

## **Mk. 9:30-41 “Greatest or Least?”**

**For the Children:** Who you accept and who you help, often shows how you see yourself. If you are too proud to accept those who are weak, or too cool to be seen with those who are not cool, those who have disabilities, and so on, it shows that you think too much of yourself. God’s children are all just servants of His. We are called to serve God humbly, making many sacrifices. There is no room in that for seeing yourself as better than the other servants, or refusing to help the other servants. When you accept and help the other servants, it shows you accept the example the Lord Jesus gave us, by humbly serving us on the cross – instead of demanding His rights as the Great One. **Questions:** How does pride sometimes show up in your life? What about in the life of the church? How can we fight against that pride?

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### **Introduction:**

#### **First Point: Further Instruction on the Passion**

- No Publicity Please: The Lord was now headed for Jerusalem and the cross. He focused on teaching the disciples about this. See 8:31. Publicity would attract crowds, which would be a distraction at this point
- Handed Over: 9:31 adds some information to what we find in 8:31. The Lord is being “handed over” or “delivered” – the tense implies it is already happening. It therefore refers to God’s handing over of His Son to wicked men, as in Lk. 22:22, Acts 2:23. Being delivered “into the hands of men” adds the idea of God forsaking His Son on the cross, due to our sins
- Deaf Ears: There is a pattern here on the part of all the disciples, including Peter, James and John, in which they refuse to accept the Lord’s teaching on His coming Passion. They also respond to it with inappropriate comments or questions. See 8:32f, 9:9-10, 10:33-34, 9:32, 34

#### **Second Point: Implications for Rank in the Kingdom**

- A Shameful Discussion: One of those poor responses is the shameful debate about which disciple is greatest (v. 34). See also Lk. 22:24. They are too ashamed to answer when the Lord asks what they were discussing
- Inverse Greatness: The Lord therefore deliberately sits down and calls them over, to give some corrective teaching. He shows that the implication of the disciples’ following His humiliation is that we see true greatness as humble, self-sacrificing service – not just in terms of glory and exaltation. To be first, you must be last and least, the servant of all – as Christ, the Greatest One, was. This is the opposite of the world’s view, which is often driven by pride
- A Representative Child: The Lord picks up a little child to illustrate. He presents this child as His choice of the “greatest” of His disciples, one who represents Him and must therefore be “received” in His Name i.e., supported, helped and shown hospitality, because he represents the Lord. This is not about all, literal children. It is saying that this view of “greatness” based on representing Christ in humble service, should be applied even to the least of His people. There are no “great ones” in the church: we are all to see ourselves as “little ones”!

#### **Third Point: Implications for Acceptance of Others in the Kingdom**

- Unauthorized Work: The disciples’ failure to understand this is seen in their reaction to the man casting out demons by Jesus’ Name in vss. 38-41. Because he was not one of the 12, John and the others saw him as a “nobody” who had no authorization to use Jesus’ power and Name
- The Criterion for Recognition: The Lord implies that this man is another “little one.” He really has faith in the Lord Jesus, which is why he is able to cast out the demons. This means he is “for” Jesus, not against Him. He will therefore promote the Gospel rather than speaking evil of the Lord. He should therefore be accepted and supported, even though he is not one of the 12. He is “great” because his faith connects him to Christ. Even the least support (a cup of water) of the least disciple is pleasing to the Lord. It shows the right view of greatness

### **Conclusion**