

# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

## RUNNING THE RACE

### STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, October 5, 2025

**Teaching Title:** The Greatest

**Key Scripture:** Mark 10:35–45

# CEDAR VALLEY

### 5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

**Monday:** Mark 10:35-45

**Tuesday:** Philippians 2

**Wednesday:** Isaiah 53

**Thursday:** Genesis 24

**Friday:** Luke 10:25-37

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's word, what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

### MEMORY TOPIC:

Service

**MEMORY VERSE:** Mark 10:43–44 NLT

But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else.

### LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

#### Introduction:

In sports, there are many conversations about who is the G.O.A.T. (Greatest of all time—it's Michael Jordan, by the way). But what does it mean to be the greatest? As Christians, how should we think about "greatness"? In Mark 10, Jesus teaches us what greatness looks like in the Kingdom of God. In the time and culture of the New Testament, people were used to rulers and leaders "lording it over" others through oppressive forms of leadership (Mark 10:42). Although the disciples who followed Jesus were low in society and had experienced oppressive of Roman rule, when they began to rise in status within the Jesus movement, they started to adopt the same leadership style they were accustomed to—seeking honor and competing for status. But Jesus says, "Among you, it will be different" (Mark 10:43). He completely redefines what it means to be "great" in God's kingdom. Greatness is found in service, not in status.

#### Questions:

Ice Breaker: What was the worst style choice (embarrassing fashion trend) you ever made?

1. Read Mark 10:35–45 as a group. How do you relate to James and John's desire for position and recognition?
2. Why does Jesus tell James and John that they don't know what they're asking? What were they missing? (See Digging Deeper)
3. Like James and John, we sometimes ask selfish questions of God without fully realizing what we're asking. In what areas of your life do you find yourself asking God for things that mostly benefit you?
4. Jesus uses the strong word "slave" in verse 44. What does this teach us about the depth of service God calls us to? (See Notes)
5. What does it mean that Jesus gave His life as a ransom for many? (See Digging Deeper)
6. How do the leadership qualities admired in the world today compare to what Jesus teaches here in Mark 10? Why do you think service is such a powerful marker of greatness in God's kingdom?

7. What are some specific ways you can serve this week, in your family, at church, and in your community? How can this group help hold you accountable? Pray that God would give you a servant's heart that reflects Jesus, the humility to put others first, and eyes to see where He wants you to serve.

#### NOTES | Question #4—

The word Jesus uses here is δοῦλος (*doulos*) meaning slave. In our culture, we often use the word lightly or metaphorically:

- "I'm a slave to my schedule."
- "A slave to coffee."
- "A slave to fashion."

We usually just mean that something takes up our time or attention.

But in Jesus' culture, slavery was literal. Everyone knew exactly what a slave was:

- A person who didn't belong to themselves.
- Someone with no rights, no status, no control over their own life.
- Their whole existence was defined by the will of their master.

So when Jesus said, "If you want to be first, you must be the slave of everyone else," it would have hit hard.

- He wasn't saying, "Serve a little when it's convenient."
- He was saying, "Lay down your claim to yourself. Your whole life now belongs to serving others."

Jesus used a stronger word than servant (*diakonos*), meaning helper, attendant, or waiter. He escalated it to slave, someone who belongs entirely to another and has no rights of their own, and He did it on purpose!

What is Jesus saying?

He's saying that in the Kingdom of God, status, wealth, and popularity are not the prerequisites for greatness, or for leadership. Humble service is the greatest (and only) prerequisite, as Jesus Himself demonstrated through His life and ministry. Jesus is telling us today, My people, those who call themselves Christians, are not to operate as the rest of the culture operates. This is a stinging rebuke to the way the modern church often looks to the world for its substance and style. We're called to be different.

#### DIGGING DEEPER | Question #2—

"The 'cup' seems to be the cup of God's wrath, spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah. Jesus, here and in Gethsemane, faces the fact that the wickedness of the whole earth, and of Israel in particular, is pulling down upon its own head the just judgment of God. This takes specific and concrete form: as in the Old Testament, God's wrath is what happens when foreign armies come and destroy God's people, God's city. Jesus' task is to go ahead and take the full force of that 'wrath' on Himself.

The 'baptism' looks back to the beginning of the story. Just as Jesus' own baptism by John committed Him to His vocation of suffering messiahship, at the head of God's new covenant people, so His forthcoming death is itself to be understood as a kind of baptism – going down beneath the waters of death, so that sins might be forgiven."

#### Question #5—

"The climax of this section (vv. 35–45) comes in this verse. In the kingdom of God, humble service is the rule, and even the Son of Man is not exempt from it.. He is in fact the example of it, especially in his redemptive mission. Every part of this verse is important. "Son of Man" is the veiled messianic title Jesus often uses of Himself. "Did not come to be served, but to serve" describes His incarnate life. He did not come as a [ruler] whose every personal whim was to be catered to by groveling servants, but He came as a servant Himself. And His coming issued in giving "His life as a ransom for many."

The word translated "ransom" is *lytron*, which also means "the price of release" (BAG, pp. 483–84). In koine Greek it is often used of money paid for the release of slaves. In the NT, however, it no longer relates to a purchase price paid someone but simply means "redemption" or "release" as a theological concept based on the experience of Israel's release from slavery of Egypt. *Lytron* may also contain an allusion to the Suffering Servant passage of Isaiah 53 and especially to v.6b: "And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all..."