



NG Study Guide: Matt. 20:17-34 “The Kingdom and Sacrifice, Service and Sigh” [4.2.17]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.

The Study

Q1. Jesus asked, “What do you wish?” [21]; and “What do you want me to do for you?” [32]. What an interesting idea to consider. How would you respond?

A. Jesus’ Sacrifice [17-19]: Jesus’ death and resurrection predicted:

Jesus is headed to Jerusalem [17] and again tells the disciples [17] of His death and resurrection [19] [Mt.16:21, 17:12-23]. The Sanhedrin functioned as the Supreme Court and Congress of the Jews and were the chief priests and scribes [18]. The Sanhedrin could issue a death sentence but during the Roman occupation only Rome could execute. Thus, Jesus would be delivered to Gentiles who would mock, scourge, and crucify [19]. This was the first time the manner of death is predicted.

Jesus’ death reveals His sovereignty [Ex. 12, Ps.22, Is. 53]: Jesus’ death occurs exactly how and when He predicted as foretold by the prophets. The astronomical odds against this reveal that Jesus is in control of these events.

Jesus’ death reveals His sacrificial love “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father” [Jn.10:18]. Jesus voluntarily gave His life so man could be redeemed to God.

B. Jesus’ example [20-28]: Sacrificial service

Jesus serves sacrificially and for God’s glory [20-24]

The mother of Zebedee’s sons (James and John) [20] is likely Jesus’ aunt Salome. Mark tells us that James and John sent their mother to Jesus [Mk.10:35]. They were seeking positions of power and authority in Jesus’ kingdom. The right hand was the place of honor and authority, and the left was the second position [21]. They are to be commended for their faith that Christ would establish His kingdom. They likely expect an imminent earthly kingdom soon after Jesus arrives in Jerusalem. But, *their selfish ambition is being contrast with Jesus’ sacrificial service.* They did not realize the sacrifice involved in

what they were asking [22]. Jesus' reference to His baptism [22] and His cup [23] referred to His suffering. Despite their assent about their willingness to sacrifice for Him [22] they did not understand. Jesus foretold that they would suffer [23]. James was the first of the twelve to be martyred [Ac.12:2], and John lived a martyr's life being exiled to Patmos [Rev.1:9]. Jesus affirms that the Father is the one who determines positions of authority [23] [Ps. 75:6-7]. The other disciples were greatly displeased [24]. We are to serve sacrificially for God's glory (not self-glory). There is no crown without the cross. Carnal ambition causes division and is an obstacle to unity.

Jesus came to serve not to be served [25-28]

Unbelievers in positions of authority in the world generally abuse authority and seek to be served [25]. In Christ's kingdom, greatness flows from serving others rather than being served [26-27]. Those who desire to lead in the kingdom will be servants to those they influence [27]. Slaves had no personal agenda, did not serve for accolades, but simply pursue the Master's interests. Jesus, who had every right to be served, came to serve not to be served, and to give His life to pay the penalty for our sin. *"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another"* [Gal. 5:13]. God's glory is demonstrated by Jesus at the cross, and by us in sacrificial service to God and others.

Q2. How does Jesus' sacrifice and example motivate you to sacrificially serve God?

Jesus' restoration [29-34]: Two blind men receive sight

Those who have been restored by Jesus want to follow Him

Jericho was a desert oasis about fifteen miles away on the main road to Jerusalem. A bush grew there that was believed to help blindness. Many blind people made their way to Jericho [29] and survived as beggars [Lu.18:35]. Matthew records two blind men [30] while Mark and Luke focus on one - Bartimaeus. The Greek term translated "cried out" was used to describe a woman's cries in labor. They were desperate, and cried for mercy to relieve their condition [30]. They refer to Jesus as, "Lord, Son of David" a Messianic title [30-31]. They had no eyesight but they had insight! They believed that Jesus could heal and restore their lives. They seek mercy. There is no sense of entitlement. Despite the crowd's effort to quiet them they continue to cry out to Jesus [30-31]. They refuse to let the opinion of the crowd keep them from Jesus.

Jesus stops and asks them, "What do you want Me to do for you? They wanted to receive their sight [33]. Jesus showed compassion and touched their eyes, and miraculously they immediately received their sight [34].

Those who see Jesus want to follow Him: "And they followed Him" [34].

When we "see" Jesus of the Bible: the Christ, and His glory, majesty, perfection, justice, holiness, love, grace, mercy, compassion, and understand His gospel it is only reasonable for us to want to follow Him.

Q3. How has Jesus restored your life (consider spiritual, emotional, and/or physical restoration)?

Q4. How are you seeking to serve Christ in this season of your life?

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

This week spend time in your neighborhood and wave at neighbors that you see. If they respond in a friendly manner look to introduce yourself and start to know your neighbor(s).

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. Feel free to use an icebreaker question or activity** to get to know one another better.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.