

Small Group Guide: Jesus Defines True Greatness

Based on Mark 10:32-45

Sermon Recap

Jesus challenges our cultural understanding of greatness by presenting a radically different vision. While the world (including "hustle culture") defines greatness through achievement, power, and recognition, Jesus defines it through willing service and self-sacrifice. The disciples struggled to understand this as they walked toward Jerusalem, expecting Jesus to claim earthly power. Instead, Jesus was heading toward the cross—His throne of true greatness.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **Read Mark 10:32-34.** Why do you think the disciples were "astonished" and the followers were "afraid" when Jesus walked ahead of them? What does this detail tell us about the moment?
2. **Read Mark 10:35-40.** What does James and John's request reveal about their understanding of greatness? How does their response to Jesus' prediction of His death show they missed the point?
3. **Read Mark 10:41-45.** How does Jesus contrast worldly greatness with Kingdom greatness? What does it mean that Jesus came to "give his life as a ransom for many"?

Personal Reflection

4. The sermon identified three symptoms of the world's vision of greatness:
 - Not listening well
 - Being easily offended
 - Seeing people as rivals instead of people

Which of these symptoms do you most struggle with? Can you share an example?

5. Jesse asked: "Who do you struggle to listen to? Whose opinions are easy for you to tune out?"

How does this reveal who you might think you're above?

6. **Reflect on this question:** "Where do you believe greatness is required to accomplish good? Or who do you think needs to lose power so that good can be done?"

How might you be wielding "the enemy's weapon" by trying to use power to accomplish good?

Going Deeper

7. The sermon explained that Jesus' identity as the "Son of Man" (from Daniel 7) means He deserves universal service, yet He chose to serve.

How does understanding Jesus' identity change how we view service? Why is willing service so important?

8. Jesse said: "The greatest obstacle to service is not laziness. It's how you see yourself."

How does your identity in Christ free you to serve without worrying about status or recognition?

9. Mother Teresa said, "Not all of us can do great things, but we can all do small things with great love."

What "small things" might God be calling you to do with great love this week?

Key Takeaways

- **Greatness redefined:** In God's Kingdom, greatness is measured by willing service, not achievement or power
- **Identity shapes activity:** How you see yourself determines how you serve (or don't serve)
- **Freedom to serve:** Because Jesus purchased your identity, you're free to serve without needing recognition
- **Universal availability:** Greatness is available to anyone—children, seniors, the weak—anyone can serve

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

1. **Listen Well:** Identify someone whose opinion you typically tune out or dismiss. This week, intentionally listen to them without planning your response. Ask follow-up questions.
2. **Serve Without Recognition:** Do something to serve someone without telling anyone else about it. No social media posts, no mentioning it in conversation.
3. **Identify Rivals:** Ask yourself, "Who do I see as a rival instead of a person to serve?" Pray for that person daily this week and look for one way to bless them.
4. **Small Things with Great Love:** Identify one "small thing" you can do regularly (daily dishes, helping a neighbor, calling an elderly friend) and commit to doing it with intentional love this week.

Group Accountability

- Share which challenge you're choosing with at least one other person in the group
 - Exchange contact information to check in mid-week
 - Plan to share next week how it went
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Closing Reflection

Read together: Mark 10:45 *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Question for Silent Reflection: What is one area of your life where you've been seeking greatness through power or achievement rather than through service? How might Jesus be inviting you to a different way?

Closing Prayer

Have someone close in prayer, asking God to:

- Help the group embrace Jesus' vision of greatness
 - Give courage to serve without seeking recognition
 - Transform hearts to see people as people, not rivals
 - Make the group known by their love and service
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For Next Week

- Read the next passage in the series
- Come prepared to share how your practical application went

- Bring someone new if possible—greatness is available to all!

• **5-Day Devotional: Redefining Greatness**

• **Day 1: The Upside-Down Kingdom**

- **Reading:** Mark 10:32-45
- **Devotional:** Jesus walked ahead of His disciples toward Jerusalem with steel-eyed determination, but not toward the throne they expected. While they imagined coronation, Jesus moved toward crucifixion. This reveals a profound truth: God's definition of greatness contradicts our natural assumptions. We measure success by accumulation, influence, and recognition. Jesus measures it by sacrifice, service, and surrender. The disciples were astonished and afraid because they sensed something momentous, yet completely misunderstood its nature. Today, ask yourself: What throne am I walking toward? Am I pursuing greatness through power or through laying down my life? The path to Jesus' kind of greatness always leads through the cross—death to self, life for others.

• **Day 2: The Listening Heart**

- **Reading:** James 1:19-27
- **Devotional:** When Jesus told His disciples He would suffer and die, James and John immediately asked for positions of power. They weren't listening. This reveals a dangerous symptom of worldly ambition: selective hearing. When we're preoccupied with our own advancement, we tune out inconvenient truths and miss what truly matters. James later wrote, "Be quick to listen, slow to speak." True greatness begins with humble attention—to God's Word, to others' needs, to the Spirit's gentle corrections. Who do you struggle to truly hear? Whose perspective do you dismiss too quickly? These reveal who you unconsciously consider beneath you. Ask God to give you ears that hear beyond your own agenda, a heart that receives truth even when it challenges your plans.

• **Day 3: The Slavery of Freedom**

- **Reading:** Philippians 2:1-11
- **Devotional:** Jesus called His followers to become "slaves to all"—a shocking identity for those seeking greatness. Yet Paul celebrates this same paradox: Christ, being in very nature God, took the nature of a servant. This is the mystery of Christian freedom: we are liberated from the slavery of self-promotion to embrace the freedom of self-giving love. Your identity isn't built on achievements or recognition; it was purchased by Jesus' blood. You don't serve to earn worth—you serve because your worth is secure. This frees you from the exhausting game of comparison and status anxiety. Nothing is beneath you because nothing was beneath Jesus. Today, what "small" act of service can you do with great love, not to be seen, but because you're already seen by God?

- **Day 4: The Ransom**

- **Reading:** 1 Peter 1:17-21

- **Devotional:** Jesus gave His life as a "ransom for many." A ransom is a payment that purchases freedom for captives. You were held captive—not by human enemies, but by sin, death, and the crushing weight of proving your worth. Jesus paid what you could never afford: His own perfect life. This isn't just historical fact; it's the foundation of your identity. When you're tempted to measure your value by productivity, remember: God already declared your worth at Calvary. When status anxiety whispers that you're falling behind, remember: you were bought with the highest price ever paid. Let this truth anchor you. You don't serve to become valuable; you serve because you've been declared invaluable by the One whose opinion matters most.

- **Day 5: Small Things, Great Love**

- **Reading:** Matthew 25:31-40

- **Devotional:** Jesus reveals that true greatness is available to everyone, regardless of ability, age, or accomplishment. The King welcomes those who gave a cup of cold water, visited the sick, clothed the naked—ordinary acts done with extraordinary love. Mother Teresa understood this: "Not all of us can do great things, but we can all do small things with great love." Greatness isn't reserved for the strong, wealthy, or influential. A child's kindness, a senior's prayer, a struggling person's encouragement—all are great in God's kingdom. What "small" service is before you today? Don't dismiss it as insignificant. Done in Jesus' name, for Jesus' sake, it echoes in eternity. Willing service, whatever your capacity, is the truest greatness. Choose today to serve someone who cannot repay you.

How does our culture's definition of greatness through hustle culture and productivity conflict with Jesus' definition of greatness through service and sacrifice?

In what areas of your life do you find yourself ranking or comparing yourself to others, and what does this reveal about your vision of greatness?

When have you been tempted to use power or influence to accomplish good, and how might that approach actually corrupt your motives like Gandalf warned?

Who in your life do you struggle to listen to or whose opinions you easily dismiss, and what does this reveal about who you think you're above?

How does understanding that your identity was purchased by Christ's sacrifice free you from serving for approval or self-validation?

What situations or tasks do you consider beneath you, and how does Jesus' example challenge that perspective?

Like the disciples who were astonished and afraid as Jesus walked ahead toward Jerusalem, when have you misunderstood what God was doing because you expected a different kind of victory?

How does Jesus' redefinition of greatness make it equally available to children, seniors, and those society deems unproductive or powerless?

In what ways do you see people as rivals to overcome rather than people to serve, and how can you shift that perspective?

What would willing service rather than obligated service look like in your relationships, workplace, or community this week?