

### 37. Jesus Taught About Godly Leadership

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what Jesus taught His disciples about His coming death and resurrection. In our topic today, we will be learning how to help our children explain and become an example of what Christ taught about godly leadership.

Jesus and His disciples were walking along the road leading to Jerusalem. While Jesus was walking with James and John, we see that they made a request to Jesus. Mark 10:35-37 says, “Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, ‘Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.’ And He said to them, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ They said to Him, ‘Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.’” Jesus had taught the disciples about His coming death and resurrection. However, the disciples were thinking about something very different. The disciples were expecting Jesus to become the king when they got to Jerusalem. That thought caused James and John to make a request.

James and John saw their opportunity to make their request as they walked with Jesus. As a result, they said to Jesus, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.” If you have children, you know that when you get a request worded like this from them, they know that maybe they should not be making that request. Jesus answered the two, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Then, they made their request to Jesus. Their request showed that they did not have any understanding of spiritual leadership, and so, wanted worldly leadership.

They were looking for Jesus to set up His kingdom. As a result, they wanted to know if they could sit on His right hand and on His left hand when He came into His glory. In that time, the right hand and the left hand were the two places of highest honor. As a result, the request of James and John was to be treated like they were the two special friends of Jesus that deserved to receive the most honor and praise. This request was motivated by pride rather than humility. 1 Peter 5:6 says, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” This was a lesson James and John had not yet learned.

We go on to read the response of Jesus. Mark 10:38-41 says, “But Jesus said to them, ‘You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ So Jesus said to them, ‘You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared.’ And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.” Jesus told them that they did not know what they were asking.

Then, Jesus asked the two brothers this question: “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” Jesus had told the disciples that His suffering and death were near. Here, we see that Jesus compared this suffering, that would soon happen, to a baptism of suffering. James and John had no understanding of the question Jesus had

just asked them. However, they quickly answered that they were able to be baptized with that baptism. Many times, Christians make this same mistake. They make promises about things they do not understand.

Jesus then explained to James and John that they would experience the baptism that He would soon experience. Acts 12:1-2 says, “Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.” These verses show that James was the first of the apostles to die for his faith. Revelation 1:9 says, “I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Patmos was an island the Romans used as a place to exile prisoners they did not want to escape. John spent the final part of his life on this island as a prisoner of the Roman government. In this way, James and John were both baptized with the baptism of suffering.

Jesus then added that the places of honor on His right side and left side were not His to give. Instead, Jesus said that those places were already reserved for those to whom it was prepared. This is an important lesson for all of us to understand. All rewards are determined by the will of God, because He knows the heart of every person. All twelve disciples needed to learn this lesson. We see that the other ten disciples were very unhappy with James and John when they heard about their request. The other ten were very unhappy, because they also had the same desire to have a place of importance when Christ sets up His kingdom.

This provided Jesus with an opportunity to teach the disciples that godly leadership and rewards are very different from worldly leadership. Mark 10:42-45 says, “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’” This was a very important lesson for the disciples to learn. It is just as important for us to learn this same lesson if we want to be effective in our service for the Lord.

Jesus then called the disciples to Himself and began to explain the difference between worldly leadership and godly leadership. Jesus explained that worldly leadership has certain characteristics. Throughout the world, the sin nature leads most people to act in similar ways when in positions of leadership. Jesus said that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles, lord it over others. The word translated “lord it over” means *to bring others under one’s power, to be the master or to exercise lordship*. Acts 19:16 says, “Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.” In this verse, the word is translated “overpowered”. In 1 Peter 5:2-3, Peter wrote to the leaders of local churches, and said: “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” Here, we see that godly leaders are not to lead by lording it over the flock, but rather by being an example to the flock.

Second, Jesus said that worldly leaders exercise authority over those they lead. The word translated “exercise authority” means *to wield power over*. We have an example of such a leader in the church in 3 John 1:9-11, where we read: “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.” Here, God makes it clear that such attitudes and actions are evil.

Jesus went on to describe what godly leadership is like. He told the disciples that Christians are not to exercise leadership like the world. Then, Jesus used two key words to describe godly leadership. First, Jesus said that whoever desires to be great is to become a servant. The word translated “servant” means *a servant, a deacon who cares for the poor, a waitress or a waiter*. This type of leadership is illustrated in 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2, where we read, “Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith.” In these verses, the word is translated “minister”.

Second, Jesus said that the one who desires to be first shall be slave of all. The word translated “slave” is the word for *a bondservant, a slave or one who gives himself to do the will of another*. This is the word that was used to describe Jesus, in Philippians 2:7, where we read, “But made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.” We see that Jesus became a bondservant for us. In the same way, we are to show our love by becoming a bondservant to others. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Here, we see that we are to lead by serving one another as slaves of Christ.

Jesus then explained why He came to this earth. Worldly leadership expects to be served. In contrast, Jesus did not come to be served. Instead, He came to serve. The greatest demonstration of that service was when He gave His life a ransom for many. The word translated “ransom” means *to pay the price to redeem or to pay the ransom for a life*. Jesus paid that ransom with His own blood. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” We want to show our physical and spiritual children what godly leadership means, by our own example. That will happen as we become bondservants of Christ and lead as a slave of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children, by your example, what godly leadership means.