



abcLinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on August 15-16, 2009

this week's coreverse

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."

Mark 9.35

usingabclinks

Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies that explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage of scripture. Other days you will be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying, answering questions.

Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions act as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members to get more information on ABC Small Groups or go to adabile.org>small groups.

See adabile.org>message recaps & Links for ABCLinks archives.



Part Four of a Five Part
Sermon Series

"The Window of Service"

God recently did a window cleaning in my life in the area of serving. Actually you could say he did a window crashing. For me, besides serving at church, serving others has gotten translated into the usual projects like: raking leaves, taking a meal, watching children, and hospital visits. Whenever I hear a sermon on serving, I seem to be hearing that I need to turn up the thermometer on the physical intensity of my serving to do things like: painting someone's house, cleaning windows, carrying furniture for people who are moving, cleaning up old houses... the kind of things I don't do well anymore and that put me in bed with aching muscles and joints.

So I did something daring, I asked God to show me other ways I could serve him and his people, and we had a conversation. He said, "you don't share the Gospel with people who don't already come to church." And I said, "well, I don't have many non-church related opportunities to share what I know about Christ." His response was, "why don't you ask me for that?" Yikes, God was convicting me to ask him to lead me to people I wouldn't normally meet, so I could share what I know about Christ with them. So I prayed that prayer, and something amazing started to happen. People who were confused about Christianity started hurtling toward me like meteors on a crash course. Meteors on a crash course toward my boarded up windows!!

One of these meteors was a woman I'll call Mary, who lives in a facility where she gets care for a disease that has physically incapacitated her. A friend of Mary's asked me if I would talk with her about God. Mary went to a parochial school, and married in a church, but other than that she had no information about Christ, nor what his death on the cross meant to her personally. Sobbing, she indicated that she was afraid of not making it to heaven. God gave me the opportunity to tell Mary that his Son died for her sins, and all she had to do was personally believe that. Seeing her respond to a very simple explanation of the Gospel was like a breath of fresh air to me. I've continued to meet with Mary. Watching her grow, and seeing her hunger for God has increased my own hunger for God, and given me a renewed appreciation for what he's done for me. I needed this extraordinary opportunity to remind me that sharing Christ is one of the ways God wants me to serve Him, and others.

You might read this and say, "That's not serving, that's evangelism. You didn't sweat, you didn't get dirty, you weren't even achy and sore afterwards. God did the work, not you." Yes indeed he did, but it was definitely serving. It required my own act of faith, and isn't it amazing how God changed both of us by the experience?



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personal bible studies

Imagine you come to an old house. From the outside, you can tell it has some tremendous character and history. But, it's a tad rundown and unkempt. As you walk up the driveway, you see that the trees and bushes are overgrown, hiding the beautiful windows that once brought light and fresh air to the inside. Dark and dreary is what you feel in the room as you step through the door. Smells of mustiness and mold are made more potent by the humidity in the room. Light and fresh air are what the place needs first and foremost.

You grab some tools and attempt to pry open the shutters, only to realize that the windows have been painted shut. It takes a lot of effort to free the windows from the caked paint. When the windows are hoisted open, you feel the light burst on your face and you smell the freshness of the outdoor air replace the musty, mildew stench. The building now has hope. Life is returning.

It doesn't take much effort on our part for our lives to become almost completely focused on ourselves. Taking care of good 'ole me comes naturally to most of us. However, we know that a self-focused life will eventually grow us spiritually stale and musty. From time to time, we need a little help to get the sticky windows of service open. Wonderful fresh air can blow into our lives when our hearts turn toward the needs of others.

Part One | ... *at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom*

This week, we'll explore two interactions between Jesus and his disciples regarding the subject of greatness. On occasion, it seemed that the disciples had a real concern for their status. Perhaps it stemmed from merely hanging out with Jesus the Messiah. They believed that Jesus would do some extraordinary things to rescue the Jewish people from oppression. Would they be the generals, vice presidents, and secretaries of state in the Jesus kingdom?

Read Mark 10.35-45.

Zebedee's sons were James and John, nicknamed sons of thunder. Flip back through the book of Mark. What sort of things did they see that would have gotten them excited about Jesus' kingdom and their potential place in it? Do you think their request to sit with Jesus came out of the blue or had it been building? Explain.

What was the point of Jesus' initial response to their request? What were they missing about Jesus? What was the meaning of the "cup"?

When the other 10 disciples got wind of this conversation, how did they respond? What do you think was happening in their hearts and minds?

Jesus calls them all together to discuss the growing dysfunction in his team. In your own words, re-tell Jesus' reaction to his disciples' ploy for position and status. What is Jesus' definition of greatness? How does his philosophy differ from that of the culture?

Position and status are two things we find ourselves clamoring for. We want to be great or to be near people who are (greatness by association). In what environments or circumstances do you wrestle with this?

The ultimate act of service was Jesus willingly placing himself on the cross to be tortured and killed. He paid a price or ransom for us; we deserved that punishment, he didn't. We have life because he served us so dramatically. He put his comfort, status and position aside for us—the ultimate servant attitude.

We are to have a servant's attitude like Christ. Describe how we are to lay down our lives for others. What comforts, position or status do you need to lay down today, so someone's needs can be met?

Think about this: When it comes to serving others, we fall into one of two camps. Camp 1: We serve, therefore, God now owes us. We earn something with our service. Camp 2: We serve because we owe God. Out of gratitude for how God has served us, we joyful give back to him and his kingdom. Spend a few minutes assessing your motives for serving. Do you do it for approval or out of gratitude?

Part Two | *Whoever welcomes one of these little children...*

On another occasion, the disciples were involved in some friendly (or not so friendly) banter about which one was the greatest. This seems to be a pattern with them.

Read Mark 9.33-37.

Do you see humor in the disciples' reaction to Jesus' question, "So, what were you talking about on the road?" What does this say about what they knew of Jesus' thoughts on the subject of greatness?

Jesus picks up a child. What do you see in Jesus in this action? What is Jesus' point with his reference to "little children"? How does this define greatness?

Take a minute to examine your heart for the helpless, the needy, and the children of our society. Are you active in their care? If you are, you are close to the heart of God. He smiles when you love and care for them!



small group discussion

leanin

If you could brag about one thing about yourself what would it be? Time to toot your horn!

lookdown

Read together Mark 10.35-45 and Mark 9.33-37.

What's the pattern that is building in the disciples' way of thinking? What would cause them to want to focus on this? If you were in their group, do you think you'd get caught up in their banter about greatness?

lookout

Where in our society or culture do you see narcissism and self-centeredness? Why do you think it is that way?

Where have you seen selflessness and others-focused attitudes in our culture? Why are they that way and what is the primary difference?

lookin

How did Jesus respond to the disciples' banter about greatness? How would you describe Jesus' philosophy or attitude about the subjects of greatness and service?

How does Jesus back up his talk with actions regarding service? How does he commit the ultimate act of service? Discuss how this could/should impact our attitude and approach to service.

Go around the room and tell stories of when God prompted you to serve and you did it. Was it inconvenient or costly? Was it helpful or fulfilling? What did you learn from serving? How did you grow spiritually because you served?

Small groups serving together can be a powerful experience. Spend the remainder of your time brainstorming or planning your next service project together. Start with who you know or with people around where you live. Who needs your help? If nothing comes to mind, spend a week or two praying as you walk and drive in your neighborhoods, towns, and community. Ask God to show you something broken or someone in need. Make plans to meet that need. Do a project or two before the snow flies!

Ada Bible Church has funds available for small groups serving together to make a positive change in their community. Go to adabile.org > resources. There you'll find a Small Group Grant Application. These funds are set aside for groups to help meet a need in their community. Contact your small group area director for assistance, or to learn more about the qualifications.