

**Unit: Find What You Need**  
**Title: How to Be Successful**  
**Scriptures: Mark 10:32-45**

I personally don't think it's correct to say that the disciples were astonished that Jesus was continuing on to Jerusalem despite His impending arrest. The parallel passage in Luke 18 explains (v. 34) that these men understood nothing of what Jesus said about what would happen to Him there. It seems more likely that the men's astonishment and fear carried over from the astonishment Mark records they felt at Jesus' words in the prior verses about how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of heaven. James and John weren't preoccupied enough with fear of Jesus' enemies in Jerusalem to refrain from asking for lofty positions at their Lord's right and left in glory. By the way, it's pretty remarkable that at least the Life Lessons version of the Leader Guide for this week mentions Southern Baptist Disaster Relief as a practical outworking of suffering to follow God's will. There have been a number of times in my years at LifeWay that I have seen God orchestrate our written materials to coincide with world events.

Foxe's Book of Martyrs says this about James' death:

"... as James was led to the place of martyrdom, his accuser was brought to repent of his conduct by the apostle's extraordinary courage and undauntedness, and fell down at his feet to request his pardon, professing himself a Christian, and resolving that James should not receive the crown of martyrdom alone. Hence they were both beheaded at the same time. Thus did the first apostolic martyr cheerfully and resolutely receive that cup, which he had told our Savior he was ready to drink."

Of his brother John we know that after helping lead the church at Jerusalem and then at Ephesus was exiled by Rome to the island of Patmos, where he received and wrote his Revelation. History records that he was once boiled in scalding oil. The "disciple whom Jesus loved" was the only to escape a tortuous death. The price of discipleship can indeed be high.

Jesus' example to His disciples was one of abject humility. Philippians 2:5-11 records that Jesus willingly emptied himself and took on the form of a slave ("doulos") - a much more stark word in the Greek than the "diakonos" given here in Mark 10. It wasn't just that Jesus came as a servant, but as one in utter subjugation to His Father's will, even to the point of death on a cross. In contrast this Slave to God became our Redeemer who paid the ransom in exchange for our sins' penalty.

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Mark 10:32-34 Jesus Ultimate Service

I. v. 32 **JESUS AND HIS FOCUS**

(III. The phrase "***and Jesus went before them***" is in the present tense. This phrase has the idea that "***Jesus kept going and going***", as He lead the way for them. It is the picture of a man whose face is set. It is picture of a man whose mind is made up. It is the picture of a man who is determined to go somewhere and who refuses to be distracted from his mission. It is a picture of a man who has His mind made up.

That is the Savior in these verses. He has His mind fixed on some things and He is determined to carry out His mission. What is He focused on?)

A. **He Was Focused On A Place** – The Bible says "***they were in the way going up to Jerusalem***". They were headed to the capital of Israel. They were going to the place where the Temple resided. They were traveling the same road walked by pilgrims on their way to sacrifice. They were walking the same path and millions of others had walked down through the centuries. They were headed to a specific place.

We are told that there were "***going up to Jerusalem***". This was true since Jerusalem is located high in the mountains of Israel. There are places with a higher elevation, but people always spoke of "***going up***" to that city.

One reason for that way of thinking has to do with its spiritual nature. Jerusalem was the home of the Temple of Jehovah. It was the place God dwelt. It was here that sacrifices were offered and atonement

was made for the people. To the Jew, Jerusalem was always on the way up. It was a place of higher spiritual elevation in their minds.

That is the city to which they were headed that day. However, I do not think Jesus had the city on His mind. I do not think that He was focused on the Temple and the religious rituals that were being carried out there. I do not think that He was contemplating the architecture He would see. I do not think His mind on the sights and sounds that would surround Him when He arrived in Jerusalem.

- B. **He Was Focused On A Plan** – Jesus knew that when He arrived at Calvary an ages old plan would be accomplished. Jesus knew that at Calvary the prophecies of the prophets would be fulfilled. Jesus knew that at Calvary the just demands of a holy God would be met. Jesus knew that when the events that would take place on Calvary were accomplished, God Almighty would be satisfied and lost sinners could be saved.

Lest you misunderstand, the cross and the death of Jesus were not some unfortunate accident. The death of Jesus on the cross was not “**Plan B**”. The death of Jesus was planned long before this world was ever created, **1 Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8**.

- C. **He Was Focused On A People** – It wasn’t just a place and an plan that had the Lord’s attention that day; His mind was also focused on a people.

Before He was born the angel told Joseph, “***thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins,***” **Matt. 1:21**. Jesus came to this world with some people on His mind. Who?

- All those who would believe on Him and be saved, **John 1:12!**
- All those who would be given to Him by the Father, **John 6:37!**
- All those chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, **Eph. 1:4!**

He had His mind on all those who bow before the Father and confess Jesus as their Savior. He died for all those who would believe the Gospel message!

In other words, if you are saved, or if you will ever be saved, you were on His mind and Jesus made His way toward Jerusalem that day.

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### **James’ and John’s demand for Special Privileges Mark 10:35-40**

I once heard the story of a rice farmer who saved an entire village from destruction. From his hilltop farm he felt the earth quake and saw the distant ocean swiftly withdraw from the shore line. He knew that a tidal wave was coming. In the valley below, he saw his neighbors working low fields that would soon be flooded. They must run quickly to his hilltop or they would all die. His rice barns were dry as tinder. So with a torch he set fire to his barns and soon the fire gong started ringing. His neighbors saw the smoke and rushed to help him. Then from their safe perch they saw the tidal wave wash over the fields they had just left. In a flash they knew not only who had saved them but what their salvation had cost their benefactor. They later erected a monument to his memory bearing the motto, “***He gave us all he had, and gave gladly.***” This poor farmer finished first in the eyes of his community, but it cost him everything he had.

#### I. v. 35-40 **A SELFISH PETITION**

- A. v. 35-37 **The Request** – James and John approach Jesus asking that they be allowed to sit with Him in the highest positions of His coming kingdom. The right hand seat was reserved for the person who was second in rank, while the left hand seat was reserved for the person who was third in rank. These men saw themselves as the leaders among the disciples and they wanted their positions made permanent.

They were literally asking for three things. They wanted **Preeminence**. They wanted the glory and honor that came from being elevated to a throne. They wanted **Proximity**. They wanted to be close to Jesus in the Kingdom. They also wanted **Power**. These men wanted to have positions of great authority in the coming kingdom.

What made them think that they could ask for such things? There are several reasons why they made such a request.

First, they based their request on their relationship to Jesus. Matthew tells us that Salome, their mother, made the request first, **Matt. 20:20-21**. Salome was Mary's sister. Thus, she was the aunt of Jesus and James and John were His first cousins. They appealed to their relationship as family.

Second, they were merely claiming the promises they had been made. **Matt. 19:28**. These men had been promised thrones, power and position in the kingdom and they were making a claim on that promise. That may be why Jesus did not rebuke them for their request. They were asking for what would be given to them, but they did not understand the Lord's timing in the matter.

**(Note:** What bothers me about their request is the timing of it. Jesus had just finished telling these men that He is going to Jerusalem, to be betrayed, rejected and killed, **v. 33-34**. All these men can think about is climbing to the top of the pile. All they can see is their position on the totem pole. Jesus is about to die for sin and they are playing "**who's on first?**" It is a cold-hearted, self-centered, unsympathetic request!

These men never did grasp the idea that their leader, the Lord Jesus Christ, was headed to a cross. All they could see was the crown. They wanted the crown without the cross. They wanted the glory without the pain. They wanted the reward without having to pay the price.

The problem with the disciples is the same problem people have today. Most people are not concerned with the glory of God. All they care about is finishing first. All they care about is their own power, position and prestige. The problem with the disciples, and the problem with many of us, is that we are filled with pride. Pride always leads to defeat, **Pro. 16:18; 1 Cor. 10:12**. What if God gets more glory from my finishing last? A humble, submissive spirit will prevent many failures.)

- B. v. 38-39a **The Response** – Jesus responds by telling them that they have no idea what they are asking for. He confronts them by asking them if they are willing and able to experience all that He is about to endure, **Ill. v. 33-34**.

When Jesus uses the word "**cup**" He is talking about "**a life experience**". When He uses the word "**baptism**" He is referring to being "**submerged or immersed**" in that experience. Jesus is saying, "**I am about to be immersed in an experience that you cannot imagine. Are you able to go through it too?**"

They tell Him that they can. But these men do not understand what awaits Jesus. Their response reveals a complete lack of understanding concerning what Jesus is about to suffer and of the load He was sent to carry.

Jesus is on His way to Calvary where He will bear the sins of His people on a Roman cross. Jesus is about to experience the undiluted wrath of Almighty God against sin and sinners. Jesus is about to die at the hands of the Heavenly Father, **Ill. Isa. 53:1-6; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24**.

- C. v. 39b-40 **The Revelation** – Jesus tells them that they will experience His anguish to a degree. **John 3:25-30**.