

**Mark Study**  
**Week Fifteen**  
**Mark 10:24 - 52**

**Day One**

24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" 27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

v. 24 – Jesus was talking about the rich in this verse. I asked in the previous study and I will ask again: **Do you own your stuff or does your stuff own you?** One of the problems with being rich is that it requires so much money and effort to keep the riches. You need attorneys, accountants, advisers and investment counselors. That can take a lot of time and effort away from the kingdom of God!

**What is the kingdom of God?** Simply put, it is God's government in your life and the life of the body of people of which you are a part. It is the visible expression of God's rule in your life. Money can interfere with God's authority and supremacy, for He wants to direct you to use and distribute your wealth as He sees fit, not as you or your advisers see fit.

v. 25 – The eye of a needle was the opening in a city gate that was high enough for a person to walk through, but not high enough for anyone on an animal to go through, for security reasons. A camel could not get through that small opening and the rich cannot come through the entrance into God's kingdom without shedding some of the baggage that won't fit through the opening. There is nothing wrong with wealth or riches, as long as they are used 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. 26 – Remember, the disciples were conditioned to think that someone who had wealth was blessed of God. This was according to the very covenant promises that God had made.

But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Now Jesus was saying that the “rules of engagement” with God had changed. The disciples were a bit unnerved by this talk, and wondered then who could be saved if it was hard for the rich to be. Of course, Jesus had already declared that the poor had it all over the rich when it came to favor and the things of God!

The poor have always responded more freely to the gospel than the rich.

Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? (James 2:5-7).

v. 27 – Yet Jesus summarized His encounter with the rich young ruler by declaring that God is able to save the rich and poor, even though the former were a more difficult group to save. No one is beyond the reach of God’s touch of grace. **Is there anyone you have been trusting God to save, but that person seems like a tough case?** Trust God for He can do a work in their life that will answer your prayer.

## Day Two

28 Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" 29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

v. 28 – Peter then reminded Jesus that they had left everything to follow Him. **I wonder what their families thought of that?** I’m sure they thought Peter and the rest were out of their minds, just like Jesus’ family thought He was. There is no other way to follow Jesus, however, as He had just indicated in the lesson with the rich young man. You can’t bring anything with you that will rival your affections for Jesus. **Is that the case in your life?**

v. 29 – Jesus had to constantly remind the people that He spoke truth because what He said sounded so untrue. **Why?** The standard of truth was so low that, when Jesus raised it, the people thought He was speaking foolishness. Note here that Jesus did not say that those who gave up everything to follow Him were radicals or fanatics. He did not tell them to get a grip and stop going overboard. No, Jesus indicated that God was pleased with those who had abandoned everything to follow Jesus. He even indicated that those who had put Him ahead of their family were on the right path.

v. 30 – God is a debtor to no man. He pays all His debts and fulfills all His promises. The Lord will repay one-hundred fold whatever anyone has to give up to follow Jesus.

Imagine a one-hundred fold return! You can't get that kind of return on many other investments. **So what are you willing to invest to enter God's kingdom, knowing that you will get such a fabulous return?**

The downside is that there will also be persecutions along with the great return. Some will say your return is due to your alliance with evil and others will say that you have what you do because you lack integrity. The ultimate reward, however, is eternal life! Every human will live forever; it's where they will spend eternity that is the key issue. And here Jesus is referencing eternal life with Him-the ultimate reward! **Where will you spend eternity?** I trust that it is with Jesus!

### Day Three

32 They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. 33 "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, 34 who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

v. 32 – Here we have a *wow 12*. Remember, we are tracking how often people were amazed, afraid or astonished when they encountered Jesus and this is the twelfth reference in Mark. This is a peculiar aspect of Mark's gospel, for he is the only one who highlights this particular response to Jesus' teaching and presence. Here the disciples were astonished but those who followed at a distance were afraid. Anyone who thinks following Jesus is an easy task or without its challenging moments is naïve.

Because Jesus told the truth about his impending suffering and death, those closest to Him were quite confused and fearful. **How could this man who they were coming to believe was the Messiah would die such a shameful death?** It is important that you not decide at any point what God will and will not do. You don't really know, so you should just leave it in His hands.

vs. 33&34 – Jesus was clear and specific about what was going to happen to Him. It is no small wonder that the Twelve did not react with more understanding when it all eventually happened, for they were told about it in graphic detail. Yet they did not want to believe it was going to happen after they had also left everything to follow Jesus. They had no concept of the resurrection, so they probably thought everything was over if Jesus died.

Jesus knew what was going to happen to Him long before it happened. Yet He still ministered, healed, delivered and blessed. I have trouble being gracious *after* something bad happens to me, but Jesus did good knowing that something evil was *going* to happen to Him.

## Day Four

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." 36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. 37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." 38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" 39 "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

v. 35 – James and John tried to do an “end run” on the other disciples, coming to Jesus to secure an honored position among the group. They tried to obtain a promise from Jesus to do what they asked *before* He knew what they were going to ask. That was sneaky and manipulative. They were asking Jesus to trust them, yet had never proved themselves trustworthy. Just a few verses ago, John wanted to shut down someone who was ministering and now these two tried to secure a place of prominence without the others knowing.

This gives me hope. **How, you may ask?** If Jesus could use these men, shaping and training them to change the world, then He can use me. I have the same mix of self-interest and selfishness as they did, yet they all gave their lives to advance the kingdom of God. They were diamonds-in-the-rough, but God worked and made them into real gems! That means there is hope for me, and for you, too!

v. 36 – You have read that I would like to start a movement entitled, “What would Jesus ask?” Here is one of those profound questions that only Jesus could ask. “What do you want me to do for you?” If Jesus asked you that question today, what would your answer be? What would you ask for?

v. 37 – James and John asked for prominent places on either side of Jesus when He came into His glory. They did not know what they were asking, for their idea of God’s glory was more in line with a monarchy similar to King David’s. They had just heard Jesus tell them about His death, yet they were so into their own prayer agenda that they immediately vied for position and authority. Jesus’ brother James warned against this attitude and tendency:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness (James 3:13-18).

v. 38 – Jesus asked them if they could pay the price that He was about to pay, which was in terms of suffering, death and resurrection. They answered that they could. I don't really think that they understood what He was asking. They were willing to pay any price for leadership, yet they could not comprehend the price that Jesus was to pay or that they would ultimately pay. But they did answer correctly, even if it was in ignorance.

v. 39 – The men said they could indeed pay that price and they were right, without realizing what they were saying. In hindsight, we know that they did pay the price since tradition tells us that all the Twelve but one gave their lives as martyrs (John was the one, not including Judas). Jesus concurred that they would pay the price. **What price are you willing to pay for discipleship?** I always go back to Philippians and meditate on the price described there:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 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 2:3-7).

v. 40 – Jesus was not in the business of distributing tribute or patronage based on those who were closest to Him. The kingdom of God is not a political entity but a spiritual one. The positions and gifts are given according to God's sovereign grace and not according to the whims and fancies of men.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14).

**What did you learn from today's passage? How can you apply it to your daily walk with Christ?**

### Day Five

41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. 42 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."

v. 41 – The other ten got wind of what James and John had asked. **I wonder how they found out? Did someone overhear their request?** I doubt if Jesus told anyone. You never operate in a vacuum; there are always people around and you can be sure that your sins will find you out!

The others were indignant, perhaps because James and John had asked for something they wanted for themselves but were afraid to ask! It is so easy to be offended when you are working with people, for we are all so blind and insensitive to others. **Why would the Bible constantly remind us to forgive one another if we didn't need to constantly be forgiving one another?**

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity (Colossians 3:13-14).

**Is there anyone with whom you are indignant whom you need to forgive?**

v. 42 – As was His custom, Jesus turned this awkward moment into a teaching opportunity. He gathered the Twelve and imparted a leadership lesson, which incorporated His leadership philosophy. Gentile rulers (and those in Israel) were accustomed to lording their authority and position over their followers. This was accepted then and is accepted now as the standard. As one man said, the leaders at the top do the thinking and the people at the bottom get thank!

vs. 43&44 – Notice Jesus didn't say to do a better job than the Gentile rulers. He told His followers that they could not be like those rulers at all! Jesus' leaders could not follow in the steps of Gentile leaders. **What is the hallmark of Jesus' leaders?** It is service to those who follow, and not the other way around. This is difficult for most leaders to comprehend, because they interpret this as weakness and are afraid that their leadership will be diluted or rendered ineffective if they serve. So instead, many Christian leaders try to become benevolent dictators, but dictators nonetheless. This isn't what Jesus was talking about.

Jesus went so far as to refer to His leaders as slaves of those who follow. What a contrast to the standard we have come to know, accept and even expect from leaders. **How does this picture of leadership make you feel? What are the drawbacks? Do you think it possible to be a strong leader and follow the pattern that Jesus outlined here? Why don't you think more leaders talk about and incorporate this leadership philosophy? Why don't you?**

v. 45 – There are many great leaders to learn from and emulate. Yet Jesus is our model for leadership and not Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy or Nelson Mandela. Those men were great leaders, but we can learn some things from them. Jesus is our standard, however, and He isn't asking leaders to do anything that He didn't do. He gave His life a ransom for many.

Many people confuse being polite with this picture of servant-leadership that Jesus portrayed. Being polite isn't the goal; serving people's highest priority needs is. Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve. That is profound.

When I come to Africa, I try not to use too many people to help me do what I do. Why? I did not come to be served but to serve! I came to help people and not have people help me. Now there are times when I cannot help but use people to accomplish what I am doing. When this happens, I try to pay them, or recognize their sacrifice in some other way, or insure that they are doing this because they want to and not because they are compelled by me, culture, their leaders or their need to be needed.

### **Day Six**

46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

v. 46 – I have been to Jericho, the lowest city on the face of the earth! That makes it super hot most of the year. It is dusty and not an attractive place at all. So as they were leaving, blind Bartimaeus was sitting by the roadside in that desert town. What an unpleasant position to be in!

When I was growing up, I remember blind beggars on the side of our streets in Pittsburgh. They had signs asking people to help them. Some had a cup of pencils and you were to take a pencil in return for your gift. As a young child, I was afraid of those beggars and I never saw my parents give them anything. Every now and then I would see someone put a coin into their cup and I was fascinated.

Then a few years ago I was in India and the beggars were such pitiful creatures, with legs as thin as those pencils that my hometown beggars used to dispense. You could not pull out any money and give to them, for before you knew it, you would be surrounded by many others, pulling on your clothes and holding out emaciated hands.

I am sure the dynamics were the same during Jesus' time. Beggars were avoided by most people, pitied by some, and helped by a few. Yet in some sense, Bartimaeus represented our spiritual condition – blind, poor and in desperate need of help. Let's read on and see what happened next.

v. 47 – The man may have been blind, but he could hear—and he heard that Jesus was passing by. You may not have all you need but use what you have to come closer to God. He also had a voice so he began shouting after Jesus. This was his moment and he was not going to let it pass. He yelled at the top of his voice, uncertain whether anyone heard or was responding, since he could not see. I think that is called faith—calling in the darkness, not sure if God hears, cares or will respond.

v. 48 – The crowd tried to settle down the blind man, rebuking him and telling him to be quiet. He would not do so, however. He was not concerned with what people thought

about him at this point. He was more concerned with getting God's attention than He was in pleasing those around him.

**Is this your attitude toward God? Do you seek Him with all your heart, or do you let what other people think about you affect your worship, prayer, giving or devotional habits?** Here are some verses that may help you:

Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you (Psalm 9:10).

My heart says of you, "Seek his face! Your face, Lord, I will seek" (Psalm 27:8).

The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing (Psalm 34:10).

### **Day Seven**

49 Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." 50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. 51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." 52 "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

v. 49 – Good news! Jesus heard him and requested an audience. Now the people changed their tune and told the blind man to cheer up. Jesus was calling for him; it was no longer the other way around. That is our goal; to be summoned into God's presence!

v. 50 – Bartimaeus did not hesitate, but threw on his cloak and jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. Probably he had someone lead him, but he wasn't going to miss this opportunity. **Do you have that urgency today to run to God, just as you are, to see what He can give you?**

v. 51 – **This is an interesting question, don't you think? It would be obvious that the man wanted to see, or did he?** We were at dinner last night on a houseboat and we played a question game. We pulled questions out of a hat and we had to answer, no matter what the question was. One woman drew, "What one goal do you have that still isn't fulfilled?" She could not answer! I think that question was a variation of the question that Jesus asked Bartimaeus. **How would you answer that question if Jesus asked you today? What do you want Him to help you do, or what do you need from Him that only He can do?**

Bartimaeus had his answer ready. He had not made peace with his blindness or accepted it as his lot in life. Without hesitation, he responded that he wanted to see. He wasn't content with an audience with Jesus; he wanted Jesus' healing touch.

v. 52 – Jesus did not say that He had healed the man. Instead He said that Bartimaeus’ faith had healed him! **Am I making too much of that point?** And notice that Jesus commanded that the man step out and “go.” As I have pointed out again and again, faith without action is dead as James told us in James 2:17. First, he had to *come* to Jesus and then he had to *go* to receive his healing. Jesus had him coming and going!

What a scene! The man was healed of his blindness instantly and began to follow Jesus on the road. What excitement there must have been! What joy and amazement! No wonder the people were astonished and fearful around Jesus. He took impossible human situations and turned them around with a word. The things impossible with and for man were simple for God!

There were some who were healed and left Jesus, but this man followed Him on the road. I wonder what happened to Bartimaeus. How long did he follow Jesus? Did he tell his story to others? What did his family think?

Jesus has done so much for me. I don’t want to walk with Him for a while and then fade away. I want to follow Him all of my days and return to Him some of what He has given to me.