

TRUE GREATNESS

Mark 10:35-45

GREATNESS



What definition and image come to mind?

What does it take to achieve it?

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” **36** And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” **37** And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” **38** Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

MARK 10:35-45

39 And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, **40** but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” **41** And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. **42** And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

MARK 10:35-45

43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

MARK 10:35-45

The Request

- James and John request positions of status in an earthly kingdom
 - They wanted prominence and honor
- But Jesus was talking about the eternal kingdom
 - The kingdom of God

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." 36 And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" 37 And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."

MARK 4:35-37



Jesus' Response

- Do you know what you're asking? Are you prepared?
 - Illustrations: cup and baptism
 - Cup is a symbol used to describe suffering, hurt, or trial (Jer. 49:12) and God's judgement (Ps. 75:8, Mt. 26:39)
 - Baptism here communicates the concept of being submerged and immersed in suffering (Ps. 42)

38 *Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"*

39 *And they said to him, "We are able..."*

MARK 4:38-39



4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

ISAIAH 53:4-5

Jesus' Response

- You will indeed face suffering and judgment...but who sits where, that's not my decision
 - Jesus isn't DENYING the authority, He's DEFERING the authority to God the Father

39 The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.

MARK 4:39-40



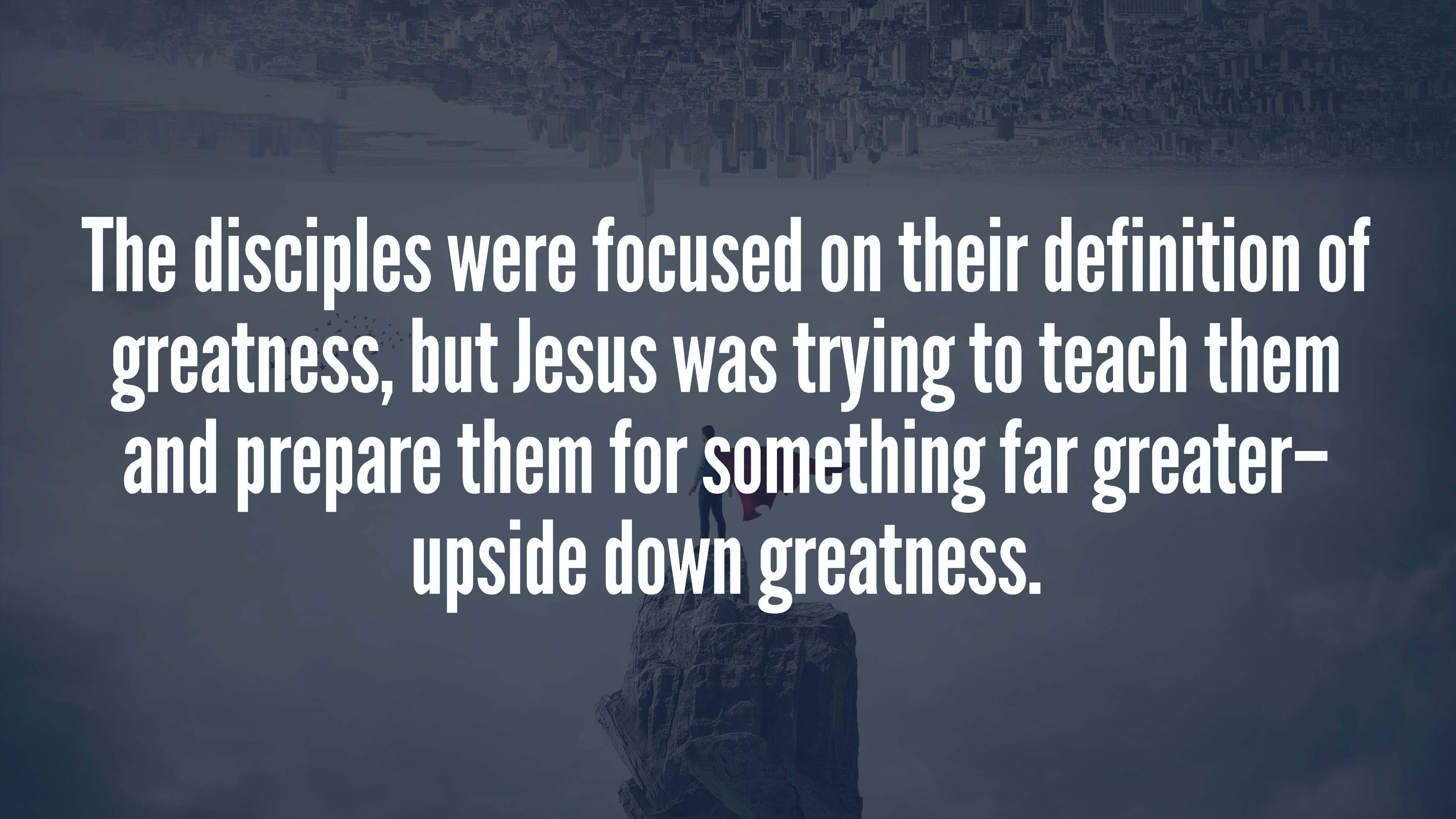
Disciple's Reactions

- The other disciples were unhappy and displeased
 - Why should James and John get to drink from this cup?!
- But they were not fully comprehending what Jesus was really talking about
 - They were focusing on physical positions, not spiritual realities
 - “My kingdom is not of this world.” -John 18:36

And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.

MARK 4:39-41





The disciples were focused on their definition of greatness, but Jesus was trying to teach them and prepare them for something far greater—upside down greatness.

True Greatness Defined

- People in this world who are great (by worldly definitions) abuse and flaunt their authority, but for disciples of Jesus, it will be different
 - **Because if you want to be truly great, you must be a servant**

42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all."

MARK 4:42-44



True greatness is not achieved by putting others down, but by radically, humbly serving others.

Greatness is not about looking inward...it's about looking outward.



True Greatness

- **If you want to be truly great, you must sacrificially serve others...regardless of your own interests**
- If you want to be great, see yourself as last
- If you want to be great, be willing to sacrificially serve others
- If you want to be great, you must pursue humility, counting others worth more than yourself
 - Consider your motivations, too
 - *“People may be pure in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their motives.” -Proverbs 16:2*



**DOES YOUR LIFE REFLECT THAT OF
HUMBLE, CHRIST-HONORING
SERVICE?**



True Greatness Exemplified

- **When it comes to true greatness, Jesus is the perfect example**
 - He is the perfect, spotless Lamb, to serve as the sacrifice for your sins
 - Jesus stood in the way of the judgment that was coming for you
- He is the one who stands in the place of guilty sinners and offers Himself as a substitute for them

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

MARK 4:45



3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-8

True Greatness Exemplified

- Jesus emptied himself, taking the form of a servant
- Jesus didn't use His position for His own benefit
- His exaltation comes because of His humility
- This is what every follower of Jesus should be seeking to imitate
 - **True disciples of Jesus must think in terms of selfless sacrifice...not self-glory**

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

ROMANS 5:8



How can we humbly serve others?

- **Pray for each other** (Ephesians 6:18)
- **Share and give to those in need** (Hebrews 13:16)
- **Give encouragement** (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- **Work with intentionality and joy** (Philippians 2:14-15)
- **Fight against the culture pressure to be self-focused, self-centered, and self-promoting** (Colossians 2:6-8)
- **Share God's Word with others** (Psalm 96:3)
- **Share the Gospel** (Matthew 28:19-20)
- **Genuinely listen to others** (James 1:19)
- **Anticipate serving** (Galatians 6:9)
- **Love others genuinely** (Romans 12:9)
- **Give GOD the glory, not yourself** (1 Corinthians 10:31)



2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, **and you will be like God**, knowing good and evil.”

GENESIS 3:2-5

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 **Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.** 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered him, "**What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.**"

JOHN 13:1-7

True greatness requires humble, sacrificial service, expecting nothing in return...all in the name of Jesus Christ.

Questions to reflect on:

- What are you willing to sacrifice to love and serve others like Jesus?
- Are you pursuing selfishness, or Christ-like service?
- Are you giving in to pride? Or giving up your ways for Christ's ways?
- If you have any kind of status, do you lord it over people? Or use it to serve others and faithfully seek to build the Kingdom of God?
- What are your true heart motives when serving others?



As we look to Jesus' perfect example of sacrifice, let's sacrificially serve others, and pursue true, Christ-like greatness this new year.