

FURTHER STUDY GUIDE

The Way of True Greatness | Mark 9:30-50

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In this section of Mark, Jesus is traveling privately with His disciples through Galilee on the way toward Jerusalem and ultimately the cross. For the second time, He predicts His suffering, death, and resurrection, but the disciples still fail to understand His mission.

Instead of focusing on Jesus' sacrifice, the disciples argue about who among them is the greatest. Jesus responds by redefining greatness through humility, service, holiness, and peace. This passage highlights the sharp contrast between worldly ambition and kingdom discipleship. The themes in this passage prepare the disciples—and us—for what it truly means to follow Jesus.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION

Describe someone you would consider “great.” What qualities make that person stand out to you?

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Humble Service (vv. 30-37)

1. Why do you think the disciples argued about greatness right after Jesus predicted His death?

2. What does Jesus teach about leadership in God's kingdom?

3. Why would Jesus use a child as an example?

4. How does humility differ from weakness?

5. In what ways can pride subtly appear in ministry or service?

A Kingdom Mindset (vv. 38-41)

6. Why did the disciples try to stop the man casting out demons?

7. What does this reveal about their hearts?

8. What is the difference between guarding truth and guarding personal territory?

9. How can churches or ministries become competitive rather than cooperative?

10. What does Jesus teach about unity in kingdom work?

Radical Holiness (vv. 42-48)

“where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.”

If you are reading from the ESV or many modern translations, you may notice that verses 44 and 46 are either missing or placed in a [bracket] or footnote. This is because the earliest and most reliable Greek manuscripts of Mark do not contain these verses. In later manuscripts, scribes likely repeated the phrase after each warning for emphasis or symmetry.

The Textus Receptus (“Received Text”) was a Greek New Testament compiled in the 1500s from a limited number of later Byzantine manuscripts. It became the basis for translations like the King James Version.

Modern translations such as the ESV, NIV, and NASB use a broader range of much earlier manuscripts that were discovered later. Because verses 44 and 46 are absent from the earliest manuscripts, most modern translations either omit them or place them in footnotes.

IMPORTANT: No doctrine is affected by this textual difference. The warning Jesus gives about judgment and the seriousness of sin remains fully intact in verse 48. The footnotes are actually evidence of careful scholarship and transparency, showing where manuscript differences exist rather than hiding them.

11. Why does Jesus use such strong language regarding sin?

12. What does it mean to “cut off” sources of temptation?

13. How can tolerated sin affect both ourselves and others?

14. Why is holiness essential to discipleship?

15. How does grace empower us to fight sin rather than excuse it?

Salt, Purity, and Peace (vv. 49-50)

16. What does Jesus mean by being “salted with fire”?

17. How does suffering refine believers?

18. What does it mean to “have salt” in yourselves?

19. Why are purity and peace connected?

20. How can Christians influence culture without becoming like it?

PRACTICAL CHALLENGE

Choose one:

- Serve someone anonymously.
- Remove one source of spiritual compromise.
- Encourage another believer or ministry.
- Pursue reconciliation with someone.
- Spend time daily in prayer and Scripture meditation.

QUESTIONS | REFLECTIONS | OBSERVATIONS
