

JESUS: THE SERVANT AT WORK

VOLUME THREE

STUDY SIX

Teachable Moments, Timeless Truths

Mark 12:35–44

There were teachable moments—opportunities for Jesus to convey information that would help them go on without Him.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE read the stories of people's adventures, and we try to imagine what these undertakings must have been like. We picture the glorious landscapes they viewed or feel the spine-tingling excitement of their discoveries. Imagining adventures, however, is nothing like living them.

How much better to be there. To feel the thrill of launching an expedition with friends. The joy of reaching the top of a mountain together. The meaningful conversations along the way. The look of delight in others' eyes. And that indescribable satisfaction that grips our soul when we return home and reflect on the experience. There's nothing like it!

For over three years, the disciples had known the thrill of *being there* with Jesus. They had seen and heard it all since the first day they embarked on their grand expedition with the One who came to serve and “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Now, their journey had led them to Jerusalem during Passover week—and the atmosphere was electric.

Many in the city had welcomed Jesus enthusiastically with songs of praise at His triumphal entry. The jealous religious leaders, however, circled Jesus like wolves, hurling hostile questions at Him and trying to destroy Him. How fast the disciples' hearts must have beat as they witnessed Jesus fend off each attack and prove His authority as the rightful King!

We can feel the disciples' relief when “after that, no one dared to ask [Jesus] any more questions” (12:34). In this rare moment of calm, they probably wanted to whisk Jesus away before more trouble brewed. But Jesus had other ideas. He used this brief interlude as a teachable moment to impart timeless truths the disciples would need in the difficult days ahead.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

No believer is so seasoned or experienced that he or she can lean on personal strength. Reflect on Jesus' words to His disciples:

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

In prayer, express your desire to draw close to Jesus and acknowledge Him as the source of your wisdom, strength, and joy.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The Twelve had just heard Jesus tell the story of the tenant farmers who killed the servants of the landowner and murdered his son to get rid of the heir to the estate (Mark 12:1–12). The religious leaders scowled when they realized Jesus was “telling the story against them” (12:12), and they stormed off. The disciples also made the connection. The religious leaders were the wicked farmers. But did they realize that Jesus was the murdered son? Perhaps not yet.

In a few days, however, Jesus would be crucified, and then the disciples would remember the parable. To prepare His disciples for His departure and for their role as leaders of Christ's church, Jesus taught them three valuable lessons regarding His deity, true piety, and genuine humility.



Observation: Teachable Moments with Jesus

Use your skills of observation as you study each section of Jesus' teaching. By answering His disciples' deepest questions, He equipped them to carry on His ministry after His crucifixion.¹

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Am I Sure That Jesus Is Deity? Mark 12:35–37

Read [Mark 12:35–37](#). What questions did Jesus ask to help His disciples understand His deity? What Old Testament passage did He quote? How did Mark depict the crowd that was listening to Him?

How can the Son of David in his bloodline be called “my Lord” by David, the writer of the psalm? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Can I Discern Pious Hypocrisy? Mark 12:38–40

Read [Mark 12:38–40](#). How did Jesus describe the prideful piety of the teachers of religious law? How would Jesus’ warning help the disciples avoid this pitfall?

Think of being a scribe! If there’s one thing hypocrisy hates, it’s exposure. And He just strips them down to reality. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Does My Giving Really Matter? Mark 12:41–44

Read [Mark 12:41–44](#). Jesus finished His teaching with an object lesson. What did He observe as He sat down near the collection box? What timeless truth did He teach?

She put in A-L-L—all she owned, all she had to live on. Pause and let that sink in. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: Timeless Truths from Jesus!

Quoting Psalm 110:1, Jesus asked how the Messiah could be David’s son *and* his “Lord” (Mark 12:36). Answer: *the Messiah must be human and divine*. Peruse this article from gotquestions.org “[What Does It Mean That Jesus Is the Son of David?](#)” What doctrine did Jesus teach His disciples about His identity as the God-man?

These people need strong doctrine if they’re going to stand against the Pharisees when Jesus is gone. They’re going to need to know what they really believe about Jesus the Messiah being both God and man when they get taken under arrest and are punished, almost to the end of their lives, for making Christ known.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

As future leaders of the church, the disciples could easily fall into the trap of spiritual pride. What timeless truth did Jesus’ warning about hypocrisy teach His disciples?

Explore your Bible-study resources regarding the Court of the Women, the collection box for the Jews’ offerings, and the poor widow’s contribution in Mark 12:41–44. For an online resource, consult [Constable’s Notes](#) at netbible.org. What timeless truth did Jesus teach about humility and generosity?

They gave out of their surplus. She gave all. By giving all her treasure, she’s living out the Shema—“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is one! You shall love the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength, all your treasure.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Doctrine, Discernment, Generosity

What do passages like [Isaiah 7:14](#); [Luke 1:26–33](#); [John 1:1–14](#); [Philippians 2:5–11](#); and [Colossians 1:15–20](#) teach about the virginal conception of Jesus along with His deity and humanity? Describe the importance of sound doctrine to our lives as Christ followers.

The One we worship is the only individual who will ever live having both natures of undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever. Learning doctrine brings great relief. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What common themes do you find when you compare our passage with [Matthew 6:1–8](#) and [23:1–12](#)? What lessons can we glean from the Scripture's description of the human heart?

Every one of us fights with greed, pride, lust, and anger! Every one of us, including those in pastors' robes. Never doubt it. That will keep you from pedestaling anybody. Don't make icons out of people you respect. Nothing's wrong with respect, but just remember they could fall at any moment. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How did the poor widow's offering in our passage resemble the Macedonian churches' offering in [2 Corinthians 8:1–5](#)? What can we learn from [Mark 10:45](#); [John 3:16](#); and [2 Corinthians 9:6–15](#) about sacrificial generosity?

Giving sacrificially makes us even more generous. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Heed These Principles

Three simple principles flow out of our passage to help you apply Christ's teaching. First, *continue to learn doctrine*. It's easy to lose motivation when it comes to the study of the Holy Scriptures or to substitute feel-good theology for strong doctrine. How will you make studying the Scriptures a priority in your schedule?

Believe me, when the bottom drops out of your life, feel-good theology will not bring any help to you. When the cults come knocking at your door and they bring their half-truths, their twisted Scriptures, their error, but presented in a winsome way, your doctrine will allow you to stand toe-to-toe and make it clear that's not what you believe and here's why. It is a magnificent point of rescue.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

As people achieve great things, we often begin to walk in awe of them—forgetting that we're all in the category of sinners. So, this second principle offers us biblical wisdom: *Train yourself to face reality*. Don't be impressed by a leader's external show of spirituality. What is the importance of seeing everyone on the same human level? How will you reserve your sense of awe for God alone?

Stop being impressed with the seen; look at the heart. Tell yourself over and over when you're tempted to fall for some great leader, "He's a sinner. He's got a problem just like everybody else. No reason to idolize him or her."
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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The world teaches us to hoard our stuff, but Jesus' way is different. Here's the third principle from His teaching: *Keep being a person of generosity.* What about this passage encourages you to be a sacrificial giver? What does cheerfulness in your giving say about your view of God?

Jesus was more than just a descendant of David. He was, and is, the Lord. He alone deserves our total loyalty and praise. Receive His generous love and grace, and then let them flow out of your hands into the hearts of others. Generously share from what you have received, and you'll be twice blessed—in the receiving and the giving.



A FINAL PRAYER

Faithful Father, thank You for Your Word. It brings great relief. Help me cultivate keen discernment by facing the reality that we all struggle. Help me be a cheerful giver, for all that I have comes from You, and I give You only what You first gave me (1 Chronicles 29:14). What an honor! In Jesus' 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://insight.org/how-does-pastor-chuck-swindoll-study-the-bible/)" at 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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