

### WARM-UP

- Tell us about one thing that easily irritates you.
- What would make you say that a person is selfish? What actions or attitudes do you think would catch your attention?
- Do you consider yourself to be competitive? Recall an instance explaining this.

**WORD** *<sup>33</sup>And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" <sup>34</sup>But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup>And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."*

**MARK 9:33-35**

Have you ever wondered what being called by Jesus would have been like while He walked the earth? While it would have been exciting, it wouldn't have been easy. In addition to the opposition He faced, there was also internal turmoil among the disciples, who had to learn to follow Jesus together. Much like the relationships in our church today, we have to find a way to get along. After all, God has designed us for relationship with our fellow believers—to love and forgive one another, and to serve Jesus together. In this lesson, we will see how our relationships with one another should be based on Jesus' conversation with His twelve disciples.

## 1 | Our relationship with one another should be a collaboration, not a competition.

*But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.* **MARK 9:34**

In ancient Roman culture, the greatest person was determined by a direct, in-your-face confrontation. With this, could you really blame the disciples for wanting to become great and somehow compete with one another? This is part of our sinful human nature. So, Jesus addressed it directly and asked them what they had been discussing. Jesus has that uncanny knack of addressing exactly what needs to be corrected in our lives. In the kingdom of God, our relationships are designed for love, not competition or selfish agenda. We are called to share life with one another with a common goal in mind—to engage the lost and make disciples. What are the dangers of thinking of relationships between believers as a competition? How can we work together to advance God’s kingdom instead?

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## 2 | Our relationship with one another should be marked by serving instead of seeking to be served.

*And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”*

**MARK 9:35**

Jesus gave His disciples a key leadership principle they (and we) are to never outgrow: Serve. If we think we are better than others, we might expect to be served or we might refuse to serve others. But Jesus said those who would be first—those who lead—must be last and serve all. How does

this go against our defaults as a society? How do you think the disciples reacted to this? How did they learn to take it to heart?

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### **3 Our relationship with one another should be founded on the person of Christ, not on cultural commonalities.**

*<sup>36</sup>And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup>“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”* **MARK 9:36-37**

What usually unites people together are the commonalities in culture. However, left to ourselves, most of us may not have much in common without Christ and would probably not get along. But now that we are brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to live in a way that honors God alone, in spite of our differences. Jesus was adjusting how His disciples were thinking. He taught them that our relationship with one another should be founded on our relationship with Him. When we realize that receiving our brothers and sisters means receiving Christ and the Father, it will change the way we relate with one another. What does Matthew 25:35-40 say about how we treat fellow believers?

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## APPLICATION

- Do you sometimes consider your relationships and ministry as a competition? In what way do you think Jesus is adjusting your mindset and approach today?
- What's one thing you can do to grow in fellowship with one another? How can you serve one another beginning this week?
- What do you think it means to *"receive one such child"* in Jesus' name? How can you receive those who need to know Christ today?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for drawing you into His family and saving you. Thank Him for the relationships He has blessed you with.
- Pray that your relationships would be founded on Christ and marked by love and service. If needed, repent of competing in your relationships.
- Pray that many would be drawn to Christ because of the love of God made manifest in the world through the Church.



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