**Live in Community**



Small Group Study



**Volume Overview**

**Be Different**

Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. ([Romans 12:2](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro12.2))

*Christians have long understood that we live and walk a fine line. We are to be in the world—all things to all people, as Paul put it—yet not of the world. God’s people have always been a chosen people, holy and set apart from the world’s ways. To pull it off, to be truly different, means we must each hold fast to the truth, speaking it when needed, all while humbling ourself and faithfully serving others.*

**Session Overview**

**Serve Others**

**Biblical Encounter*:*** James and John Get a Lesson on Greatness ([Matthew 20:20–28](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt20.20-28))

**Outcome:** Be different by leading through serving others.

*So much has been written about leadership. Climbing the ladder of greatness and success is an admirable goal, but it can also be a slippery slope. So what’s the true cost of greatness when it comes to serving God? Jesus answered that question after He was approached by James and John’s mother, asking for her sons to be seated next to Jesus in His kingdom. Jesus gave James and John—and each of us—an honest look at what it means to be great in God’s kingdom. Being great like Jesus is all about leading through serving.*

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| ***You Will Need***  *•* ***Large Group Activity Page***  *• Scissors*  ***Getting Ready***  *• Print the* ***Large Group Activity Page*** *and cut it into strips. Fold the strips so the words are hidden.*  • ***First time leading* Live *for Youth? Look here for the*** [**Facilitator Guide**](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf)**.** |

*To access session content and videos from a computer, visit:* [***BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads***](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

**Welcome**

*Take this time to welcome everyone, introduce new students, learn names, and thank everyone for coming. Your friendliness here can create a comfort level that encourages student participation later.*

**Introduction**

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| **QUESTION**  Who is the greatest person you know personally? Why do you consider him or her to be great? |

Last time we talked about how Paul and Barnabas challenged wrong thinking when they were considered gods by the crowd. That leads right into today’s discussion on greatness. We often think of greatness as doing superhuman tasks or performing miracles. But Jesus revealed what truly makes for a great person in God’s kingdom. His answer goes against most people’s idea of greatness. So by the end of our discussion, we’ll have a much clearer idea of what it means to be great in the eyes of God.

**Opening Prayer**

*Prayer thoughts: Thank God for everyone who is there. Give thanks for His Word, which helps us live in all truth. Ask for the Holy Spirit to lead the discussion and help everyone understand and share His truth with others.*

**Group Activity**

**Telephone Charades**

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| ***You Will Need***  *•* ***Large Group Activity Page***  *• Scissors*  ***Getting Ready***  *• Print out the* ***Large Group Activity Page*** *and cut it into strips. Fold the strips so the words are hidden.* |

I need five volunteers for today’s activity.

• *Select the five and ask them to come to the front of the room.*

Our volunteers are going to play Telephone Charades. How many of you have played charades before? *(Group response)* I hope our volunteers are ready to call on their best acting today! I need the five of you to line up, single file, across the front.

The person at the end of the line will choose a slip with an activity on it. Once that person is ready, they’ll act it out without saying anything. But there’s a catch. How many of you have played the telephone game where you pass along a whispered phrase? *(Group response)* That’s how we’re going to play charades.

When the person at the back is ready to act it out, they’ll tap the person in front of them on the shoulder. Only that person will turn around and watch the person behind them act out what they read on the paper. None of the volunteers in front of the second person can watch. Then, the person who was watching will act out the activity they saw for the person in front of them. You’ll pass along the charade until the person at the front of the line gets to guess what was being portrayed from the slip of paper.

You only get one chance to act everything out, so do your best. Ready to play? *(Group response)*

• *Let the person at the back of the line draw a slip and start the game.*

• *After each volunteer has passed the message, the person at the front of the line should guess the action being portrayed (the first two or three words on the slip).*

• *After each round, have the last person in line move to the front for the next round.*

• *Keep playing until each volunteer has had an opportunity to draw a slip.*

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| **QUESTION**  Did the activities change much from the first actor to the final guesser? Why is that? |

Sometimes it’s easy to forget or confuse what we’ve seen. It happens all the time with witnesses to crimes in public or accidents. A person clearly sees what’s happened but forgets details later. Something similar can happen with Jesus and us. Jesus gave many examples of how to live for Him. But sometimes, we forget what He did or said and change things up a bit. So today, we’re going to focus on how Jesus defined greatness. We’ll be able to see how close we are to being great based on Jesus’ definition. But first, let’s watch this video.

**Watch**



**Consider What the Bible Says**

*Ensure each student has access to a Bible, preferably the same version.*

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| **QUESTION**  Do you want to be a leader some day? What do you want to lead? |

Being a leader in Jesus’ way starts with understanding how He defined leadership. In today’s Bible passage, Jesus pointed out that being a great leader will look different from what most people think. So if you want to lead, today’s discussion will certainly help. And even if you’re not into traditional leadership, this session will still help you live in a way that you can better lead others to Jesus.

**A Request for Status**

Just prior to the verses we’re about to read, Jesus told His disciples about His death. Jesus shared a lot of details of what would happen to Him when they got to Jerusalem. Let’s look at what happened next.

Read [Matthew 20:20–21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt20.20-21).

James and John’s mom approached Jesus, asking Him to allow her sons to sit in positions of high honor in His future kingdom. Though the mother is the focus in Matthew’s Gospel, Mark’s account ([Mark 10:35–37](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk10.35-37)) doesn’t even mention her. That doesn’t mean she wasn’t there. It likely means that her sons were the real source of the question, even if their mom asked it. Why would they ask this? They were looking for status.

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| **QUESTION**  Why might James and John have wanted their mother to ask Jesus this question? |

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| **QUESTION**  What do you think the other disciples thought about this request? |

This trio really put Jesus on the spot by asking such a big favor from Him in front of His closest followers.

**Did You Know?**

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| The Gospels tell us that James and John’s father, Zebedee, owned a fishing business, and the brothers worked alongside the hired hands (Mark 1:20). On the Sea of Galilee, fishing was big business. It was not only because of the number of fish that could be caught, but also what was done with the fish after they were caught. Archaeology of the city of Magdala has revealed that the fish were preserved in salt, which was often worth more than gold in the ancient world. Because of the investment required for this type of family business, James and John appear to have come from wealthy means. This possibly speaks to the reason their mother took a bolder approach to Jesus than one would normally expect of women at that time. |

**Jesus Answers the Request**

Read [Matthew 20:22–23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt20.22-23).

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| **QUESTION**  How does Jesus respond to the request for James and John to sit on His right and left? |

This was a huge request on the part of James and John. Jesus let them know exactly how significant it was by noting that only the Father has the authority to choose who sits in those places. Jesus said that He didn’t get to make that decision.

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| **QUESTION**  What do you think Jesus meant by “the bitter cup of suffering”? |

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| **QUESTION**  How do you think you would have responded to Jesus’ question about the bitter cup? |

Keep in mind just a few verses earlier, Jesus had talked about His death. He was challenging them with the idea that being a part of His kingdom may involve suffering—following Him came with a price.

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| **QUESTION**  How did James and John respond to Jesus? |

This was not only a careless request, but also a response that lacked any careful thought. You have to wonder if James and John were really listening to what Jesus was saying. They seemed eager to follow their own ambition at any cost.

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| **QUESTION**  How can our own ambition get in the way of God’s plan for our life? |

**Jesus Teaches in Response to the Request**

The other disciples overheard what James and John had been talking with Jesus about. Emotions ran high, and Jesus responded by turning the disciples’ mindset upside down.

Read [Matthew 20:24–28](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt20.24-28).

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| **QUESTION**  How does this passage say the other disciples felt about James and John’s request? |

Even though all these men had spent a lot of time with Jesus by this point, they didn’t react as Jesus did. The disciples responded selfishly. Rather than ignoring the ridiculous request, the disciples responded in anger. And that response is likely why the lesson moved from two disciples to twelve.

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| **QUESTION**  What did Jesus say it takes to be a great leader? |

Jesus used this opportunity to teach His disciples how to live and lead for Him. He said leadership is all about serving others. If we’re to truly live as His followers, developing as leaders in His kingdom, we need to understand this principle. Leadership or greatness comes with the requirement of service.

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| **QUESTION**  What are two reasons Jesus gave for coming to earth in verse [28](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt20.28)? |

There’s a different way to live in God’s kingdom. We’re called to act contrary to the world’s way of leadership. Most people think leading is just being in charge, gathering followers, or getting others to do things for you. But Jesus said that we are to lead by serving others. Our greatness is not found in acquiring power and position for ourself, but in giving ourself to help others like He did.

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| **QUESTION**  What can you learn from this passage to apply to your life? |

**Reflect**

**Be different by leading through serving others.**

Jesus doesn’t appear to have any issues with someone wanting to be great in His kingdom. He’s looking for individuals who desire to do it the right way—serving with great purpose. Doing great things Jesus’ way is all about serving and giving your life to help others. This was Jesus’ purpose, what He did by giving His life for us.

It’s what He desires for each of us, too. Be different. Lead by serving. How are you at serving and extending yourself to help others like Jesus did? Or are you more concerned about gaining status?

**Listen to God**

Let’s take time to consider how our life demonstrates a real trust in the Bible. These questions are meant to serve as a conversation between you and God. Sharing your responses with the group is completely voluntary.

• *Pause for a few moments of silent reflection before asking students if they want to share.*

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| **QUESTION**  Is it difficult for you to serve others consistently? Why or why not? |

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| **QUESTION**  Think of a time when someone else was given something special that you thought you deserved (a position on a sports team, a special part in a musical, etc.). Did you respond more like Jesus or His disciples? |

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| **QUESTION**  What’s one thing you can do to grow in the area of leading by serving? |

**Activate**

It’s one thing to talk about serving others. It’s quite another to serve regularly. Yet, Jesus addressed His disciples’ quest for greatness by explaining that serving is how you lead. But greatness in the eyes of the world looks a whole lot different from how Jesus sees it.

You and I have the same opportunity to become great in God’s kingdom. To go and serve is a clear path to accomplish this. There are many opportunities for us to serve every day. It’s really a matter of recognizing what they are and then acting on them. This may include cleaning up after someone, helping around the house without being asked, doing something for a friend or neighbor, or helping out at church. And like Jesus, we need to serve with a great attitude.

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| **QUESTION**  What’s one practical way you can serve others this week? |

**Conclusion**

Jesus has called us to follow His example. This includes sacrificing to serve others. This is true greatness. The challenge for each of us is to grow in this kind of leadership. We may not see much of Jesus’ style of serving in people around us, but we can be an example of it for others.

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| **Salvation Opportunity**  *Include this if you think there may be some in the group who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.*  In the last verse we read ([Matthew 20:28](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt20.28)), Jesus told His disciples that He came to give His life as a ransom for others. In other words, He gave His life on the Cross in our place. Jesus died for our sins, so we could choose salvation and live for Him.  **Is anyone here that we can pray for who doesn’t have a relationship with Jesus or wants to renew their relationship with Him?**  *Take a moment to acknowledge those who respond and thank them for their desire to make things right between themselves and God. Pray with them as you close in prayer or after the group time is over. Following group time, talk more about where they are in their walk with God and how you might be able to help.* |

**Prayer**

Jesus, thank You for showing us what greatness is all about. We pray that Your Church would grow in its ability to serve a world that desperately needs to hear about salvation through You. Raise up people all over the world who know what it means to serve You by serving others. Thank You for providing everything we need for life. We love You. Amen.

**Dismissal**

I look forward to seeing each of you next time as we continue our journey in God’s Word. One way you can continue to challenge yourself to grow in your faith is to do the devotions provided on the Bible Engagement Project app. These give you opportunities to learn from the Bible and then live it out. See you next time!