

FOLLOWING THE PATH OF JESUS

A Harmony Of the Gospels

A Daily Devotional Study Guide - Book 2



Week 21

“Take Up Your Cross”

Study: Matthew 16:21-26, Mark 8:31-37, Luke 9:22-25

Reading: Philippians 3:1-21

Memory: 1 John 1:8

What Does the Bible Say?

It is very interesting to note that Jesus was at the northernmost part of Israel when He set His sights on Jerusalem and began to prepare for His trip there where He would be crucified. He started describing to the disciples how He would be rejected by the religious leaders in Jerusalem and would be sent to the cross to be crucified. He wanted them to be aware that things would not be easy for a while because He was going to suffer and die. He would not stay dead though, because He was going to rise again on the third day. This teaching must have shocked the disciples who fully thought that Jesus was going to establish His reign here on the earth as was predicted in the Old Testament. The prophets declared much about the Messiah, but did not place a great distinction in their prophecies between the first and second coming of Jesus. This is why the disciples had a hard time understanding how Jesus was going to die instead of reign as king (Mt 16:21, Mk 8:31, Lk 9:22).

Though all the disciples must have been thinking it, Peter was the bold and hasty one who took Jesus aside and told Him this could not happen because He was the Messiah. Jesus looked at His disciples and told Peter to “get behind” Him and also called him “Satan.” Jesus was not saying that Peter was Satan, just that Peter was acting like Satan because He was trying to stop the plan of God for the life of Jesus. This is why He told Peter to “get behind” Him. He was simply telling Peter not to stand in the way of what God wanted done. He told Peter that thinking like this was not the way God desired for them to think. Peter was only thinking from a worldly perspective. Peter was thinking of the physical rule and reign rather than the spiritual purpose of saving men from their sins (Mt 16:22, Mk 8:32).

Jesus then called everyone that was around Him to Himself and began to declare to them that if they were going to follow Him, they must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him. The denial of self was a thought that was taught by the religious leaders of the day, but the ultimate purpose was for selfish gain through the praise of men. The

denial of self that Jesus presented focused on humility involving the choice to do what God wanted and live how God directed. The idea of taking up a cross was a reference to the willingness to suffer and die. The cross was not a glorious symbol like it is today, but pictured pain, agony and death. Those who wanted to truly follow Christ also had to be willing to die for Him. Following Christ was much more than hanging around and living in happiness or the amazement of His marvelous works. It involved self sacrifice, surrender and selfless service (Mt 16:23-24, Mk 8:33-34).

Opposite of what most men thought, in order to gain eternal life, Jesus said that they must be willing to give up their own life. If they chose to give up their personal wishes, goals and desires they would find real life and find what they were really looking for in this life and in the life to come. Those who chose to live for themselves in this world would not find the true joy, peace and happiness in this life, nor would they experience it in the life to come. Jesus declared that it would be no profit to a man to live for the things of this world and have all that he could ever desire on this earth, but at the same time lose his own soul. There was nothing more important than the soul of a man and the place where that soul would spend eternity (Mt 16:25-26, Mk 8:35-37, Lk 9:23-25).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you realize the importance of giving up your own wishes and desires for those of God? Are you willing to give up everything for Him? This is a constant choice that believers must make and is not just a one time decision. You have to be willing daily to give up a life that is focused on this world and live for a life that is to come. Though this is hard, the benefits are well worth it and in eternity you will be forever grateful that you gave up your life. This does not mean that life will be miserable on this earth, often the opposite is true. You will have a full life in this world and in the world to come. Take time to evaluate your life today to see if you are living for yourself or if you are denying yourself for the cause of Christ. There will be hard times, but it will be well worth it.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for teaching you how to truly have life.*
- * *Ask God to help you take up your cross daily.*

Matthew 16

What “time” is verse 21 referring to (see verses 13-20)?

What three things did Jesus start emphasizing to His disciples (vs 21)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How did Peter respond (vs 22)?

Why do you think Peter responded this way?

Are there times that you find yourself getting in the way of God’s plan because it is not your plan? Explain.

What did Jesus tell Peter to do (vs 23)?

Why do you think He called him “Satan” (vs 23)?

How was Peter being a hindrance to God’s plan (vs 23)?

What was Peter focused on (vs 23)?

What are ways that you can focus on earthly things instead of the things of God?

What three things did Jesus say His true disciples needed to do (vs 24)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Define what you think each of those mean.

What happens to those who try to save their life on this earth (vs 25)?

What happens to those who choose to lose their life in this earth (vs 25)?

What powerful questions does Jesus ask in verse 26?

“Ashamed of Him”

Study: Matthew 16:27-28, Mark 8:38-9:1, Luke 9:26-27

Reading: Romans 1:16-32, Luke 12:20-43

Memory: 1 John 1:8

I have been a fan of the Detroit Lions ever since I can remember. Until I left for college, I lived less than two miles from the Silverdome where the Lions used to play all their games, and for a while, I lived only a few blocks from there. As a kid, I remember going on many bike rides in the Silverdome parking lot and going into the Lions office asking for Lions stickers that I could put on my bike and school notebooks. Being a fan of a team that has more losing seasons than winning seasons is not always easy (though one of these years they are going to win the Super Bowl). It was especially difficult to be a fan when they went a whole year without winning a game. Yet, through it all I have not been ashamed to be a Detroit Lions fan and I know that when they do win the Super Bowl that my loyalty will pay off.

Today, we are going to read how we can be ashamed of something when things appear not to be working as we hoped. Many people would be ashamed of Jesus, especially when He was crucified, but those people will one day regret their shame when Jesus comes back to reward those who stuck by Him.

What Does the Bible Say?

The demand of Jesus was that His followers deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. He didn't want any of them to be ashamed of Him in the middle of an “adulterous generation.” Jesus referred to the religious leaders as “adulterers” because they claimed to be spiritually one with Him, but they actually were living for themselves. This would make it very hard to stand up for Christ because it was completely different than the current stream of religious teaching. Jesus was going to come back with His angels to rule and reign upon this earth, but those who were ashamed to declare Him as their Lord and King before He came would find that He would not claim them either when He returned. He was (and still is) going to return to establish His kingdom and when

He does He will have rewards with Him for those who chose to give themselves for Him and His cause (Mt 16:27, Mk 8:38, Lk 9:26).

In a very interesting statement, Jesus told His listeners that there were some standing in the audience listening to His Words that would not experience death until they saw the kingdom of God. Taking this verse out of context would be greatly confusing because all of those who heard the message of Jesus physically died many years ago and the “kingdom” has not come yet. The confusion of this is also brought about by chapter divisions which were not in the original writings. The chapter breaks make us think that something different was taking place between the end of one chapter and the beginning of the other, but that is not the case in this narrative. It is curious to note that the chapter division in Matthew is different than in Mark and Luke though all of these are recording the same instance. So what is the answer to the statement of Jesus? The highly probable answer about the glory of Jesus that sticks out was a reference to Peter, James and John and their ability to witness the transfiguration that took place (we will study this tomorrow). They didn't see the full kingdom, but they saw the glory of what it would be like one day when Jesus would come and rule upon this earth (Mt 16:28, Mk 9:1, Lk 9:27).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you ashamed of God? When others speak about God around you or question you about your faith, do you boldly stand up for Him and declare the truth? This does not mean you have to preach a long sermon to others about Jesus, but do you share Jesus in a humble and simple way to those around you? It is one thing to attend a church, but another thing to declare that Jesus is the Christ who is coming to rule and reign on this earth. The scary words that Jesus declares are that if we are ashamed of Him, He will be ashamed of us. This is not meant to drive people to follow God out of guilt, but it is meant to reveal that true believers will not be ashamed of their God and will stand up for Him even in the middle of a generation that denies Him.

Thought for the day

Mark 8:38-9:1

What two terms did Jesus use to describe the current generation the disciples were living in (vs 38)?

- 1.
- 2.

Who do you think the “generation” was that Jesus was referring to?

Why do you think Jesus described them this way?

Are you living in a similar generation? Explain your answer?

How do you think you can be ashamed of Jesus (vs 38)?

****It is easy to be bold when you are in a church setting or when people have a high view of religion, but it is much more difficult when you are dealing with people who are antagonistic about faith in Jesus.*

Have you ever felt yourself shy away from proclaiming that you are a follower of Jesus? If so, why do you think you felt this way?

What can you do to enable you to be a bold follower of Christ?

Who does Jesus say He will be ashamed of when He returns (vs 28)?

What do you think that means?

What did Jesus declare about some who were standing there with Him (vs 1)?

What do you think Jesus meant by this?

****Many commentators have given many answers to this question over the years and it could confuse people. Though I can't be 100% certain, as mentioned in the commentary, it seems to point to what is about to happen on the Mount of Transfiguration.*

“The Transfiguration”

Study: Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-10, Luke 9:28-36

Reading: Leviticus 23:33-44

Memory: 1 John 1:8

What Does the Bible Say?

Matthew and Mark stated that six days had passed since the events in the previous verses occurred, though Luke stated that it had been eight days. The reason for the difference is not clear, but it is probably because they are counting their days from different previous events, having a different starting point and/or ending point. The number of days are not that significant, but the fact that all three Gospels mention the number of days is significant because it ties the end of the previous passage with this one, revealing how some of the disciples would see Jesus in His full glory. Jesus took Peter, James and John and traveled up to a high mountain. This mountain is not identified, but since they were in Caesarea Philippi, the nearest high mountain, the tallest one by far in Israel, is Mount Hermon. Scholar's argue about the exact mountain and there is even a mountain in Israel called the “Mount of Transfiguration,” (Mount Tabor) but that name was given much later in history by religious leaders. The three disciples that Jesus had with Him were part of what is called the “inner circle.” These were men that were closest to Jesus and were often with Him for major events (Mt 17:1, Mk 9:2, Lk 9:28).

While up on the mountain praying, Jesus began to be transfigured and started to glow brightly. His face was bright like the sun and His clothes shined whiter than any white that could be produced on the earth. Two men appeared and were talking with Him. These two men were identified as Moses and Elijah. They were talking about the departure of Jesus from the earth and what He was going to have to suffer before it took place. It is significant that the two men were Moses and Elijah. Not only were these two of the most famous and respected men in Jewish history, but Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the Prophets. If you remember, Jesus declared that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Mt 5:17). The disciples had not seen the men appear because they were sleeping, but the glory of Jesus and the conversation woke them out of their deep sleep (Mt 17:2-3, Mk 9:3-4, Lk 9:29-32).

Peter, not knowing what to say, but feeling that he needed to say something, suggested that they build three tents in that spot. This appears to be a reference to the booths that were erected during the Feast of Tabernacles (tents or booths) which commemorated the Israelites wondering in the wilderness with no permanent home. It appeared that Peter was saying that they should build a little place to shelter them so they could stay there for a while on the mountain. Peter, James and John were just catching the end of the conversation of Jesus with Moses and Elijah and, as the two men were disappearing, a great cloud moved in over them and a voice came out of the cloud. This terrified the disciples and they were more afraid when the voice of God sounded from the cloud saying that Jesus was His beloved Son and that He was well pleased with Him. The voice commanded the disciples to listen to Jesus because He was the Son of God (Mt 17:4-5, Mk 9:5-7, Lk 9:33-35).

After they heard the voice from heaven, they “fell on their faces and were terrified.” Jesus came to them and gently touched them, telling them to get up and not be afraid. When they looked up, Moses and Elijah were gone and the appearance of Jesus was back to normal. As they traveled back down the mountain Jesus told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after His resurrection. It is unclear why Jesus told them this, but they chose to do as He said. They kept this to themselves, though they were still unsure about what He meant by His death and resurrection (Mt 7:6-9, Mk 9:6-10, Lk 9:36).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you realize how grand and glorious God is? The disciples had seen Jesus do many great things, but the sight of the glory of God shining from the face of Jesus and the voice of God from heaven was overwhelming for the disciples. Their response reveals how small they really felt in the presence of a holy and almighty God. This should also give you insight into the humility that you should have before this same God. This does not mean you should walk around in constant fear of Him and what He could do to you, but it should cause you to respect and adore Him even more. It should cause you to submit to His plan and His way, realizing that He is so much greater than you could ever imagine. Choose today to live in humility and awe of your great God, anticipating a day where you will see Him in all of His glory.

Mark 9

Why do you think the three Gospels which record this event give a specific amount of days (vs 2)?

****As we have read before in the devotional book, many of the events recorded in the Gospels weren't necessarily recorded in chronological order. Many were arranged in themes, but this particular event has a specific time recorded with it. As stated yesterday, this gives evidence that verse 1 was most likely referring to this event.*

Who did Jesus take with Him up to a mountain (vs 2)?

Why do you think He only took these three?

What happened to Jesus (vs 2-3)?

Who joined Jesus (vs 4)?

Why do you think these two joined Jesus?

What did Peter declare that they should do (vs 5)?

Why did Peter declare this (vs 6)?

What can you learn about Peter from this?

Why do you think this is what Peter chose to say?

What happened when a cloud came over them (vs 7)?

Why do you think God chose to act this way?

****Jesus was preparing His disciples for His departure and God wanted them to be 100% sure that Jesus was the Son of God and that they should listen to all that He was telling them.*

What happened after the cloud departed (vs 8)?

What didn't they do (vs 8)? Why not (vs 9)?

“Building Your Faith”

Study: Matthew 17:10-20, Mark 9:10-29, Luke 9:37-42

Reading: Luke 13:18-21

Memory: 1 John 1:8

What Does the Bible Say?

On the way down from the mountain, Jesus told Peter, James and John not to tell anyone what they had seen until after His resurrection from the dead. The disciples were puzzled by what Jesus meant about the resurrection and began to question Him about it. They also asked Jesus about the appearance of Elijah on the mountain and what was meant in Scripture when it stated that Elijah must come before the Messiah. The last book in the Old Testament, Malachi, closed the Old Testament with a look forward to Elijah and then the Messiah.

Jesus responded to their question by telling them that Elijah had already come. He came, but few people recognized that he was the Elijah the Old Testament was talking about. The religious leaders rejected him and Herod had him beheaded. The disciples realized that Jesus was saying that this Elijah was John the Baptist and that the Old Testament was fulfilled when it said that Elijah would prepare the way for the Son of Man. Jesus also reminded them that it was predicted that the Son of Man would suffer many things. Though it was also predicted that He would be king and rule the earth, He was going to first have to suffer (Mt 17:10-13, Mk 9:10-13).

When they came down from the mountain, Jesus was met by a large crowd who had been surrounding His other disciples. A man who had a demon possessed son had asked the disciples to cast out the demon while Jesus was gone, but they could not. This demon had caused many problems for the boy and had often caused him to fall on the ground and roll around, sometimes causing him to go into a fire. Jesus responded in sadness as He realized it was the disciple's lack of faith that hindered them from casting out the demon. Though He had been training them and was getting ready to depart from this earth, He once again realized that they were not fully ready. While Jesus was briefly grieving over their lack of faith, the demon caused the boy to fall and roll around. When Jesus questioned the father, the father told Him this had been happening for several years. When the man pleaded with Jesus for help,

Jesus told him that if he believed, it could happen. The man responded by telling Jesus that he believed, but realized that there was some unbelief that he needed help with (Mt 17:14-17, Mk 9:14-24, Lk 9:37-42a).

Jesus saw that a larger crowd was gathering as they noticed the boy rolling on the ground and He commanded the demon to depart from the boy. The demon immediately departed and the boy lay so still that many thought He was dead. Jesus revealed that the boy was alive when He went over and lifted the boy up and the boy was healthy and normal. A little later on, the disciples wanted to know why they couldn't cast out the demon. Jesus responded by telling them that they had great power but that power was only accessed by prayer. They had the power to move mountains, but they needed to let their faith grow. Jesus made reference to having faith like that of the grain of mustard seed, which was known for its very small size. It doesn't appear that Jesus was telling them to have "very tiny" faith, but that their faith should grow, just like a tiny mustard seed grows into a very large plant. They had some faith, but through much prayer, their faith could grow larger, giving them the ability to move mountains (Mt 17:18-20, Mk 9:25-29, Lk 9:42b).

How Does this Apply to Me?

How is your faith growing? You know you should pray and you know that you should have faith, but do you realize that your faith increases with your prayer life? The more you pray for and seek the power of God in your life, the stronger your faith will grow. Jesus was not encouraging the disciples to have little faith but was attempting to teach them that the more they trusted and relied upon God, the more their faith would grow and it was then that they would see more of the power of God. This was a great lesson that took the disciples a while to learn because they would often be found sleeping instead of praying, just like they had been before the transfiguration. Basically, Jesus was saying that the power of God did not come easily, but came through time and effort that produced spiritual growth. Just as a tiny seed grew under the right conditions, so your faith, watered with prayer and Bible reading, can grow to move mountains.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for giving you access to great power.*
- * *Ask God to help you grow in your faith.*
- * *Praise God because He has the power over evil.*

Mark 9

What did the disciples not understand (vs 10)?

What did they ask Jesus about (vs 11)?

What did Jesus focus on rather than Elijah (vs 12)?

What did Jesus say about Elijah (vs 13)?

What was happening with the other disciples when Jesus reached the base of the hill (vs 14-15)?

What were they arguing about (vs 16-18)?

Why do you think Jesus responded the way He did in verse 19?

What happened when the demon realized Jesus was there (vs 20)?

What was significant about this problem (vs 21-22)?

What powerful statement did Jesus make in verse 23?

What did the father ask for help with (vs 24)?

Why do you think he declared this?

Have you ever felt this way before? Explain.

What did Jesus command (vs 25)?

What happened next (vs 26-27)?

What did the disciples want to know (vs 28)?

What short answer did Jesus give (vs 29)?

How do faith and prayer go hand in hand?

Why do you think Jesus illustrated this with a mustard seed (Mat 17:20)?

“St. Peter’s Fish”

Study: Matthew 17:24-26

Reading: Philippians 4:10-19, Matthew 6:25-34

Memory: 1 John 1:8

What Does the Bible Say?

Upon arrival in Capernaum, some tax collectors came to Peter and asked him if Jesus paid taxes. These tax collectors were not collecting for the Roman government, but instead they were collecting the temple tax. Every male over the age of 20 was required by the Old Testament Law to give a half shekel yearly for the upkeep of the Temple (Exodus 30:13). The half shekel in those days was equivalent to two drachma’s and would be about the wages for two days of pay. In our modern day, it would come to between \$250 - \$400. Apparently Jesus and Peter had not paid their tax yet that year and the tax collectors came implying that Jesus was not one who kept the law since He had not given His tax to the temple. Peter immediately responded by telling the tax collector that they did pay the temple tax but then went to Jesus right after this to ask Him about it (Mt 17:24).

Jesus knew what had taken place with Peter and the tax collectors and before he could ask Jesus about it, Jesus asked Peter what he thought. He asked Peter if the kings of the earth took taxes from their own children or if they collected it from others?

Peter gave the obvious response stating that kings do not collect taxes from their own children and that the children of the king are free from paying taxes. By this, Jesus was stating that He did not need to pay the



This is called St. Peter’s Fish and it is served at some restaurants along the Sea of Galilee.

temple tax since His Father was the ruler of the temple. Yet, Jesus did not want to offend the Jewish leaders who did not understand who He was. He then told Peter to go to the Sea of Galilee and catch a fish. In the mouth of the fish, Peter would find a shekel that He could give to the tax collectors to pay the temple tax for both of them. It is interesting to note the fishing method used here was that of a hook rather than a net. Jesus was not asking Him to go back to His commercial fishing, but just to go and let God provide for their daily needs (Mt 17:25-26).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Jesus taught a few different lessons to Peter in this little narrative that is only recorded in the book of Matthew. It is interesting that Matthew is the only one who recorded it, especially since he was formerly a tax collector. The first lesson that we can see is that Jesus did not want to give other people just cause to be angry at Him, so He went ahead and paid the temple tax though He didn't really need to. This is a great example of humility and giving in for the good of others and the peace of all. There will be times in your life where you have every right not to do something or to do something, but because it might cause problems with others, the humble servant of God gives up his rights.

A second lesson I see from this is the lesson about God's provision. We are not told if Peter had the money for this tax or not, but Jesus miraculously provided for their needs. Though Jesus was not responsible for the tax, Peter was. Peter did not have to worry about paying it because God would give him what he needed. This same God promises to provide for your needs and to take care of you.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Thank God for giving you what you need when you need it.
- * Ask God to help you trust Him to meet your needs.
- * Praise God because He can do whatever He desires to do.

Thought for the day

Who came to Peter questioning him about taxes (vs 24)?

Why do you think they came to Peter?

****The religious leaders who tried to trip up Jesus on His words and His beliefs were never successful. In fact, most of them accomplished the opposite of their plan. Instead of turning people from Jesus, they would turn people toward Jesus when He wisely answered their questions. Here, they were trying to turn the disciples against Jesus and cause questions in their minds.*

How did Peter respond to their question (vs 25)?

Why do you think Peter came to ask Jesus about this even though he had already responded (vs 25)?

Why do you think Jesus spoke before Peter ever asked anything (vs 25)?

What simple question did Jesus ask (vs 25)?

What was Jesus declaring by this question (vs 25)?

What answer did Jesus give (vs 26)?

Why did Jesus choose to give a tax though He, being the Son of God, was really not required by God to do so (vs 27)?

Why do you think it is important to give up some of your "rights" in order to avoid problems?

****There are times where you need to stand up for what is right and other times you need to give up your rights. The wisdom of God will help dictate when is the right circumstance for each action.*

Where did Peter get the shekel for the tax (vs 27)?

What significant lesson do you think Jesus was teaching Peter about the provision of God?

“The Greatest”

Study: Matthew 17:22-23, 18:1-4, Mark 9:30-37, Luke 9:43-48

Reading: Luke 4:21-30, James 1:26-27

Memory: 1 John 1:8

What Does the Bible Say?

It appears that the healing of the demonic boy took place at Caesarea Philippi where Jesus began his journey southward to Jerusalem. His next stop on the way was back in Galilee, though He didn't want to draw large crowds. He was now focused on teaching and training His disciples. One of the main teachings He was attempting to get across to them is that He was going to be delivered over to evil men who would have Him killed. He would not stay dead, but would rise again on the third day. Though He taught this to them over and over, it did not make sense in their minds. They were so convinced that He was going to establish His earthly kingdom at this time that they couldn't imagine how He could be killed. They had already seen Him miraculously escape death in Nazareth (Lk 4:29-30), and they saw no earthly force that was stronger than He was. In fact, this saying bothered them so much that they didn't even ask Him questions about it. Though they did not understand at the time, Jesus knew that they would remember His words when He was gone (Mt 17:22-23, Mk 9:30-32, Lk 9:43-45).

While they were still traveling to Capernaum, the disciples began to discuss who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God. In the Jewish religious system, they would have all grown up honoring high positions and those positions would have been highly sought after. This was the same understanding they had of the kingdom of God and each of the disciples probably wanted a higher spot than the others. When they arrived at Capernaum, Jesus asked them what they had been discussing on the way. He knew what they had been talking about, but when confronted about their conversation, they began to realize that it was probably not something they should have been discussing. According to Mark, they kept silent, but Matthew and Luke said that they asked Jesus who would be the greatest. Most likely, when Jesus first asked the question, they all sat still and quiet and then finally one of them got up enough nerve to ask Jesus (Mt 18:1, Mk 9:33-34, Lk 9:46).

Jesus resolved this dispute by taking a little child that was near him

and putting that child on his lap. Jesus told the disciples that whoever sought to be first upon this earth would end up last in the Kingdom of God, but whoever sought to be last, would be first. He told them that those who want to be part of the Kingdom of God must accept it like a child, in simple dependence and trust. Whoever would be great in the kingdom of God would be the person who would humble themselves to minister to that child and other children like him. Jesus was not promoting a children's ministry, but in that culture, children were not often valued and cherished. To be great in their culture meant hanging around with important men and working your way into the system. Reaching out to children was a humble task that few people would notice and care about. Jesus was declaring that doing the things that no one would see out of a love for God and a love for others is what would make a person great (Mt 18:2-4, Mk 9:35-37, Lk 9:47-48).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you humbly serving God in the task He has called you to do? True greatness in the eyes of God is much different than greatness in the eyes of most men. It is easy to think that greatness comes from being popular and having a title, but true greatness comes from humility. This doesn't mean that you won't have a title or won't be praised by men, only that you seek to obey regardless if you get noticed or not. Being willing to humble yourself and do the things that won't gain popularity or exalt you in the eyes of others is true humility. Loving the outcast, caring for those who are in need and sacrificing your desires for the cause of Christ are what God desires from you. It is serving Him and following Him with dependence and humility that will truly allow you to be great.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for being a God that you can depend upon.*
- * *Ask God to help you humbly follow Him.*
- * *Praise God because He can always be trusted.*

Thought for the day

Mark 9

Where did they travel after the Mount of Transfiguration (vs 30)?

****From the narrative about the temple tax we know that they had gone somewhere near the Sea of Galilee.*

What did Jesus not want people to be aware of (vs 30)? Why not?

****Jesus knew that it was much more important to heavily invest in His disciples than it was to minister to a crowd. This is a vital lesson that Jesus taught by example. It is very easy to think that large crowds equal success, but Jesus revealed that investing in individuals was far more important.*

What was Jesus teaching His disciples (vs 31)?

****We read a few days ago how He was teaching the very same thing. It was so hard for them to comprehend what He was saying because it did not fit into their view of what would happen when the Messiah came.*

What was clear even though Jesus had repeated it (vs 32)?

Why do you think repetition in different ways and at different times is important to learning?

What did Jesus ask when they reached Capernaum (vs 33)?

Why were they afraid to answer Jesus (vs 34)?

What did Jesus declare about being great (vs 35)?

What do you think He meant by this?

Who did Jesus use as an example (vs 36)?

Why did Jesus use this example?

What do you think it looks like to receive Jesus like a child (vs 37)?

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. 5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.