



Island Groups

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Week of June 8, 2025

BOOK OF MARK – WEEK 29

LIKE A CHILD

(MARK 10:13-16)

OPENING PRAYER TIME

As we continue our "The Book of Mark" series, exploring how Jesus continues to turn societal and cultural norms upside down, let's make sure we are anchoring everything in prayer. We are asking each Island Group to begin their weekly meetings with 10-15 minutes devoted exclusively to 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 His grace that we can approach His throne with confidence, not because of what we bring, but because of Jesus
- Confess any ways we've acted as gatekeepers to God's grace rather than welcome mats for others
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help us receive the kingdom like children - with open hands and humble hearts
- Pray for wisdom to embrace the overlooked and make space for those pushed to the margins
- Thank Jesus for taking us in His arms and blessing us, even when we have nothing to offer
- Invite God to help us reflect the heart of Jesus to the vulnerable and needy in our community

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 been in a situation where someone was trying to 'protect' another person's time, but you felt like they were being a gatekeeper? How did that make you feel?**"

Ask someone to read **Mark 10:13**. What strikes you about the timing of this event? Jesus had just finished teaching about the heavy topic of marriage and divorce, and suddenly parents arrive with their young children. How do you think this scene would have appeared to the disciples?

Pastor Charlie explained that the Greek word *paidia* refers to infants and very young children. He emphasized that in their culture, "**children weren't seen as important... they were a burden - they took and didn't contribute.**" How does this cultural context help us understand why the parents' actions were somewhat audacious?

Have someone read **Mark 10:13b**. The disciples rebuked the parents who were bringing their children. Pastor Charlie suggested the disciples "**thought they were helping Jesus... protecting his time and his mission.**" When have you seen people with good intentions inadvertently become barriers to others accessing something important?

What does Pastor Charlie mean when he says the disciples were "**acting as gatekeepers to grace**"? How might we sometimes unintentionally do the same thing today?

Ask someone to read **Mark 10:14**. Jesus was "indignant" (other translations say "much displeased," "angry," or "upset") with His disciples. Pastor Charlie explained that Jesus "**is not indifferent when the vulnerable are turned away**" and that "**the heart of God burns with righteous anger when grace is obstructed.**" Why do you think Jesus had such a strong reaction?

Pastor Charlie made this sobering observation: "**It's possible to be near Jesus and still not reflect His heart.**" He pointed out that no one had been closer to Jesus than the disciples, yet here they were trying to keep children away from Him. How does this warning apply to us as followers of Christ today?

Have someone read **Mark 10:14-15**. Jesus gives three responses: a command ("Let the children come to me"), a rebuke ("Do not hinder them"), and then a teaching. What is revolutionary about Jesus saying "**for to such belongs the kingdom of God**"?

Jesus says we must **"receive the kingdom of God like a child."** Pastor Charlie clarified this doesn't mean "childishly" but "childlike." What are the childlike qualities he mentioned? (dependent, trusting, eager, honest, unable to earn anything)

Pastor Charlie emphasized that **"Children don't bring resumes, achievements, or conditions. They bring needs and open hands."** How does this image challenge our natural tendency to try to earn God's favor?

Have someone read **Hebrews 4:15-16**. Why can we approach God's throne of grace with confidence? Pastor Charlie stressed, **"It has nothing to do with what {each of us} brings to the table... It has to do with Jesus and what he already did."** How does this truth free us from performance-based Christianity?

Pastor Charlie identified **"two people who miss out on the kingdom of God: those who think they don't need it, and those who think they deserve it."** Which category do you think is more common in our culture today? Which one are you more tempted toward?

Have someone read **Mark 10:16**. Jesus **"took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them."** Pastor Charlie noted that Jesus didn't just teach about love - **"He showed it."** What does this hands-on blessing reveal about the personal nature of God's grace?

Pastor Charlie posed this challenging question: **"Are we gatekeepers for Jesus? Or are we welcome mats who invite in 'the least of these'?"** How would you honestly assess yourself and our church in this regard?

APPLICATION

Reflect on your role as a "gatekeeper" or "welcome mat." Are there people or groups you've consciously or unconsciously made feel unwelcome in God's kingdom? Confess this to God and ask Him to change your heart toward them.

Practice approaching God "like a child" this week. Come to Him in prayer with empty hands rather than a list of what you've done for Him. Journal about how this changes your experience of His presence and grace.

Identify someone in your life who might feel overlooked or pushed to the margins. Following Jesus' example, make a practical plan to **"embrace the overlooked"** and **"make space"** for them this week.

Examine your motivations for following Jesus. Are you trying to earn His love, or are you resting in what He's already done? Choose one area where you've been striving and practice simply receiving His grace instead.

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:

- Thank Jesus for welcoming the weak, blessing the unworthy, and touching the untouchables through His sacrifice on the cross
- Confess any ways you've been a gatekeeper to God's grace rather than a welcome mat for others
- Ask for childlike hearts that approach God with empty hands and humble dependence rather than trying to earn His favor
- Pray for wisdom to embrace the overlooked in your community and make space for those others push to the margins
- Thank God that salvation is personal - that it's "God-with-us" rather than something sterile from a distance
- Ask for grace to reflect the heart of Jesus to the vulnerable, needy, and unqualified people in your life

Close by thanking God that we can approach His throne of grace with confidence, not because of what we bring to the table, but because of what Jesus has already done. Praise Him that His kingdom belongs to those who come like children - with needs and open hands.