

# Growing Deeper in Mark

## MARK 9.42 – 10.16

**VERSES 42-50:** We have a series of short teachings dealing with the priority of this world in comparison with the priorities of the next world. Just before the transfiguration, Jesus was attempting to instruct the crowds (and the disciples) what it meant to be a disciple. These teachings continue that theme.

**VERSE 42:** Children had the lowest social status in Jewish culture. This teaching not only conveys the importance of passing along the faith to the next generation, but the importance of sharing the gospel with all people no matter their social/economic/political standing. It is better to be fitted with concrete swim fins, so to speak, than to not share the gospel! Maybe this is a good time to offer our evangelism class again?!?!

**VERSES 43-48:** NO! NO! Jesus is not recommending self-mutilation. Deuteronomy 14.1 prohibits it. This is hyperbole. How can we be sure? Because your hand, foot, or eye cannot cause you to sin. Jesus has already taught us that it is what proceeds from the heart that makes us unclean (Mark 7.20-23). What Jesus is teaching us is that there are things in this world that entice us to sin and we must be willing to cut those things out of our lives. That can be the people we associate with, the things we watch on TV or the internet, items that we covet, and so on. Better to live this 80 or so years on earth denying ourselves than to allow them to keep us from inheriting eternal life!

**VERSE 49:** According to Garland (*The NIV Commentary Series, Mark*, p. 370), an early interpretation of this verse pointed to Leviticus 2.13 which taught that all offerings should be salted. This would be the same idea as Romans 12.1 that we are to offer our whole selves to God as living sacrifices.

**VERSE 50:** I take this verse to be talking about a purity of lifestyle both in regards to how we relate with those outside the church (Jesus commands us to be salt in the world, Mt. 5.13) as well as those inside the church.

**CHAPTER 10 VERSE 1:** Jesus is working his way to Jerusalem. The crowds come to him and 'as was his custom, he taught them.' Are you allowing Jesus to teach you through this series in Mark? It is his great desire!

**VERSES 2-4:** The Pharisees seek to 'test' Jesus by asking him about divorce. They may possibly want to try to usher Jesus down the path that led to the John the Baptist's demise? But what they get is another schooling from Jesus that turns their assumptions on their heads. He asks what Moses commanded. They say Moses permitted divorce (Dt. 24.1-4).

**VERSES 5-9:** Jesus gives some amazing insight into scripture that the permission to divorce was a concession to the peoples hardened hearts. He then points them back further to Genesis 1 and 2 for God's intention for marriage. It is to be between one man and one woman, for lifetime. Divorce is not God's intention, but when hearts are hard and it takes place, the weak must be protected. (The Matthew 19 account of this teaching records Jesus making an allowance for divorce in the event of sexual immorality.)

**VERSES 10-12:** In private with the disciples, Jesus further expresses his intention that once divorced, remarriage is not an option. These are difficult teachings that many will not accept in our current culture. It is the recurring struggle that takes place throughout the gospel, God's ways are not our ways. Marriage, ultimately, is not about us, our pleasure, or our preferences. For the disciple of Jesus, marriage is a covenant intended to represent God's covenant with his people, to provide for procreation, to facilitate the transmission of faith from one generation to the next, and to enable stable relationships that bring blessing to all. Divorce short-circuits God's good intention in these critically important ways. Unfortunately, our culture prioritizes sex, self-fulfillment, and happiness in the determination of what constitutes a worthwhile marriage.

**VERSES 13-16:** We began this week's notes with Jesus warning against causing 'one of these little ones-those who believe in me-to stumble' and we conclude it with Jesus' indignations with the disciples for trying to keep the children from him. To me, it is instructive that Jesus hardline teaching on divorce is sandwiched between two accounts of the importance of children accessing the gospel. Jesus not only wants children included in the gospel but also lifts them up as an example. We must receive the gospel with the recognition that we come empty-handed with no standing that makes us worthy to be saved.