

JESUS: THE SERVANT AT WORK

VOLUME THREE

STUDY ONE

Prediction, Ambition, Submission

Mark 10:32–45

I am most Christlike when I serve and give to others.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHAT is the pathway to true greatness?

In a world that's lost its way, people think greatness comes through power and intimidation. In some countries, rulers force their way to the top by killing their enemies and cruelly attacking their own people. They demand total allegiance and make everyone bow the knee at the mention of their "great" name. This was how Roman emperors ruled the world in Jesus' day—with the iron fist of domination and fear.

The disciples had been watching Jesus during His ministry, and He was different. He was more powerful than any ruler they had seen. At His word, storms calmed and demons fled in fear. At His touch, the lame walked and the dead were raised. He was the long-awaited Messiah, and at His name, every knee would one day bow. But He taught that the path to greatness comes not by stepping on others but by serving them. "Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else," He said (Mark 9:35). How unlike the kings of the world!

On His final journey to Jerusalem, Jesus once again showed His disciples the pathway to true greatness. In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll follow in His footsteps and learn to emulate the life and mission of this remarkable Servant of God.



INSIGHT FOR LIVING



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Come to the Lord with all that you are—your mind, your heart, your soul—as you turn to the Scriptures. Offer a prayer of gratitude for His indwelling presence, His surpassing greatness, and His unsearchable wisdom. Express in your own words your enthusiasm to receive truths that will transform your life.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Twice before, Jesus had foretold His suffering, death, and resurrection in Mark 8:31 and 9:31. Now, as He was “on the way up to Jerusalem” (Mark 10:32), Jesus again warned His disciples what lay ahead. The mood was somber and serious as He and the Twelve made their last trip together to the Holy City. Later, Jesus would grieve over Jerusalem, the city that habitually “kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers” (Matthew 23:37). As He marched up the steep road to Jerusalem toward the culmination of His earthly pilgrimage, savage lions lay in wait to pounce on Him and devour His revolutionary movement.

Jesus scanned the rocky canyons that marked the seventeen-mile uphill climb to Jerusalem, and He thought it best to remind His disciples that the pathway to true greatness would be just as rugged and treacherous as the road ahead.



Observation: Jesus Predicts His Death a Final Time

Observe [Mark 10:32–45](#) by reading it as if you were one of the twelve disciples on the way to Jerusalem. As you read, notice the emphasized and repeated verbs. Look for related words and contrasting words.¹

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A Somber and Determined Journey—Mark 10:32

Describe the emotions of the disciples and the people following behind as Jesus was walking ahead. Why do you think they had these feelings? Jesus pulled the disciples aside and focused on what subject in Mark 10:32?

This is the third and final time He will rehearse the prediction. He's done it once, but not in this kind of detail. He's done it a second time and they hardly heard it. Now He's saying, "Okay. Come over here away from the others. I want you to listen to what I have to tell you and don't forget it." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What Lies Ahead—Mark 10:33–34

Observe the repeated conjunction “and” in Mark 10:33–34 (NASB). That style of syntax is called *polysyndeton*, which is used to heighten the intensity of the actions. What did Jesus say would happen to Him?

Jesus' Dialogue with James and John—Mark 10:35–41

James and John wasted no time approaching Jesus. They still expected Jesus to overthrow Rome and take the throne. Note the incongruity between what Jesus just told them and their request in Mark 10:35–41. Carefully observe their dialogue with Jesus. Summarize their request, Jesus' response, and the reaction of the ten other disciples.

“Well, before You go, just promise us when that future thing's set up, you know, we just like reserved seats. That's all we're asking.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Opposing Styles of Leadership—Mark 10:42–45

Hear the indignation in the disciples' voices as James and John jockey for the best seat in the kingdom! Watch Jesus call them to come up close. What did He say to them in Mark 10:42–45? What opposing styles of leadership did He describe? What was His message?

And Jesus says, “You follow Me, you learn to be a servant, and you learn to be a slave.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Jesus Explains His Mission and True Greatness

Interpretation seeks to understand what the passage means. Consult your Bible-study tools such as dictionaries and commentaries to dig into cultural and historical contexts.

“Jesus was walking ahead of [His disciples]” (Mark 10:32). By walking the path of suffering ahead of His followers, what subtle message do you think Jesus was communicating with each courageous step?

In Mark 10:38, Jesus asked James and John if they were able “to drink from the bitter cup of suffering” from which He was about to drink. Look up 10:38 in [Constable's Notes](https://www.netbible.org/Constable's-Notes) at netbible.org. What is the meaning of this cup? What does it reveal about Jesus' mindset and mission, James' and John's future, and the role of submission in the lives of the followers of Christ?

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Jesus already was in Gethsemane in His mind. “I pray that the cup will pass from Me. That cup . . . that torture! That death, that baptism of fire, oh God, let it pass from Me. Not My will but Yours be done.” What the disciples didn’t know was that virtually every one of them would die a martyr’s death. When you follow Jesus, there’s a price. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Read [Mark 10:41–44](#) in the MSG and J. B. Phillips translations. Why were the other ten disciples angry with James and John? What is the significance of Jesus’ message to both ancient and modern-day readers? Explain the importance of humility in the life of the faithful disciple.

I don’t think most of us have any idea how revolutionary that message was in the Middle Eastern first-century world. Unheard of. The Romans didn’t believe it. The Greeks didn’t teach it. Along comes this itinerant preacher from Nazareth who steps on the scene. And He says, “When you follow Me, you learn to be a servant.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The theme verse in the gospel of Mark is 10:45: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Read the article “[What Does It Mean That the Son of Man Did Not Come to Be Served, but to Serve \(Mark 10:45\)?](#)” at [gotquestions.org](#). Rewrite this verse in your own words.

Here is the eternal Son of the Father. Here is a second member of the Trinity on earth. “Even the Son of Man” though supernatural became sacrificial. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Servanthood and True Greatness

Compare [Mark 10:32–45](#) with [John 13:1–17](#). How does Jesus' style of leadership differ from the world's style of leadership? What can we learn from His posture during the Last Supper? What attitudes must we believers adopt to emulate our Savior?

Jesus gets up from the table and puts a towel around His girth and pours the water and washes their feet. And He says, "See what I've done among you." The next line you expect Him to say, "Do that to Me." He doesn't! He says, "Do that to one another." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What central message do [Proverbs 16:18](#) and [Philippians 2:1–11](#) communicate about the necessity of choosing humility over pride—serving sacrificially over flaunting our status?

Greatness is characterized by serving. Highest honor goes to those who help and never expect applause, recognition, a pat on the back, or a name in a worship folder. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Give and Serve!

All too often, selfish motives drive our ambition to succeed and dictate how we act in our marriages, our ministries, and our work. If we wish to follow Jesus, however, we must abandon these worldly and trendy notions about success.

Think of some practical ways you can emulate Christ when doing menial tasks at home, completing important projects at work, or serving in a ministry at church. Note them below.

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To give and to serve. Repeat it to yourself every morning when you get ready for work. When it's time to do the dishes, "To give and to serve." When it's time to deal with one of the kids, "To give and to serve." It's remarkable! It'll just change you. You won't learn it from the evening news or from a neighbor. You'll learn it from Jesus. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

As you reflect on the mission of Jesus, our Savior, what message has the Holy Spirit communicated to your heart about your life mission? Why not express some gratitude for the honor of using your life to serve this magnificent God who created everything?

We have to say it to our Savior: "Lord, I exist to serve You. I draw breath in my lungs so that when I let out air my words praise Your name. I take food into my body so that my energy is spent giving and serving. My journal is filled with opportunities that You've given me. I've watched You work, as I've had the joy of serving." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for Jesus! Help me to be like Him and to look for ways every day to give and to serve. May my heart repeat what should be the chorus of everything that has breath: "I exist to serve You." In His name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](https://www.insight.org/how-does-pastor-chuck-swindoll-study-the-bible)" at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org).

For the 2027 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2011, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Insight for Living

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