

Mark Study
Week Fourteen
Mark 9:47 – 10:23

Day One

47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48 where " 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' 49 Everyone will be salted with fire. 50 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

v. 47 – Jesus is once again reminding us to be ruthless with the sin in our lives and merciful with the frailties of others. Remember, these verses are still in the context of John wanting to stop the man from ministering who wasn't with them. Jesus is helping them with their priorities in life and He wants to help you with yours. Here is something you can use as a guideline, since it's easy to memorize and remember:

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

v. 48 – The issues we deal with in people's lives (and our own) have eternal consequences. We are talking about where people will spend eternity – in heaven or hell. I watch churches fight over silly, insignificant things, most of which are personal preferences and not mandates from God about church government, music and pastoral styles and care. In the scheme of things, those aspects of church life aren't worth the passion that many employ. We should be passionate about saving people from hell. **Do you agree?**

v. 49 – This is an interesting concept, especially introduced in this context. Jesus mentioned the fires of hell and then made a simple statement that everyone will be salted with fire. **What does this mean that we will all be salted with fire?** I wonder if it relates to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

v. 50 – As I asked in verse 49, how does this concept relate to the context? Jesus related it in this verse. We are to be tempered with fire so that we can get along with one another or "be at peace" as Jesus termed it. **How can fire temper our relationships?** It

certainly helps us to keep in mind that we are all in the same boat, so to speak. We are sons and daughters of the king and we are working out our salvation with fear and trembling (see Philippians 2:12-13). Remember, Jesus was still addressing John's desire to restrict someone who wasn't part of their team. Jesus urged John to be at peace with that man.

Day Two

1 Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them. 2 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3 "What did Moses command you?" he replied. 4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

v. 1 – Now Jesus went back to Judea proper on the west side of the Jordan River. As soon as He arrived, His celebrity status took over and the crowds flocked to hear Him. He began to teach them but the ever-present Pharisees were also there to test Him, trying to trick Him into a mis-statement or hoping to expose an incorrect doctrine—incorrect from their viewpoint, that is. Didn't those men have anything better to do than challenge Jesus? I guess not. These men were like self-appointed watch dogs over God and their beliefs. They thought God needed them to protect Him. He did not. God is big enough to take care of and defend Himself.

I no longer think I must correct every wrong I hear or see. I have learned to leave some of those things alone.

v. 2 – The Pharisees tested Jesus with a question about divorce. We find out from this that they had liberal divorce laws, all weighted to the man's favor. So they were curious if Jesus was going to support their views, which they equated with God's view on divorce. We must be careful not to get a view or opinion and then project that onto God, believing that He thinks like us.

These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you. But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face (Psalm 50:21).

Is that the case with any of your beliefs? Are you convinced that God thinks like you do? Are you sure that He does?

v. 3 – Jesus was thoroughly acquainted with the Law. After all, He was a Jew. As mentioned earlier, Jesus was the perfect missionary. He came to a foreign culture (from heaven) and became one of the people in every way and custom. Jesus was a good Jew! He thought like a Jew and was familiar with all the Jewish customs and laws. He embodied what Paul wrote later:

I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (1 Corinthians 9:22-23).

How well do you fit into the culture to which Jesus has sent you, whether church, national or business? Do you relate well to that culture or do you oppose it, being critical of it every chance you get? You can never help redeem something that you have already judged. If you don't believe me, consider Jonah's relationship with Nineveh.

v. 4 – So here we see that Moses permitted the Jews to write a certificate of divorce and send the wife away. The Pharisees had adopted this as God's point of view, since Moses said it. They obviously exercised this right regularly and thought God approved of their actions. We are about to find out that they were incorrect.

Day Three

5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

v. 5 – This is a phenomenal statement from Jesus. Moses did not issue his divorce decree, not as a directive from God, but as a concession due to the hard hearts of the men. As difficult as a woman's life became after divorce, it was for the woman's sake that Moses allowed divorce—so she could be free from a hard-hearted husband. This should have alerted the Pharisees that not everything they held as sacred and from God was actually from God!

When I read this, I want to know where else God has made adjustments based on the hardness of my heart! *Lord, open my eyes to where I think I am doing Your will when I am only following my own way!* As the psalmist wrote:

Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me (Psalm 19:12-13).

v. 6 – The New Testament has a lot to say about marriage and well it should. Marriage was and is God's idea, as Jesus pointed out by quoting Genesis. The goal of marriage is one flesh, not two people living under one roof. I have been married 32 years as I write, and I'm not sure I understand this concept. I think I did leave my father and mother, and seldom let them come before my wife. But that is only half the picture. I was not only to leave my parents but also to become one with my wife. This is why sexual infidelity is so serious, for it mars the physical expression of this one-flesh spiritual goal. Yet the one-flesh reality goes beyond just sexual union. It is spiritual.

vs. 7&8 – Here are some of the New Testament directives about marriage. Paul and the writers had a lot to say about this important topic and the Gentiles, who did not honor marriage from a biblical point of view, had a lot to learn from these verses. Modern secular society has a lot to learn as well:

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church? for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery? but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband (Ephesians 5:22-33).

v. 9 – God’s best is for one man and one woman to be joined for life. Yet divorce is not uncommon in the Christian world today. **How can we reconcile this?** While divorce is serious, it is not the unpardonable sin. We have a godly institution of marriage being carried out by imperfect, sinful people. Sometimes men and women stumble. We should hold a high view of marriage but offer grace, counseling and mercy to those who cannot hold to that standard. I always use Jesus’ meeting with the woman at the well in John 4 as an example. That woman lived with five husbands, yet Jesus reached out to her and ministered salvation and grace. We should do the same.

Day Four

10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery." 13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.

v. 10 – The disciples were obviously as surprised by Jesus’ statement about Moses’ divorce decree as I am. They had to question Jesus about this. **Are you questioning Jesus concerning something you don’t understand?** When you do, it’s called seeking the Lord. You seek Him until you have answers, no matter how long it takes.

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God (Proverbs 2:1-5).

Notice the process outlined in Proverbs 2. **What do you have to do to get wisdom and understanding? Are you willing to do that?**

v. 11 – Jesus set a high standard here and I subscribe to it. This is not all the Bible has to say about divorce, however, and I think we must look at it all before we finalize our policy and attitude toward divorce. **What is your attitude toward it? What do you believe the church should do with divorced people, especially those who divorce as Christians?**

v. 13 – **Do you see a pattern here?** First, John wanted to “send away” the man who was casting out demons but not one of Jesus’ core group. Then Jesus addressed the culture of the day’s custom of “sending away” wives through divorce. Now He confronted the fact that His disciples were trying to “send away” the children who wanted to touch Jesus. The church’s role isn’t to send people away from Jesus, but to draw people to Jesus. I think we have gotten this mixed up from time to time, or at least I have.

The disciples were often Jesus’ ushers. Some would designate them “armor bearers” – those closest to Him who were to help Him carry out His mission. They weren’t helping, though, because they spent some of their time hindering Jesus’ ability to seek and save the lost. **What about you? Are you helping Jesus’ carry out His mission, or are you an obstacle at times?**

I had to face the fact that, even though I am a man of God, there are times I don’t like people. Jesus, however, likes people. I therefore have to adjust (or should adjust) my attitude to be the same as His. At times, I have had to ask Him to help me. At other times, I have resisted His help.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (Philippians 2:5-7).

My walk with Jesus is for me to be like Him, not to try and fashion my image of Him according to my own preferences or desires. One of the original commandments forbade any false god—that includes mental as well as physical gods. I must worship and serve God as He is, not as I want Him to be.

Day Five

14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. 17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

v. 14 – Jesus got angry! Anger is not a sin. It’s what we do with anger that deems it a normal emotion or sinful. Jesus allowed His anger to do the correct thing: He confronted the disciples. **How often don’t you say anything because your anger, only to have your anger fester and burn inside you?** Note what Paul said about anger:

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold (Ephesians 4:25-28).

Jesus said the Kingdom belonged to people like those children! **What does that mean? How can you be more childlike in your approach to Jesus?**

v. 15 – Jesus went on to say that those who can’t receive the Kingdom like a child will never enter it! *Help me, Lord! I want to enter your government, so I need to learn to be like a child all over again.*

I think that is the problem with so many—we grew up too soon. The problem may be that we grew up at all. We lost our youthful zeal, our zest for life, our ability to have fun and allowed the cares of this world to wear us down. **Does a child worry about his or her next meal? Does a child pay that much attention to time? Does a child get formal with parents or siblings? The answer to all these questions is no. How can we apply those same attitudes and behaviors to the church today?**

v. 16 – Jesus sought to touch the children and bless them. He imparted a blessing through physical touch. I have heard that babies need touching. If they don’t get it, they don’t develop emotionally and even physically. If we are to be like children in the Kingdom, then we need touch as well. **Do you touch (appropriately of course) your brothers and sisters in the Kingdom? Do you allow Jesus to touch you and impart a blessing? Why or why not?**

I have to work on this, for my tendency is to stay within my private space, not venturing out or inviting anyone else in. **What can you do to touch and impart a blessing to more people? What can you do to receive your blessing by the same means?**

v. 17 – Finally, someone had access to Jesus without interference! He ran up to Jesus and fell on his knees, an act of respect, reverence and worship. This looked like a good start to an encounter with the Son of God but, as it turns out, it was a false start. The man’s externals were in order, but we will see that his heart was wrong. Externals are important, but without the right heart, they are useless

Day Six

18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" 20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

v. 18 – The young man obviously didn't fully understand the implications of what he was saying, for he called Jesus good. Jesus pointed out that only God is good. **Was Jesus checking to see if this young man had revelation from the Father as to who He [Jesus] was?** I don't think this young man knew who Jesus really was. I think he was just being overly polite or officious, perhaps in the hope of gaining some kind of favor with Jesus.

v. 19 – The man not only looked good in the kneeling position, but he asked the right question about what he must do to inherit eternal life. I think, however, that there was a hint of his problem in his question. He wanted to know what he had to do to gain eternal life. Jesus came to give eternal life as a gift, and that was and is hard for some to accept. They wanted to earn their salvation by a system of works and rules.

Jesus responded according to the prevailing attitude of the day. He told the man to keep the commandments and behave himself. Jesus gave him six of the ten commandments and said no more.

v. 20 – This man was moral for he had kept the commandments since he was a old enough to remember. Yet the young man must have sensed that something was missing. Behaving yourself isn't enough to gain eternal life. There are people who have not done any major act of sin, not because they love God but because they don't want to get caught. This verse in Revelation has always intrigued me:

But *the cowardly*, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars ? their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death” (Revelation 21:8 emphasis added).

The fearful will go in to the lake of fire. Why? I guess they were afraid of getting caught doing something wrong but never let God deal with their heart that wanted to do something wrong. **Does that make sense?** While not doing wrong is the first step in morality and righteousness, God requires a clean heart. That can only come by someone surrendering to the work of the Spirit that creates a clean heart and mind by His power.

Are you settling for outward righteousness only, or are you doing the hard internal work while you insure that your outward behavior is in line with the Lord's commands?

Day Seven

21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. 23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

v. 21 – Jesus looked at this man with love and then told him the truth about his spiritual condition. While the man had kept the commandments, he now needed to follow Jesus and divest himself of the riches that had a hold on his life. It is hard to tell others the truth, not because we don't want them to feel bad, but we don't want to be around when they feel bad. So we don't fulfill what Paul commanded us to do:

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ (Ephesians 4:15).

We don't have to brutally deliver the truth, but there are times when we must have the courage to speak honestly, just like Jesus did in this case. **Is there someone or some situation where you have not been honest and need to be in the near future? Do you have the courage to do so?**

v. 22 – The man was visibly moved by what Jesus said. **Do you watch how people respond and not just hear what they say?** We are a total package where communication is concerned. It's not just our voice, but our inflection, facial expressions, body language and volume emphasis. This is why email and phone conversations can limit comprehension. Furthermore, this is why I prefer as many face-to-face meetings as possible.

Does your stuff own you or do you own your stuff? If your stuff owns you, then you could react like this young man if Jesus told you to get rid of it. I just lost a very good pen, but I refuse to give it any thought. I loaned it to someone, they took it with them and then lost it. It's only a pen. I owned it, it didn't own me.

If you have money or possessions, you aren't in sin or doing anything wrong. Just use them as God directs:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

v. 23 – The Jews then felt that if someone was rich, it was God's blessing on their lives as promised in the covenant of Deuteronomy 28. Then Jesus told them that it was difficult for the rich to come under God's government, and they had just seen an example of what Jesus said. The man was probably sorry he had asked, feeling that Jesus was going to confirm what the man was already doing (or not doing). Yet Jesus took it one step further and the man went away sad. What's more, the disciples were shocked.

Are you using your possessions, no matter how many or few, to build yourself treasures in heaven? I have a rule that if I haven't used something in 12 months, I get

rid of it. **When in doubt, throw it out, is what I always say. Do you have too much stuff? Do you need to give some of it away? To whom? When?**