



“Whoever wants to become great... must become a servant”

Mark 10:43

The Power Grab

What were these guys thinking? Talk about not “reading the room.” Talk about tone deaf. And to make matters worse, their mother was egging them on. It was usually Peter who put his foot in his mouth. But this time it was his buddies, James and John, who Jesus named the Sons of Thunder.

Jesus had just finished telling the disciples for the third time that he was going to die in Jerusalem and be raised from the dead. But this time, as recorded in Mark 10:35-40, was different. Jesus had explained in graphic detail about the horrible torture and death he was facing.

But into this solemn, sad moment, James and John blurted out, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” The account in Matthew 20 says that their mother made this outrageous request. Then they said they wanted to be co-rulers with him in his kingdom. They wanted to jump the political line and be in front of the others.

Imagine! While Jesus was preparing himself and his disciples for rejection, humiliation, and death, his closest companions jockeyed for positions of power in his future administration as King of Israel. They could envision Jesus being feted with a ticker tape parade after defeating the Romans. And they wanted to be on the podium with him.

Redefining Power

For months, Jesus had been teaching them that being his disciple meant denying yourself and following his agenda rather than your own. He repeatedly told them that the secret to the Kingdom of God was not to be first and most powerful, but to be last. Not to be served, but to serve. Clearly, they missed the whole point of Jesus’ teaching.

So Jesus repeated to them that the Kingdom of God functions in the opposite way from the world. He reminded them that the world tells us to seek power and use it to lord it over those with less power. But he said, “Not so with you. Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant...and the slave of all.” (Mark 10:43-44)

Jesus ended this lesson by declaring himself as the CSO – Chief Serving Officer when he said, “Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45) Imagine, the Son of God chose to describe himself as a servant. As a slave in the service of others. Not as a king or ruler.

Our Power Struggle

Someone once noted that “Nowhere do the ethics of the Kingdom of God clash more vigorously with the ethics of the world than in the matters of power and service.” So how is this power struggle working out in your life? Here are a couple of thoughts that might help your discipleship pathway.

Want-Must: Jesus repeatedly tells the disciples and us that if we WANT xxx, we MUST xxx. This WANT - MUST formula is true throughout life. If I want to lose ten pounds, I must eat better, and so on. But Jesus makes this a spiritual formula.

What is your WANT - MUST? Take a minute and jot down your deepest WANTS, and what you MUST do to attain them. Then ask God to guide you toward them or away from them as it suits His purposes.

Servanthood: Jesus’ model of being a servant means voluntarily placing yourself at another's service. Who can you serve today? Perhaps someone close to you, like a spouse or child. Perhaps it is a total stranger.

What would it look like if you treated every encounter as an appointment that God prearranged? That every person you meet is there to allow you to serve their needs rather than being served by them?

Remember, Jesus came to serve you by dying for you. When we serve others, they will begin to see Jesus in us.



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