others and compete for position or recognition
- Ask God to multiply the ways we serve others this week, just as He multiplied the loaves and fishes

Close by declaring that Jesus is worthy of our worship not just because He is good or because Scripture commands it, but because He did what we wouldn't do - He obeyed God even to death on the cross to save us from our sin. Commit to letting this reality fuel passionate worship and joyful service as we follow His example this week.