

THE KINGDOM KEY OF HUMILITY



LESSON 3 // THE PATH TO GREATNESS

Humility is an important key to growing in Christ. It opens doors of opportunity for us to receive God's grace (James 4:6) and to make an impact for His kingdom. Jesus gave us some valuable insight about this in the following teaching:

Mark 10:42-45 (NIV) *Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

In these verses Jesus speaks of becoming great. He wants us to aim for greatness, fulfilling the highest and best He has planned for us. Let's look at two aspects of this that we must understand in order to pursue true greatness in our lives.

1. **Servant-hearted humility is Jesus' way to greatness.**

Jesus makes it clear in Mark 10 that His way to greatness is very different than the way of the world. Those who are in charge ("rulers") in the world "exercise authority" and "lord it over" others. This is leadership by force from the top down.

Leadership in God's kingdom is about humble service to others. It's about giving rather than getting. It seeks the best for those who are served, rather than selfish gain for those who lead.

This is exactly what Christ did for us when He went to the cross! His greatness is in the humble pathway He took to Calvary to "give his life as a ransom for many." His leadership and influence flow from the amazing example of sacrificial giving He set before us.

This is the pathway to greatness Jesus calls us to follow. Notice two important words that express this calling in verses 43 and 44:

- *Servant.* The Greek word *diakonos* refers to someone who is a "table servant." This was how Jesus described Himself in Luke 22:27: "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."
- *Slave.* This Greek word (*doulos*) speaks of the relationship we have with Jesus as Lord. He is the Master and we are His slaves. We are to submit to Him and obey His Word as He provides direction and protection for our lives.

Greatness is not found in a position or title or recognition we receive. Jesus tells us that greatness is servanthood and submission to His will and ways.

2. Servant-hearted humility must be developed.

Being a servant and a slave requires humility. It doesn't come naturally to us to submit to God and serve Him and others. This requires:

- *God's grace.* We need His grace to follow the humble example and calling of Jesus in our daily walk with Him.
- *The Holy Spirit's power.* The Apostle Paul tells us that “no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3b). The Spirit gives us power to put to death our own desires and submit to the Lord.
- *Our brokenness.* Brokenness is essential for anyone who wants to be used by God. Like David, we cry out in brokenness when we realize our desperate need:

Psalm 51:10, 12b (TLB) *Create in me a new, clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts and right desires ... ¹² and make me willing to obey you.*

The process of breaking continues throughout our lives and makes us more tender, vulnerable, weak and dependent on the Lord. It leaves us with a positive sense of inadequacy that allows God's strength to prevail in and through us.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NIV) *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

- *Our willingness.* Although God supplies the power to submit and serve, we must be willing from our hearts to cooperate with Him.

1 Peter 5:2 (NIV) *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve.*

- *Our faith.* Without faith in Christ, we will not be willing to humble ourselves and serve Him.

Jesus' invitation in Mark 10 is to “whoever wants to become great among you” (verse 43). He is calling all of us as His followers to take up the challenge to be great like Him—humble servants who impact others for God's kingdom.

Discussion questions

1. Read Mark 10:42-45. How does Jesus describe greatness in these verses? How does this contrast with the world's view of greatness?
2. Read Psalm 51:10, 12 and 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. What do you learn from these verses about the value of brokenness in developing a heart of humility?
3. In what practical ways can you grow as a humble servant of Christ?