

# When I Get Big, I Want to Be Little

How many of you remember asking a child, or being asked as a child, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Or one I heard one child ask another, "What do you want to be when you get big?"

The responses are numerous: "When I get big, I want to be ...a policeman...a nurse...a soldier...a mommy...a cowboy...an astronaut...a singer...a basketball player...president of the United States."

Wouldn't it be interesting to flashback to your childhood days and listen to yourself as you dreamed of being something "when you get big." You might still be dreaming of what you will be when you get big- when you get enough money, or get the rights breaks, or finish your education, or whenever you finally "arrive". You might still be thinking this way: When I get big...I want to get married...I want to get my driver's license...I want to live out on my own...I want a higher paying job... I want to have kids... I want to make a million dollars...I want to own my own home... I want to be my own boss...I want to retire and enjoy life." You fill in the blank. "When I get big, I want to..."

There is nothing wrong with dreaming, even after you become an adult. God gives you some dreams to spur you on to become what He wants us to be. But Jesus tells us that if you really want to dream big, then you've got to think small. Jesus wants people who say, "When I get big, I want to be little." Let's listen to His explanation of what that means in **Mark 9:30-37**:

- 30 Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it.**
- 31 For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."**
- 32 But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.**
- 33 Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?"**
- 34 But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.**
- 35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."**
- 36 Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them,**
- 37 "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."**

Jesus and His disciples are on their way back to Capernaum in these verses. Jesus' main public ministry is essentially over. From here on out Jesus purposefully avoids the crowds. Verse 30 says, "**Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it.**" Jesus

know that very soon He is going to the cross where He will suffer and die for the sins of the world. So He is taking this time to prepare His disciples for what is coming. Verse 31 says, **"For He taught His disciples and said to them, 'The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.'"**

Jesus had told them this before, back in Chapter 8. But this time He adds that: **"The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men."** That word "betrayed" is the very word used later to describe the betrayal of Judas. Jesus hints that He would be turned over to His enemies by an act of betrayal. What this meant to Judas, we are not told. But Jesus clearly knew what would happen from the very beginning.

The disciples did not like this. They hear what He says, but they do not understand it, and they are afraid to ask Jesus what He means, **"But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him."** It seems that what held them back was the fear of knowing more about it. But Jesus confronts them continuously with this inescapable fact of the cross, even though they do not want to see it.

The disciples are not able to understand the truth that the Messiah must give His life for His people. They cannot comprehend the truth that Jesus will teach them in chapter 10 verse 45 ***"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*** They have a mental block when it comes to a suffering Savior, a crucified Christ.

They see Jesus establishing His kingdom. They see Him reigning in power and glory. They see Him defeating Israel's enemies and restoring the ancient glory to Israel. They cannot see Him dying for sin.

What they cannot grasp is exactly what Jesus came to this world to do. He came to die and rise again so that all who receive Him might have everlasting life. That is the truth Jesus tried to teach His disciples and that is what He wants you to know as well.

As these verses unfold, we move from the teaching of our Lord's death and resurrection to the subject of who is greatest in the kingdom of God. Jesus uses these events to teach His people then, and now, that true greatness comes from humble service to others. Jesus wants us to be able to say with all of our heart, "When I get big, I want to be little."

I want you to see ***A Debate*** and ***A Demonstration*** in these verses. Let God minister to your heart as we consider **"When I Get Big, I Want to Be Little."**

### **I. A DEBATE: Who is the Greatest? v. 33-34**

When they reached the end of their journey, Jesus has a question for His men. He wants to know what they were discussing as they traveled in verse 33, ***Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, 'What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?'*** The disciples all stand around Jesus tight-lipped. No one answers. Apparently, they were embarrassed by their discussion, because they had been arguing among themselves about who among them was the greatest. Somehow that did not sound right in the presence of Jesus. It would be wonderful if we always had this

awareness that what we say and think is being done in His presence. It would make us think twice about the things we say and do, wouldn't it?

We are not told how this argument came about. It might have had something to do with the fact that Jesus had chosen three of them, Peter, James and John to go with Him on a special trip up the mountain as we saw earlier in this chapter. They saw Jesus transfigured before them in all His true heavenly glory. They even heard the voice of God the Father from the cloud. And remember in verse 9 Jesus told them not to talk about what they had seen or heard there.

So, these men come off the mountain and they are excited about what they have seen. They might be saying things like, ***"Man, I have never seen anything like that! Have you?" "That was the most amazing spiritual experience of my life!"*** I can see them smiling to themselves; talking among themselves; and feeling a little superior to the others.

Probably the other nine ask the three about what happened on the mountain top. They reply smugly, "Oh we can't tell you." As you can imagine, this would have caused the nine disciples to feel left out. And then, of course, the argument readily arose as to who was greatest. They began to debate and argue with one another.

It's no wonder that these men were embarrassed by their argument. When they were talking among themselves the issue seemed important. But, when they stood before Jesus, they suddenly see how silly, immature, arrogant and self-centered they had been. Jesus has just reminded them He is going to die and rise again from the dead. And, all they can do is fight about who should be first! No wonder they are embarrassed.

By the way, it's still embarrassing when it happens today! Even in the church you sometimes find people who want to be recognized as the greatest and the best.

In the epistle of **3 John**, John condemned a man by the name of Diotrephes. John said that he ***"loved to have the preeminence among them, v. 9."*** that is, this man wanted to be number one. He wanted to control the church. He wanted to run the church. He wanted to be the church boss. He wanted everyone in the church to bow to his will.

Let me just set the record straight today. There are no big ***"I's"*** and little ***"you's"*** around here. All that we have in this church are people who have been saved by the grace of God. There are no masters here that must be served. There are only people here that need to learn to serve others. We are not a church filled with Masters; we are a church filled with servants. We only have one Master, and even He ***"did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."***

When this life is over and we stand before the Lord; all of our petty, silly striving to be first will be seen to be as ugly as it really is.

In order to correct the immature and foolish thinking of His disciples, Jesus sat down to teach them His truth. When a rabbi sat, in those days, he assumed a place of authority over his students. When Jesus sat down, His men knew they needed to listen up!

When Jesus begins to teach, He speaks of a great paradox. He says, "**If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.**" He tells them that the way to greatness is through serving others. He tells them that the door to the first place is located in the servant's quarters. The word "**servant**" in **verse 35** is the same word translated "**deacon**" elsewhere in the New Testament. The word refers to those "**who wait tables**". The literal meaning of the word is "**to kick up dust**". It is the image of a servant kicking up little puffs of dust as he moves from one duty to another.

What he is really saying is that there are two kinds of greatness, two kinds of ambition. There is the ambition to be approved and applauded by men, and the ambition to be approved and applauded by God. These are as different as night and day. There are those who want to gain fame and attention and influence and power. The measurement of the ambition to be great before men is always: "How many serve me? How much power do I exercise over others? How wide is the extent of my influence?"

But Jesus points out that true greatness is never found there. The measure of true greatness is: "How many do I serve? How many am I willing to minister to? How many can I help?" This is the mark of greatness in the eyes of God. This is enduring greatness.

You can see how radically different these two views are. Following Jesus is radical! It will completely revolutionize our thinking. It is exactly the opposite of the natural instincts of the heart. This is why, as we grow as Christians, we learn more and more to act not according to the way we feel, the natural inclination, but to act according to teaching of Jesus and the leading the Holy Spirit.

## **II. A DEMONSTRATION: Like a Child v. 35-37**

Jesus is teaching His men the truth that true greatness is achieved through the humble service of others. If you really want others to respect you, serve them. Put them before yourself and meet their needs, forgetting about your own needs. Give them the first seat, without wanting anything in return.

To drive this lesson home, Jesus takes a child and places him before the disciples, **v. 36**. He tells " **Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.**"

The word "**receive**" carries the idea of "**displaying hospitality**". In those days, hospitality was everything. When a person showed up at your house, you were expected to "**receive**" them and serve them, meeting all their needs.

Jesus is telling us that when we serve the least among us, we are in reality serving Him. By serving Him, we are serving His Father as well.

Jesus could have just told them this. Why did He use a child? I think there are several reasons. First, children in that society were at the bottom of the social ladder. They were viewed as mere property and largely ignored by most adults. Second, Jesus used a child to teach His disciples about service because children really can't do anything for adults. A child can't enhance a person's position in society. A child cannot add to your success. A child can't make you more

important in the eyes of the world. However, a child can teach you much about ministry!

Think about it, every parent in this room knows what happens when you have a new baby. That child demands everything! From day one it must be served, every need must be met by a willing adult. Children come into our homes and they take constant care and attention. If they are ignored, they let you know all about in loud and irritating fashion. When parents have children, they learn what giving and service are all about. When that child is born you give and you give and you give. When that child grows, you give and you give and you give. Often, even when they reach adulthood, you give and you give and you give.

Jesus used a child because children need to be served, but they cannot serve us in return. That is a lesson we all need to take to heart. Too often, we only serve those who can do something in return for us. The Lord would have us reach out to those who are the neediest. He would have us serve those who cannot or even will not serve us in return. He desires that we do as He did and give our all for those who may break our hearts in return.

Often the church will reach out, but when we do, we often reach out to people who are like us. We look for those we think will be a blessing to the church. We want people with money, talent and potential. We look for people who can help us become a success.

Jesus, on the other hand, had a habit of reaching out to people who could do nothing for Him in return. (Ill. Jairus' daughter; The Widow of Nain; The Gaderene Demoniack; Bartimaeus; the Dying Thief, etc.)

Greatness is not in prominence, but actually in obscurity! Not in pushing yourself forward into the limelight, but stepping back into the shadow and serving! Not lording over other people, but being a servant - voluntarily taking the lowest place of service and living for other people instead of yourself! Now that is radical! It's the way of the cross:

'Wouldst thou be great, then lowly serve;  
Wouldst thou go up, go down;  
But go as low as e'er you will,  
The Highest, has gone lower still'.

That is what Jesus did the night before He died. His disciples were so busy arguing about who should be the greatest that not a one of them would humble himself and wash the feet of the others, as was the custom of the day. But, when Jesus and His disciples finished their meal in the upper room, Jesus put a towel around His waist and washed His disciple's feet, **John 13:1-17**. Jesus took the place of a slave and washed the dirty feet of men who would run away before dawn. He washed the feet of Peter who would deny Him three times before dawn. He even washed the feet of Judas Iscariot who would betray Him in to the hands of His enemies that very night.

Jesus freely served those who would break His heart. When the next day dawned, Jesus performed the greatest service of all when He went to Calvary to die on the cross for sinners who hated Him and wanted nothing to do with Him.

Jesus set the example for us. He was a servant of the neediest people of all. He was a servant to those who could never repay Him. He was a servant to those who would fail Him, deny Him, and dishonor Him. He was a servant to you and men when He died on the cross, **Mark 10:45**.

We need to set our hearts on those who need Jesus, without regard for what they can bring to the table or contribute to the church. We need to fulfill our Lord's command to "***Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled,***" **Luke 14:23**. We need to wash the feet of those around us, regardless of their position in society, their ability to help us, or their power and influence. We need a heart that is willing to serve the least among us for the glory of God alone!

The great things are sometimes the small things. Fred Craddock illustrated it this way:

"To give my life for Christ appears glorious," he said. "To pour myself out for others...to pay the ultimate price of martyrdom-I'll do it. I'm ready, Lord, to go out in a blaze of glory.

"We think giving our all to the Lord is like taking a \$1,000 bill and laying it on the table-'Here's my life, Lord. I'm giving it all.' "But the reality for most of us is that he sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there. Listen to the neighbor kid's troubles instead of saying, 'Get lost.' Go to a committee meeting. Give a cup of water to a shaky old man in a nursing home. "Usually giving our life to Christ isn't glorious. It's done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time. It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory; it's harder to live the Christian life little by little over the long haul."

The Biggest Person in the universe once became small enough to learn what it means to be a human being. He became small enough to serve sinners like you and I by dying for us. He became small enough to bring peace between you and God. Even when He was small, He was still the Biggest Person the world has ever seen.

Who's the greatest in New Covenant Baptist Church? The greatest person in this church is the person who serves others selflessly, with no thought for what they might receive in return. The greatest person in this church is the person who is willing to take the last place so that others can be first. The greatest person in this church is the person who seeks to serve those who can never give anything back in return. Does that describe you?

Or, has God spoken to you about this matter of serving Him by serving others. If He has, you need to come before Him and surrender to His plan for your life.

Are you saved? If you aren't, you can be! If the Lord is speaking to your heart about the greatest need of your soul, you need to come to Him and be saved today.