

# GOING DEEPER

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

September 28, 2014



# JESUS SAYS

# Discussion Guide

## Use power to serve

Mark 10.35-45

### Connecting:

45 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a way of connecting with one another so that you might partner in the work God is doing in your lives.)

- In what ways did God move in your life this week? In what ways did you respond to him?
- What was your biggest challenge this week? In what ways, if any, did you invite God into this challenge?
- How honest have you been with us? (Graciously thank group members for their honesty if they answer that they have held back.)

### Getting Started:

10 minutes

- Are you a person who likes to get your way? What happens if you do not get your way?

### Diving Into the Text:

60 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a simple road map through the text. Feel free to use these questions in ways that best fit your group and the dynamics of your own meeting.)

- Use the notes to explain the background of the title “Son of Man” and to explain the context of the passage.
- Read Mark 10.35-45 aloud, slowly. Pause. Read the passage once more, aloud, slowly, trying to imagine yourself present, watching the scene unfold.
- As you watch the scene unfold, what stands out to you? Can you elaborate?

- In the text, what are the competing agendas and ideas of how to use power to accomplish these agendas?
- What agendas do Christians today have? In what ways do they use power to accomplish these agendas? Do you see any similarities or differences with what you find in the text?
- Have you ever experienced someone use their power over you to accomplish their agenda? What did this feel like?
- Jesus encourages his followers to use their power to serve others so that his kingdom agenda might be accomplished. Does this seem practical to you? Could you elaborate?
- What might it look like for the Church to use its power to serve so that Jesus’ kingdom agenda might be accomplished? How might this be the same or different from how the Church is now using its power?
- What might this look like for you in practical terms? What, if anything, prevents you from following Jesus in his example of service?
- Conclude your time together in prayer for the Church and for one another.

### Context and Background

#### *Son of Man*

Throughout his ministry, Jesus commonly referred to himself as the Son of Man (Matthew 20.18; 24.30, 44; Mark 14.62; Luke 18.8; John 3.14). This phrase had deep messianic roots within the Old Testament, roots which are found in Daniel 7. In Daniel 7, Daniel has an eschatological (end time) vision of various nations causing turmoil and suffering upon earth (Daniel 7.1-8, 16-17). However, the power of these kingdoms is checked by God when he comes to establish his kingdom and exact judgment upon the earth (Daniel 7.9-10). In the establishment of God’s kingdom, one who is the “son of man” appears, “coming with the clouds

of heaven" (Daniel 7.13). This Son of Man is granted authority, glory, and sovereign power by God with the result being that all nations come and worship him and participate in his everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7.14). While the Son of Man is certainly the head of this kingdom, God's holy people are seen as participants, partaking in the reign of this Son of Man (Daniel 7.17).

Jesus plainly understood his ministry and mission to be the fulfillment of this prophecy as he described his ministry with a quotation from Daniel 7 (Mark 14.62). Jesus' frequent use of the title "Son of Man" coupled with his own description of his ministry in the terms of Daniel 7 would not have been missed by those closest to him. They clearly would have understood Jesus to be claiming that he was the one sent by God to be part of God's judgment and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. In their minds, Jesus was one who would have very real power and authority as he was marked with the glory of God. The disciples would have understood this to be a real and tangible kingdom, something we can sense behind their questions in Acts (Acts 1.6). What is important to note is that Jesus did not dismiss the idea that he had the glory of God or that he had very real power and authority (John 17.24). What Jesus did change was the understanding of how power and authority were to be properly used. Rather than using power and authority to subdue and control, something the disciples certainly longed for with regard to Rome, Jesus chose to use his power and authority to serve and encouraged his disciples to do the same (Mark 9.35; 10.42-45). The Son of Man was coming to establish a kingdom, but he would do it through service.

## The Text

### Mark 10.35-40: Enter the kingdom

Jesus' interaction with his disciples is during his final journey to Jerusalem (Mark 10.32). Jesus has been clear that this journey will end in his death at the hand of the Gentiles (Mark 8.31-32; 9.30-32; 10.33-34). This disciples have heard Jesus' teaching, repeatedly, and have struggled to understand (Mark 8.32-33; 9.32). In part, their misunderstanding was probably rooted in their understanding of Jesus' claim to be the Son of Man. In their minds, Jesus was the promised

Messiah who would establish God's kingdom with might and power. (See Son of Man.) Jesus' statement that he would suffer and die did not fit in their interpretation of the prophecy of Daniel 7.

After some time and repeated teaching about the upcoming events in Jerusalem, James and John appear to grasp what Jesus is saying. Somehow Jesus' death is part of his taking up the mantle of God's glory, power, and authority. This is how the kingdom enters. Grasping this truth, James and John request to have positions of power in the coming kingdom. They wish to sit at Jesus' right and left hand, thus making them the next most powerful people in Jesus' kingdom.

What is clear is that John and James understand that Jesus will reign. It is also clear that they desire great power and authority. However, Jesus wants to make sure they understand the path to power involves suffering. To enter the kingdom requires that one share his cup and experience his baptism. Jesus uses the term cup metaphorically in keeping with the Old Testament imagery of one's lot provided by God which could be blessing but equally judgment (Psalm 23.5; 16.5; 75.8; Job 21.20). James and John appear to grasp the idea that entering the kingdom requires suffering. After all, this was a central part of Jesus' teaching (Matthew 5.10-12; Mark 8.34-36). These two men are willing to suffer, like Jesus, in order to obtain a measure of his power and authority. Jesus accepts their willingness but denies their request. Power and authority are not earned but given by God, and this at his sovereign choosing.

### Mark 10.41-45: Use of kingdom power

Somehow the rest of the disciples hear (overhear?) about the conversation between Jesus, James, and John and they are angry. They may be angry because they did not ask for power first. Most likely, they are angry because this continues a running feud among the disciples in which they sought to create a pecking order among themselves (Mark 9.30-37). Jesus takes time to address the roots of the request of James and John, the desire for power. Jesus does not dispute the desire for power, nor does he deny the reality that those who partake in his kingdom will have power. What he does is redefine the proper use of power.

The typical approach to power and authority is to consolidate and use it to move others about. However, this use of power is not of God. The proper use of power in God's kingdom is to marshal one's resources for service. This is the sign of true greatness, and it has purpose. As Jesus will demonstrate with his own service, the giving of his life, freedom for others comes through service. The power of evil is broken for others when power is used to serve rather than move others about.

### **Real life with Blake:**

I like to be the boss. I like to call the shots and have things my way. When I bump into someone who doesn't like things my way, I will measure them up to see if I have enough power to make them do it my way. This is pretty easy with a 7 and 8-year-old. Raise your voice and threaten to take away the Kindle and amazing compliance occurs. It is a bit trickier with adults, but I have learned the finer art of power plays and bringing others along to see things my way. Why wouldn't they want to do things my way? It is the best way, and it feels great when others come along to do it my way. I feel empowered. I feel like I am important, because people do things my way. I am challenged by the example and teaching of Jesus, because it flies in the face of my own approach to life. Life isn't about getting things my way. Life is not about using my power and influence to achieve compliance. Power and influence are part of my life. In fact, as a child of God, I have more power and influence than I imagine, but the power and influence I possess is to be used with purpose. Proper use of my power involves a willingness to serve, to lift up, to help. My greatness is not found in the number of my followers—could we say minions?—but in the number of those I have served. While I understand the logic of Jesus, it doesn't feel right. It feels like I won't see things happen, that the kingdom will not progress, my children will not behave. What I am learning is that what I think is happening is usually a thin veneer covering a plotting to assert an opposing will. I am, after all, the

parent of a 7 and 8-year-old. But, when I serve, I witness a deeper and lasting change in which the will itself is changed.

### **Real life with you:**

The promise of Jesus is that those who follow him inherit a kingdom, a kingdom of power and authority. Oh, and we get to reign with him. We get to share some of that power and authority. The question is, what do we do with all that power and authority? Sometimes we are told that we should use it to get our way, Jesus' way that is. The problem is that not everyone wants to see things our way. They don't want to be loving and kind. They don't want to vote our way or pen laws we agree with. What do we do then? The common thinking is that we are in the right, so it is OK to use might to get our way, and we do. We use the power of words, the power of action, the power of inaction to force others to do things our way. We justify what we have done by saying we have used the power given to us to effect change. However, have we really brought about true change? Compliance? Probably. Change? Probably not. Real change only happens when we use power properly, as Jesus used power. Real change happens when we use power to serve, to help, to rescue rather than to bend others to our will, for it is in this use of power that the will itself is changed. This week, think about an area or relationship that needs change. Begin to look for ways in which you could use your power and position to serve another person or be a help in a specific situation. Give God room in and through your service to bring about real change.

Want to know how this looks in real life? Check out Blake's blog at [BlakeShipp.blogspot.com](http://BlakeShipp.blogspot.com)



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