

# MARK 10

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## **Mark 10:1–12. Jesus Answers Questions about Divorce**

*Adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 548–559.*

This test posed to Jesus aims to place Him in a controversy, as this issue was debated heavily among the Jews of the time. Although virtually all parties agreed that divorce was permissible, there was some disagreement about the conditions under which it should take place. The potential trap may lie in the fact that although divorce is permitted (Deuteronomy 24:1–4), God’s displeasure with it is declared in Malachi 2:14–16. Jesus comes down firmly on the side of Malachi, explaining that divorce is tolerated, not prescribed, and this only because of “hardness of . . . heart.”

The citation of Genesis shows that men and women were created to be joined, not separated, and places the two on equal footing. Note that in the question (as well as in the divorce regulations of Deuteronomy) it is assumed that only the man may initiate the divorce process. Jesus’s response to His disciples’ follow-up question places equal responsibility and obligation upon both husband and wife for marital fidelity and perpetuation. His comments also seem to suggest that remarriage is a form of adultery. This can be viewed as a compounding sin upon the one who “put away” their former spouse due to “hardness of heart.”

## **Mark 10:13–16. Jesus with the Children**

*Adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 559–563.*

Mark does not tell us anything about these children or who brought them to Jesus, and this anonymity may help us to understand that Jesus’s love for children is universal. As is often the case in Mark, the

disciples misunderstand the importance of the moment and want to have the children removed, rebuking those that brought them (“rebuke,” Greek *epitimaō*, is strong, being the same word used to remove demons). Jesus is upset at this lack of understanding, reminding the disciples that God’s kingdom belongs especially to innocent children. As in the chapter prior (9:33–37), children stand as a model to all of faithful acceptance and humility.

### **Mark 10:17–22. Jesus and the Rich Man**

*Adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 564–569.*

Jesus’s refusal to accept the appellation “good” is confusing, but this may reflect traditional Jewish deference to God. The question itself is built on the faulty assumption that eternal life is to be earned through doing something—Jesus has just explained that the kingdom of God is to be received “as a little child”; little children cannot, presumably, work in such a way that they could earn an inheritance to the kingdom. Eternal life is given, not earned. This does not mean, however, that such a gift is unconditional, as the rest of this episode demonstrates.

Despite this lack of understanding, the man seems to be sincere. His honest effort to keep the commandments is commendable, and Jesus looks on him lovingly. His injunction is tailored to provide the man with what he is missing: total commitment to the Savior and His Gospel. We do not earn eternal life through our actions; rather we qualify for it through total surrender or consecration. This is a high mark, and many of us often fall short of it, as does this man. In the end, the man’s failure to comply represents a failure to follow Jesus with any sort of real commitment.

### **Mark 10:23–31. Jesus Teaches about Wealth and Sacrifice**

*Adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 570–576.*

Some older manuscripts omit the phrase “for them that trust in riches” from verse 24, underscoring that entering the kingdom of God is a difficult task for all, not just the rich. However, for those who “trust in riches” rather than Jesus, such a task would be impossible. The image of a camel passing through a needle’s eye, ridiculous as it may be, is a hyperbolic illustration of this difficulty (a camel being perhaps the largest animal with which the disciples would have been familiar and a needle’s eye being a tiny space). The disciples’ surprise at this declaration may reflect an understanding that worldly riches were a sign of God’s favor. Verse 27 once again refutes the false notion assumed by the man who approached Jesus that eternal life is earned through human action.

Peter's comment, while not incorrect, seems to be fishing for praise. He is pointing out the contrast between the disciples and this man, perhaps hoping for some sort of reward. Jesus's response avoids flattering the Twelve and instead emphasizes the universal rewards of sacrifice, which are available to all who follow Him. These rewards are promised in "this time" as well as "in the world to come," an echo of covenant promises "in time, and through all eternity" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:19). The seeming failure to receive all these blessings before one dies does not nullify God's word, for in the Resurrection (that is, the millennial day), a period during the earth's mortal probation (thus "in time"), God fulfills all the promises He has made to all who have entered His covenant prior to their reception of it in eternity.

### **Mark 10:32–34. Another Prediction of Death**

*Adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 577–581.*

"Going up" (Greek *anabainō*) describes both the physical climb (Jerusalem is situated at a relatively high elevation) and the spiritual ascent to the Holy City. Jesus's position at the front of the group provides a model for discipleship (the disciples were following Him) and demonstrates His willingness to face death in Jerusalem. It is probably for this reason that the disciples are amazed and afraid. Jesus's statement, which mirrors His two previous predictions of His death (Mark 8:31; 9:31), places blame on the shoulders of the Jewish leadership and the Gentiles, not on the Jewish people. Unlike with the previous two predictions, the disciples' reaction is not recorded—perhaps because Mark has already told us that they are amazed and afraid.

### **Mark 10:35–45. Jesus Teaches about Authority in the Kingdom**

*Adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 581–588.*

Jesus, wary of His disciples' tendency to misunderstand, does not immediately accede to James and John's request. It seems that they have ignored His repeated warnings about His coming death and are focused only on the potential glory that they might have in the coming kingdom. But Jesus understands that these—His death and the kingdom's glory—are integrally connected, and His question in verse 38 indicates that glory only comes after the suffering. The brothers' enthusiastic response, "We can," demonstrates how little they understand of what is to come. Jesus does concur, however, as the disciples will eventually share in His suffering, with many of them dying for His cause. At the moment, though, the other members of the Twelve are upset over an apparent attempt at a power grab by James and John.

Jesus resolves this conflict by explaining that authority in His kingdom will be fundamentally different to that in the kingdoms of the world. Greatness, Jesus explains, should be sought through service. Jesus,

whom James and John pictured upon a throne, is in reality the greatest servant of them all. Some of the words and themes of verse 45 echo Isaiah 53, suggesting that Jesus’s greatest act of service will be the vicarious atonement that He will offer for many.

## **Mark 10:46–52. Jesus Heals Bartimaeus**

*Adapted from Julie M. Smith, The Gospel according to Mark (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2019), 588–597.*

This healing story is more personal than many of the others encountered in Mark’s Gospel, and it can also be read as a call to discipleship. Bartimaeus is the only person in Mark who calls Jesus the Son of David—perhaps an ironic lesson in that this blind man is the only one able to recognize who Jesus really is. The reference to Bartimaeus being called and to his abandonment of his old clothing perhaps symbolizes the beginning of his new life as a disciple. This symbolism is strengthened by Bartimaeus’s actions immediately upon receiving sight—he follows Jesus “in the way,” even though he likely knows that this way will lead to pain and suffering, as it will for Jesus. Such is the path of discipleship.

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