



Next Steps Week 3
September 30, 2018

Welcome to week 3 of our series STEPS. Over the past couples of weeks we said that as Christians we are called to be followers or students of Jesus Christ. Church people call it *Discipleship*. *Discipleship* is about following Jesus Christ. It's a *journey*. And every journey is made up of *steps*.

And that's what this series is all about: the simple steps of discipleship. We said that successful discipleship all comes down to simple steps. They're not *easy* but they are entirely *simple*.

We have identified specific STEPS, each of which are, in fact, *life style choices* - choices that we think are essential to growing and strengthening our faith. We think that in order to grow in a relationship with Christ, a relationship in which he can change and transform us, these STEPS are all important to take.

As we've already noted the steps we are talking about are not obligations. As soon as you look at them that way you weaken their potential effectiveness. Neither are they simply more to do: none of you need more to do the steps we're talking about are aimed at *simplifying* not *complicating* your life.

STEPS is an acronym

S is about service in a ministry. Jesus called himself a servant and that's what he wants his followers to be.

T is about treasure and giving. God is generous. God is a giver and we can use our money to become more like him.

E is engage which is about small groups.
Faith is personal, not private.
It needs to be lived out in a community of people.

P is the practice of prayer and the sacraments.

S Lastly we talk about sharing our faith. our faith actually grows as we share this message with others.

Each week of this series we're looking at another step. And the step we're looking at this weekend is a great one. In fact, Jesus promises that this step is the *path* to greatness. Most, if not all of us, want to be great. We don't want to be mediocre or simply OK. Maybe not great in the sense of celebrity or fame and fortune but definitely in the sense of *best-in-class* kind of great.

Every mom here wants to be a great Mom, every dad wants to be a great dad. Every doctor, lawyer, engineer, and teacher wants to be great at their profession. Every business leader wants to have a great business. We all want to be great, in one way or another. If given the choice between being great and being mediocre we would rather be great. But, sometimes we may give up on greatness because it seems so elusive, and we are not sure we can achieve it, or it seems to come at too steep a cost, or, we've tried and failed.

At least that's the way we feel. You feel like we're failing because you're not making the money and enjoying the promotions you were expecting. You're finally acknowledging you do not have the skills you need.

Did you know that ultimately greatness is a choice? It's a step we can choose to take and we all have a shot at taking this step. To understand that choice and that step we are going to look at a passage from the ninth chapter of the Gospel of Mark, where he tells us, and it's from last week's Gospel

They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" Mark 9:33

While on this particular journey the disciples were apparently arguing with one another, kind of like the way your kids argue in the back seat. Jesus knows what the apostles were arguing about, but he questions them about it anyway, when they arrive home, to challenge them, and use it as an opportunity to teach them too. We find out *why* in the next verse:

But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest. Mark 9: 33

Their thinking was conditioned by the assumption that one day soon Jesus is going to be king. And, as part of his inner circle, his entourage, his posse,

they could all expect to enjoy positions of power and influence. But, human nature being what it is, that's not enough. They're arguing about who's going to get the *most* power and influence.

Here's something you need to know about the apostles and most of the early disciples. They didn't follow Jesus out of altruistic, self-less motives. They **weren't** doing it in pursuit of holiness or virtue. They didn't even understand that Jesus was going to suffer and die or that there would be persecutions and problems ahead. They followed Jesus because they thought he would one day be made king and that they would profit in worldly ways from that eventuality. And their discussion is all about who would profit most. And here, they're jockeying for position.

Matters of rank are incredibly important to people. This goes on all the time. Who is most important. Who gets the highest ranking? Who gets a first-class ticket. It happens in all realms of life. We love to make lists and rank people and then figure out where we are in the ranking. And that can be helpful, if it helps us clarify values and priorities it can also be destructive and debilitating.

In our flawed, fallen nature there is just this comparison trap we can fall into. We compare ourselves to others, and it is a trap, because it can make us feel bad about ourselves (if we fail in the comparison) or bad about someone else (if they do).

That's what's going on here. So, he sat down, called the Twelve and said...

If anyone wishes to be great...

Mark 9.35

Please don't miss this...

If... Mark 9.35

You want to be great. That's great. Jesus isn't against aiming at greatness. God wants you to be great too. Christianity, despite how it is sometimes portrayed, isn't this wimpy religion that seeks to water everything down into a shared mediocrity. Christianity is definitely about greatness. Discipleship is about greatness, by all means aim at greatness. It's just that Jesus takes the human definition of greatness, and turns it upside down.

If anyone wishes to be great, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.

Mark 9.35

Instead of being all about power *over* people, it's about power *for* people, - **to serve people**. True greatness becomes SERVING others. Greatness means leveraging my abilities and skills and opportunities and influence and any other advantages or resources or skills.... for the benefit and well - being of others.

Every act of service, large or small matters to God. And it actually takes faith to believe that, doesn't it? It takes faith to believe having a servant's heart matters, but it has also been verified through research. Learning to serve people who can do nothing for us is crucial to growing in faith. Service is an attitude of the heart that should certainly be put into practice every day of our lives when the opportunity presents itself.

But it is also something we must intentionally put on our schedules, and choose to do too. It needs to become a part of our life-style.

One of the five steps of discipleship is service. And we talk about service through Ministry. **When we say serve in *ministry*, we mean serve our church family, in our church family.** Give some of your time, from time to time or, better yet, on a regular basis in service to the church. Get up out of the *chairs* and serve the *parish*.

The welcome desk ministry- serving at the welcome desk creating a sense of welcome. Become a greeter just simply open the door for someone entering and greet them with a smile and warm welcome. The kids and teen ministry looking after the next generation through Children's Word, Kidzone, HERO, LIFT. The café ministry, make someone especially new feel welcome with a cup of coffee and a friendly smile. Think of signing up for music ministry to use your voice or your talent to play an instrument to praise God when we worship.

We've said from the beginning of this series that we're not trying to get everyone to take all 5 steps at once. But if ministry really is your next step you can get involved right after Mass, by meeting one of those ministers directly involved with that ministry, right after this Mass.

You can ask them questions about what they do, You will be able to sign up at the table or using one of the new electronic kiosks in the atrium, and we have refreshments immediately following the mass.

Stop say hello, ask questions have a bite to eat.

Ministry is about service in the parish. Ministry is a path to greatness.

We all want to be great. God wants us to be great. Discipleship is simply following the Lord, step by step, on the path of greatness. Its following the Lord step by step...In the direction of discipleship. A little bit more today than yesterday. A little bit more tomorrow than today. And in the process discovering a more successful great life.

