

Service Lesson Ten

Focal Texts: Mark 10:35-45; John 13:12-17; James 2:14-17

Background: Mark 10:35-45; John 13:12-17; James 2:14-17

Teaching Aim: To lead members to identify various misunderstandings common in the lives of Christians and to apply Christ's response to the misunderstandings of his disciples in this study for today to each of these misunderstandings.

Connect with Life: Begin by asking members to share responses to the following question: What are some common misunderstandings in the lives of Christians with regard to:

1. Prayers of faith?
2. How to handle life's difficult times?
3. True greatness?
4. How to be a servant?
5. The balance between faith and works?

After a time of sharing tell members that the disciples of Jesus also demonstrated times of serious misunderstanding in these same areas of life. We will identify each of these and discuss Christ's response to each misunderstanding in order to determine the application of this study to our own times of misunderstanding today.

Guide Bible Study: Ask members to identify each misunderstanding and share background material related to each misunderstanding. Suggested misunderstandings and related commentary are as follows:

1. Misunderstanding about prayer (Mark 10:35). This incident occurred not long after Jesus had challenged the disciples to pray with faith that God would answer their prayers. The disciples expressed great boldness in approaching Jesus with their prayer request but this was not an example of a prayer that God would answer. "They invoked the name of their master, Jesus, and expected him to answer in the affirmative, no matter the nature of their request."
2. Misunderstanding about the true nature of the kingdom (Mark 10:36-37). The disciples were still thinking about an earthly kingdom. "This was a request for political power, and revealed a basic misunderstanding of Jesus' teaching." This was the third time that Jesus had told the disciples of his impending death. They could have thought he was using his method of teaching in parables. This would be why they did not take his statements literally. "The fact that they, along with all the other

disciples (as seen in the second prediction narrative) were expecting an earthly kingdom reveals the pervasive nature of the disciples' misunderstanding.”

3. Misunderstanding about what Christ was about to experience (Mark 10:38-40). “Jesus responded patiently but quite pointedly. The cup was a common Jewish metaphor for ‘divine judgment against human sin’, while baptism or ‘being under water’ was an Old Testament picture of being overwhelmed by calamity.” “The cup was the cup of suffering. The cup, for Jesus, was sacrificial death.” Once again, the disciples revealed their misunderstanding about the horrible death that Jesus was about to experience. They were thinking of an entirely different experience that would come as a result of the upcoming fight for the kingdom. They considered themselves prepared for such an experience.
4. Misunderstanding about true greatness (Mark 10:41-45). Even though the other disciples did not make this request of Jesus, they showed their anger and jealousy regarding James and John. They had been thinking about their places of greatness in the coming kingdom as well. “Jesus reminded them, once again, of the order of power within his kingdom. It is the servant who holds the most power.” This still did not make any sense to the disciples. This was so opposite of what they had been led to believe about true greatness. “It seems to have as its foundation Isaiah 52:13-53:12, known as the Suffering Servant Song. There are several places in the song that indicate the idea of one who was sent to suffer and die in order to redeem the people.”
5. Misunderstanding about the importance of being a servant and the role of a servant (John 13:12-17). “After the meal he presented a living illustration of what it meant to be his disciple. Over their objections, Jesus took a basin of water and a towel, and performed the duty reserved for only the lowliest of slaves. He washed the feet of his disciples.” “John focused on the theological meaning of the foot washing. Jesus was proclaiming that his disciples were clean. If their ‘Teacher’, and ‘Lord’, had lowered himself to washing their feet, then they should have no hesitation in doing the same for each other.” “In this action Jesus revealed that other-centered love was less about exercising positional authority and more about self-emptying service. Regardless of age or positional authority, disciples are to lead past perceived barriers and join Jesus in washing the feet of others.”
6. Misunderstanding about true faith (James 2:14-17). “Such faith is insufficient, not because works produce salvation, but because a proclamation of faith, without a practical manifestation of it, rings hollow. James was not advocating for people to seek to earn their salvation by works, but rather that Christian action is the evidence of true faith.” “James confirmed this concept and added that the only way people can know that you love them is if you show it.” “James indicated that this was most clearly evident when disciples had the opportunity to help the brothers and sisters they encountered secure their most basic needs.”

Encourage Application: Review the list of misunderstandings shared at the beginning of this study. Now ask members to discuss how each of these misunderstandings can be cleared up with the proper application of Jesus' response to his disciples. For example:

1. Jesus responded to the disciples that they didn't know for what they were asking. Our prayers of faith must be those prayers that God can answer. (Review lesson eight on "prayer.") They cannot be selfish or self-serving.
2. The disciples saw a time of glory as they submitted to God's will for their lives. If we do the same we will receive the same response from Jesus that he gave to the disciples.
3. The disciples were about to go through the most difficult times in their lives. They had no idea about what Jesus was about to experience and how it would affect them. Eventually, they would recall the teachings of Jesus regarding this time of suffering and would then be prepared to deal with their own times of suffering. They and we need to understand that suffering is a part of the Christian's life.
4. All of us have a difficult time understanding the meaning of true greatness. We, like the disciples, have been led to believe that the great people of this world are the ones who receive honor and recognition. We have a difficult time accepting our places of humble service.
5. Many of us try to excuse ourselves from service to others by declaring that we don't know whom to serve. We just need to learn from the "foot washing" illustration of Jesus. We are to serve those we see everyday who have various needs.
6. The greatest works of faith that we can perform are to those in need. We need to seek these out and demonstrate our faith in God by our self-less service to those in need.

Close with a time of challenge and prayer for members to deal with any misunderstandings in their lives similar to these in our study for today.