

March 10, 2024

# Steps—Mark, Chapter 10

## Tests and Lessons

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Jesus was constantly being tested by religious leaders who considered themselves better than, more knowledgeable than, and more righteous than everyone else. But Jesus used every test as an opportunity to teach another lesson to the disciples, the Pharisees, and the crowd that was following him.

### Marriage

Marriages in Jesus' time were usually arranged as a way of improving social or financial status. Women had no choice and were considered property. Divorce was *not a legal decision*, granted by a court. A divorce only required that the husband state publicly that he was divorcing his wife on proper grounds. Among the

different schools of thought, the Shammai school believed that the only acceptable grounds was marital unfaithfulness *of the wife*. The Hillel school believed that a man could divorce if his wife displeased him for *any reason*—even burning his dinner. For a woman it meant she lost her children and, unless a male relative took her in, was totally on her own. This topic was the perfect set up for a test of Jesus. It was also a perfect way to get Jesus in trouble with Herod (remember John the Baptist and his criticism of the marriage of Herod and Herodius).

Read Mark 10:1-12.

- Jesus states that Moses' law about divorce was only written because their hearts were hard. Divorce was an accommodation for human weakness. What was God's purpose and intention for marriage?
- What is the place of sin and grace in marriage?
- Because of the seriousness of marriage, the Jewish community would provide support for a couple in the hopes that they would remain married. What should be the role of our church community when a couple is having difficulties?

### Heavenly Aspirations

Just like women were property and worth little in society, children were often considered of little value until they were grown. Certainly they were unimportant enough to keep them from bothering Jesus. However, if you were a rich man, you were important and could buy your way into positions of power. So what are the requirements for getting close to Jesus and reaching heaven?

Read Mark 10:13-31

- What is the difference between being childish and being childlike? What characteristic(s) was Jesus emphasizing in his response to the disciples?

- How does this explanation relate to being born again?
- This passionate, humble, and respectful young man is a good person, a faithful Jew, but knows it is not enough. What is the one thing he lacks?
- Notice in verse 21 that Jesus looks at him and *loves* him. Why is that important?
- There were rich people who followed Jesus like Zacchaeus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Barnabus. So if being rich does not automatically exclude you, what is the lesson here?
- Do you know of someone who is in danger of throwing away eternal blessings for temporary earthly riches? How might you lovingly minister to that person?
- How does Peter react? What is Jesus' response and warning?

### Be Careful What You Ask For

Ego rears its ugly head again. The very humanity of the disciples is a reminder to us that we all fall short of the Kingdom of God. The cup is a metaphor for God's wrath against sin. Keep that in mind as you read.

Read Mark 10:32-45.

- When James and John ask their favor, they are asking to be placed in positions of authority and power. Why is Jesus' response a warning?
- How do the other disciples react? Why? What is Jesus' response to them? How does his response overturn the value structure of the world?
- What did Jesus ransom? If we follow him, what is the value of that ransom to us?

### Blind Faith

We all need to have the faith of the blind man. We all need to recognize we need Christ's mercy to heal us. The crowd has physical sight but no spiritual insight. Bartimaeus has no physical sight but deep spiritual insight.

Read Mark 10:46-52. Notice the actions of Bartimaeus and how they apply to us. Check the actions below that you struggle with as you follow Jesus.

Bartimaeus	Us
Jesus is in town	Jesus is always present
Man identifies Jesus	We acknowledge who Jesus is
Man calls for mercy	We call for mercy
Crowd discourages man	Others will discourage or tempt us
Jesus invites the man	Jesus always invites us to join him
Man enthusiastically comes to Jesus	We accept his invitation with joy
Jesus asks what he needs	Jesus wants us to express our needs
Man responds as student to teacher	We listen to Jesus' lessons
Man tells Jesus his greatest desire	We share our deepest desires with Jesus
Jesus recognizes man's great faith	Jesus sees our true faith
Man's blindness is healed	We are healed (physical, mental, spiritual)
Man follows Jesus to Jerusalem	We follow Jesus wherever he goes

### Take Action

Pray that you will follow Jesus the way Bartimaeus did.