



DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENT OF SERVING

Thinking

Are you a golfer, or do you play some golf? Are you a baker, or do you do some baking from time to time? What really is the difference between *doing something* and *being something*?

Reflecting

As Jesus' followers wrestle with what it means to experience life with Him, they have to address this *doing* versus *being* kind of idea. See if you can pick up on it as you read their exchanges in Mark 9:33-35 and 10:42-45.

What are the followers of Jesus struggling with? What is seemingly foremost in their minds?

How does Jesus characterize "greatness" in the kingdom? What defines a kingdom-kind of life?

Why is this be the appropriate kingdom characteristic?

What would be different in the way we are called to understand life in the kingdom if Jesus had said, "Serve others at times" rather than "be a servant"?

Taking it to heart

Ultimately, what the disciples needed (and what we need) is a change of heart so that we really do see ourselves the way Jesus saw Himself: As a servant! What do you think is the biggest obstacle in your own soul to genuinely seeing yourself that way? What does Jesus need to do in your heart to free you to live as a servant?



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*The big picture*

In drawing our discussion of serving to a close, we want to underscore one final idea: Jesus does not call us simply to do servant-like things, He invites us to *be servants*. His invitation is more about a whole way of life—a way of *being*—than it is about a call to get busy *doing* servant-like things.

*Thinking*

The opening question should help clarify the reality that there is a difference between *doing* some particular thing and *being* someone who does such things. Feel free to draw on your own experience of the difference between the two if the examples of golf and baking don't quite connect with you or your group. The point, however, is simple. That you *do* something may not truly define you; but what you *are* will be reflected in what you do. And for Jesus, that is at the heart of how He thinks about serving.

*Reflecting*

When you turn to the passages, you will notice that we are drawing on two short passages from adjacent chapters in Mark. In a sense, they are both part of one ongoing conversation that Jesus was having with His followers.

Earlier in Mark 9, Jesus spoke to His followers about His imminent death (9:31-38); they didn't receive it very well! They were planning on a victory party and not a wake. And Jesus' rebuke of Peter for his resistance to Jesus' affirmation of His coming death would have still been ringing in their ears.

So when Jesus again speaks about His dying, it's not surprising that the disciples are reluctant to address their

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GROUP DISCUSSION

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MARK 9:33-35; 10:42-45

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questions to Jesus about what He meant. His dying just didn't fit into their picture of their own impending "greatness" (9:34). And, right there on the heels of their discussion of greatness, Jesus defines real greatness from the perspective of His kingdom: Real greatness is found in servants.

When the conversation is resumed in Mark 10, Jesus underscores the same idea. When it comes to measuring what matters in the kingdom, servanthood is the measuring stick.

There are a couple of things to make sure you don't overlook in your discussion. First, Jesus doesn't discourage the longing for "greatness." He doesn't say "Don't want to be great!" but only "Measure greatness correctly!"

Also notice how He actually speaks about servanthood. Jesus could have talked about "doing servant-like things." (Kind of like the recently popular "random acts of kindness" fad seen across the nation.) "Do something nice for someone" is *not* what Jesus is calling for. Pay attention to His language. He is not talking, primarily, about *doing something* but about *being a certain kind of person*. He wants us to "be" servants, not merely do servile things.

That takes us back to the opening question. Even those who don't see themselves as *servant* may, from time to time, do a servile thing. Even those who think they are above it all and who believe they deserve better than most of the people they know might, occasionally, serve another in some way (if it suits their own purposes and needs appropriately enough!). But that is very far removed from Jesus' call for us to *be servants*. Being a servant is an identity issue; it has to do with how I see myself. Doing servile things is a task; it has to do with what I choose to do when it fits into my life.

Lastly, pay attention to why being a servant is what characterizes life in the kingdom. Why is servanthood so critical? Simply put: The king of the kingdom is a servant so, to experience life with *Him*, one must embrace His kind of life. That is driven home by Jesus' explanation of why He "came into the world." Jesus' life as a servant is not merely a role He plays or a task He has adopted for a time; being a servant is an expression of Jesus' very essence. And that is what He wants for all His followers.

*Taking it to heart*

As you draw the discussion to a close and press on to the final question, draw on what you need to from our earlier discussions: Serving is not about "giving" to God or helping Him out but about our experiencing life with Him. Serving is giving ourselves away expecting nothing in return. Servanthood can be tasted both "within the walls" and "outside the walls." And, now, servanthood is not merely something we *do* but is something Jesus is shaping us to *be*. Honestly explore anything that hinders your full embrace of that call to *be* wholly transformed into a servant . . . like Him!