

Discussion Questions



Key Takeaways

- Jesus did not come to fit into social, cultural, or religious norms. He came to turn everything upside down.
- The cross, which looks like defeat from the outside, is the greatest win in history.
- The disciples James and John sought seats of honor, revealing how easy it is to pursue kingdom privilege while misunderstanding kingdom values.
- Jesus' response in Mark 10 was not to reject their ambition outright but to redefine greatness: the one who wants to be first must become a servant of all.
- In Matthew 5, Jesus shifts the framework from retaliation and self-protection to generosity and non-retaliation — not as passive victimhood, but as active kingdom resistance.
- We are not just being asked to do something difficult. We are being invited to reflect what God has already done for us. Part one is God's generosity toward us. Part two is us reflecting that generosity outward.
- The words "not so with you" are a direct and personal call from Jesus to his followers to live by a different standard.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Pastor Ike described himself as intensely competitive and admitted that he makes almost everything into a contest. In what areas of your own life do you find yourself most driven to win or come out on top?
2. Before this sermon, how would you have defined what it means to win in life? Has that definition shifted at all as you have grown in your faith?

Digging Into the Text

3. In Mark 10, James and John asked Jesus for the two most honored seats in his kingdom. The pastor noted that Jesus did not immediately shut down their request but engaged them in conversation. What do you think that tells us about how Jesus deals with our misguided ambitions?
4. Jesus said in Mark 10:43-45 that whoever wants to be great must be a servant, and whoever wants to be first must be a slave of all. How does that definition of greatness challenge the way you think about your role at work, in your family, or in this church community?
5. In Matthew 5:38-42, Jesus sets aside the "eye for an eye" standard and calls his followers to a completely different response. The pastor was careful to point out that this is not a call to remain in abusive situations or to be passive in the face of harm. With that in mind, what do you think Jesus is actually calling us toward in these verses?
6. Pastor Ike described these passages as Jesus making an ontological claim — meaning Jesus is not saying the kingdom will become this way someday. He is saying this is what the kingdom already is. How does that distinction change the way you read these teachings?

Personal Reflection

7. Pastor Ike said that we often spend so much time debating when and how and where these teachings apply that we lose focus on the heart of what Jesus is asking. He suggested the heart of it is this: will you do what you know is the right thing to do, even when it is difficult and even when it costs you? Is there a situation in your life right now where you already know what the right thing is but have been hesitant to do it?
8. Pastor Ike made an important distinction between part one and part two of what Jesus asks. Part one is recognizing God's generosity in making us members of his kingdom. Part two is reflecting that generosity toward others. How does keeping part one in mind change how you feel about part two?
9. The sermon closed with a series of "not so with you" statements. Which one landed most personally for you?

- When the goal is to get ahead and make a name for yourself
- When you desire a seat of honor or recognition
- When you are tempted to walk past those society has rejected
- When you want to retaliate and the other person genuinely deserves it
- When you are tempted to adopt the standards of the surrounding culture

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to commit to before your group meets again.

Servant posture. Identify one relationship this week — at home, at work, or in your community — where you have been quietly competing for recognition or position. Choose one concrete action that reflects servanthood instead of self-promotion.

Releasing retaliation. Is there a situation in your life where you have been holding onto the right to get even? Spend time this week in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help you release that and respond differently. You do not have to pretend the wrong did not happen. Ask God for the grace to respond as someone who has already received undeserved mercy.

Generosity of spirit. Look for one opportunity this week to give more than what is expected or required of you — your time, attention, resources, or patience — especially in a situation where you would normally pull back.

Paying attention to the tug. The pastor prayed that the Holy Spirit would whisper "not so with you" in our ears when we are tempted to revert to old patterns. Pay attention to those moments this week. When you notice that tug, pause and write it down. Bring what you noticed back to the group next time.

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying the pastor's closing prayer or using it as a guide for your own:

God, thank you that what you are asking us to do is what you have already done for us. We know that it is easy to walk out of this room and quickly go back to the way we normally live. Holy Spirit, we give you permission to tug at our hearts and remind us — not so with you. Live differently. Live according to the kingdom of heaven. And while that may not look like a win here, in what really matters, it is. In Jesus' name, amen.

Series Recap

If your group has been walking through this series together, take a few minutes to reflect on the full arc before closing.

- Week 1 — The kingdom of heaven often does not look the way we expect it to.
- Week 2 — Jesus loved the people that society pushes away, and he calls us to do the same.
- Week 3 — We are invited to desire the greater reward, the one that lasts, rather than the one that is immediately available here on earth.
- Week 4 — True winning in the kingdom often looks like losing by the world's standards.

What is one thing from this entire series that you want to carry with you going forward?