

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: April 28, 2019
Lesson Title: "Serves"
Lesson Passage: Mark 10:35-45

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Seemingly oblivious to Jesus' prediction of the suffering and death that awaits him in Jerusalem, James and John attempt to reserve for themselves positions of honor in the kingdom. Jesus uses the occasion to press home the point that the key to greatness is servanthood.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain why Jesus told James and John they did not know what they were asking. (2) Formulate a definition of success based on Jesus' teaching.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Begin by asking class members to name successful people. Jot their responses on the board. Ask why they suggested these names. Observe that people measure success in many different ways. To illustrate, display these definitions: (1) "Success is the ability to get along with some people--and ahead of others." (2) "To do for the world more than the world does for you--that is success." (3) "Success: Making more money to meet obligations you wouldn't have if you didn't have so much money." (4) "The secret of success is to do the common thing uncommonly well." Observe that the lesson passage will reveal how Jesus measured success in the eyes of God.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. To present the Bible passage in a somewhat different fashion, ask two class members to read the dialogue between Jesus and the two brothers in Mk. 10:35-40. (Let one person read the words of Jesus and another the words of James and John.)

2. Review the setting for this conversation between Jesus and the two disciples: (1) As Jesus marched resolutely toward Jerusalem (v. 32), his followers were "amazed" and "afraid" because they knew his enemies awaited him there. (2) Jesus had just taken the twelve aside and told them of his impending suffering and death (vv. 33-34). It is incredible that James and John would make such a request at this particular time, for two reasons: First, they seem to have been totally insensitive to Jesus' prediction of his suffering and death. (Imagine two sons of a businessman saying, upon learning that their father has terminal cancer, "Dad, can we be vice-presidents in the company when you die?") Second, their inquiry suggests that they didn't really believe what he had said about his suffering. (Perhaps they still held to the popular belief that, as an invincible Messiah, he would set himself up as ruler of an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem.)

3. Ask the class to interpret Jesus' response in v. 38. Share these thoughts: (1) Jesus might have been using familiar Old Testament imagery in his reference to "the cup that I drink" (see *Isaiah 51:17, 22, where the cup represents suffering*). (2) The best clue to his meaning is the prayer in Gethsemane (Mk. 14:36). (3) Interestingly, Jesus does not actually deny their request. Rather, he lets them know that status in the kingdom is based on one's sharing the cup of his suffering and being submerged in the baptism of his death. (*Point out that 2 Tim. 2:11-12 reflects this same truth.*)

4. Call attention to the reaction of the other disciples when they heard what James and John were up to (Mk. 10:41): FOR DISCUSSION: This dramatizes an age-old problem within Christian ranks, the jealousy and bad feelings generated as disciples compete with one another for power, status, and recognition. QUOTE: *"Power is a limited commodity. There is only so much to go around. Those who are in power want to protect their position; those who are out of power always want more. The prediction is sure. If power is a standard of greatness in any church or Christian organization, ambition will rule and jealousy will reign"* (David McKenna).

5. In a discussion of the implications of Jesus' teaching in Mk. 10:42-45, share these thoughts: (1) People who seek to achieve success by gaining power and status are employing the tactics of the secular world (v. 42); they are not following the example of Jesus (v. 45). (2) Greatness in the eyes of God is not to be sought. It comes through self-giving service to others. ILLUSTRATION: Cal Thomas has noted that the lifestyle of some of today's "big time" preachers stands in contrast to the teachings of Jesus: *"I have watched preachers at celebrity gatherings move through lobbies with their security details and public relations flacks carrying walkie-talkies. There is never time for these important leaders to mingle with the masses. They are constantly hurrying to news conferences and to meetings. It looks more like a presidential detail than a preacher greeting his flock"* (Thomas & Dobson, *Blinded by Might*, p. 83). (3) Serving others is rewarding in itself. Those who experience the satisfaction of participating in servanthood with Christ don't really need to achieve the symbols of success recognized by the secular world.

CLOSING THE LESSON

Point out that most people want to achieve success in life, but that our definitions of success vary widely. Ask class members to write down brief epitaphs by which they would like to be remembered. Invite them to share their epitaphs with the class.

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