

## **Dr. Mark Jennings, Mark, Session 16, Discipleship, Rich Young Ruler (Mark 9:30-10:31) Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Jennings, Mark, Session 16, Discipleship, Rich Young Ruler (Mark 9:30-10:31), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Mark Jennings' lecture on Mark 9:30-10:31 explores key aspects of discipleship.** He examines the disciples' **lack of understanding** regarding true followership, highlighted by John's concern about an unaffiliated exorcist. **Jesus emphasizes humility and warns against hindering those with lower social status**, using children as an example of the required posture for entering God's kingdom. The lecture then transitions to **Jesus' teachings on divorce**, contrasting God's original intent for marriage with human concessions due to hardness of heart. Finally, the encounter with the **rich ruler** illustrates the difficulty those attached to wealth face in embracing true discipleship, further emphasizing the themes of humility and reevaluation of values.

**2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Jennings, Mark, Session 16 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels → Mark).**



**Jennings\_Mark\_Session16.mp3**

### **3. Briefing Document: Jennings, Session 16, Discipleship, Rich Young Ruler (Mark 9:30-10:31)**

#### **Briefing Document: Mark 9:30-10:31 - Discipleship, Divorce, Children, Rich Ruler**

**Overview:** This lecture by Dr. Mark Jennings delves into Mark 9:30-10:31, focusing on key themes related to discipleship: the disciples' lack of understanding, true honor, the nature of belonging, the seriousness of causing others to stumble, the radical call to avoid sin, the teaching on divorce, the welcoming of children and the nature of child-like faith, and the encounter with the rich ruler and the difficulty for the wealthy to enter the Kingdom of God.

#### **Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:**

##### **1. The Disciples' Misunderstanding of Discipleship and True Honor:**

- The lecture highlights the disciples' continued struggle to grasp the true meaning of following Jesus. They operate based on "their own cultural norms, their own pride, and their own arrogance."
- The episode with the unnamed exorcist (Mark 9:38-41) illustrates this. John objects to someone casting out demons in Jesus' name because "he was not following us."
- Jennings emphasizes that John's concern is with their group ("us"), not necessarily Jesus ("you").
- Jesus rebukes this exclusivity, stating, "Do not stop him. For no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us."
- This underscores that belonging to Christ transcends belonging to a specific human group of followers.
- The disciples' behavior contrasts with the example of prayer, previously discussed, which signifies "humility and dependence on God." John, being absent during the disciples' failure to cast out a demon, still exhibits a lack of humility in his reaction to the successful exorcist.
- Jennings suggests John's reaction might stem from a concern about their own "honor or sense of greatness" being diminished.

## 2. The Seriousness of Causing "Little Ones" to Stumble:

- Jesus warns against causing "one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble" (Mark 9:42), stating, "it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea."
- Jennings clarifies that "little ones" in this context refers not necessarily to innocent children, but to "lowly ones or perhaps ones who are vulnerable to stumbling, falling into some sort of sin, or receiving a rebuke."
- John's attempt to stop the exorcist could be seen as causing such a stumbling, potentially discouraging someone affirming Christ.
- This passage emphasizes the responsibility of believers to edify and support one another, not reject those who operate outside their immediate circle but align with Christ.

## 3. Radical Call to Avoid Sin (Mark 9:43-48):

- Jesus uses hyperbolic examples of cutting off a hand, foot, or tearing out an eye if they cause one to sin.
- "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to Gehenna, to the unquenchable fire."
- Jennings clarifies that this is not a call for self-mutilation, which was prohibited in Second Temple Judaism.
- These are metaphors emphasizing the urgent and radical need to remove anything in one's life that leads to sin and separates one from God.
- The use of hand, foot, and eye signifies the "totality of the person" – actions, direction, and desires.
- "Gehenna" is explained as a valley south of Jerusalem that became a symbol of "divine punishment" in Second Temple Judaism, evolving from a place of Canaanite sacrifices to a trash reservoir.
- This section reinforces the danger of seeking one's own status and glory, which leads to God's judgment.

#### 4. Jesus' Teaching on Divorce (Mark 10:1-12):

- The Pharisees question Jesus about the lawfulness of divorce, attempting to "test him." Their question, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" was not the typical debate, which centered on *when* divorce was lawful according to interpretations of Deuteronomy 24:1-4.
- Jennings highlights that Deuteronomy 24:1-4, allowing a man to divorce his wife if he finds "some indecency" in her, was not a general teaching on divorce but specifically addressed the prohibition of remarriage between a divorced couple after the woman had married someone else. The debate among Jewish schools (Shammai and Hillel) revolved around the definition of "indecency."
- Jesus redirects the discussion to God's original intention for marriage, quoting Genesis 1:27 ("God made them male and female") and Genesis 2:24 ("Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh").
- Jesus emphasizes the unity created in marriage: "so that they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together; let not man separate." (Mark 10:8-9).
- Mark's account lacks the "exception clause" found in Matthew regarding sexual immorality ("porneia"). Jennings suggests this might indicate different teaching occasions or Mark's focus on contrasting the Pharisees' concession to "hardness of heart" with God's original design.
- Privately, Jesus tells his disciples that "whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (Mark 10:11-12), again without the exception clause.
- Jennings argues that Jesus is highlighting how the religious leaders' interpretations allow for the violation of God's commandments, including adultery, by prioritizing human tradition over divine intent, similar to their rulings on *Corban* and the Sabbath.

### 5. Jesus Welcomes Children (Mark 10:13-16) and the Nature of Child-like Faith:

- The disciples rebuke those bringing children to Jesus, reflecting the low social status of children in the ancient world. They are acting as "prequalifiers" of who is worthy to be in Jesus' presence, similar to the religious leaders' criticism of Jesus eating with "tax collectors and sinners."
- Jesus is "indignant" at the disciples' actions, emphasizing that "to such belongs the kingdom of God."
- Jennings clarifies that this passage is not about the "age of conversion" or infant baptism, but about who the Kingdom belongs to – the marginalized and those of low social status.
- The statement "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mark 10:15) emphasizes the *manner* of reception.
- Child-like faith is not about innocence but about "humble faith," recognizing one's "lower and weak and dependent upon God" status, without the "pretension of their status." The example of the Syrophenician woman is used to illustrate this dependence.
- The disciples, in their concern for their own status, are failing to embody this child-like humility.

### 6. The Rich Ruler (Mark 10:17-31) and the Difficulty for the Wealthy:

- A rich man asks Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" This is presented as a genuine question, not an attempt to test Jesus.
- Jesus' response, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone," is interpreted as potentially challenging the man's flattery and prompting him to recognize Jesus' divine nature.
- Jesus lists several commandments from the second half of the Decalogue, focusing on human interactions, but omits "You shall not covet" and the commandments related to devotion to God. Jennings suggests the silence on covetousness is significant.
- The man claims to have kept these commandments from his youth. Jesus, looking at him, "loved him" and said, "You lack one thing. Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

- This call to sell everything was not a universal command but specific to this man's need to detach from his "covetousness and his desire for wealth." Jesus gains nothing personally from this.
- The man goes away "sorrowful, for he had great possessions," demonstrating his inability to surrender his wealth.
- Jesus then tells his disciples how difficult it is for the wealthy to enter the Kingdom of God: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."
- The disciples are "exceedingly astonished" because in their cultural understanding of honor and status, wealth was often seen as a sign of God's blessing. Jesus' statement challenges this perception and suggests a fundamental incompatibility between clinging to wealth and fully embracing the Kingdom.
- Their question, "Then who can be saved?" reveals their dismay at what seems like an impossible standard, even for those who have seemingly left everything to follow Jesus.

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Jennings' lecture provides a detailed analysis of Mark 9:30-10:31, revealing crucial insights into the nature of discipleship. The disciples' ongoing struggles highlight the need for humility, dependence on God, and a reevaluation of societal values. Jesus' teachings on divorce reaffirm God's original design for marriage, while his embrace of children underscores the importance of a humble and dependent faith. Finally, the encounter with the rich ruler exposes the potential barrier that wealth can create to entering the Kingdom of God, challenging conventional notions of blessing and status.

## 4. Study Guide: Jennings, Session 16, Discipleship, Rich Young Ruler (Mark 9:30-10:31)

### Mark 9:30-10:31 Study Guide: Discipleship, Divorce, Children, Rich Ruler

#### Quiz

1. What was the issue John brought to Jesus' attention in Mark 9:38, and what was the underlying reason for his concern?
2. Explain Jesus' response to John's concern about the man casting out demons. What principle did Jesus emphasize in his reply?
3. According to Dr. Jennings, what is the significance of Jesus' hyperbolic statements about cutting off a hand, foot, or tearing out an eye? What is he truly urging his followers to do?
4. How did the Pharisees attempt to test Jesus regarding divorce in Mark 10:2, and what was the common debate surrounding divorce in Second Temple Judaism?
5. What was Jesus' counter-argument to the Pharisees' justification for divorce based on Deuteronomy 24? What aspect of Moses' writings did Jesus emphasize?
6. How did Jesus' teaching on divorce to his disciples in private differ from his initial response to the Pharisees, and what is the implication of this stricter teaching?
7. Why were the disciples rebuking those who brought children to Jesus? What does Dr. Jennings suggest was the underlying reason for Jesus' indignation?
8. According to Dr. Jennings, what is the significance of Jesus' statement that one must receive the kingdom of God like a child? Is it about innocence or something else?
9. What was the rich ruler's question to Jesus, and what was potentially paradoxical about his phrasing?
10. What was the specific "one thing" that Jesus told the rich ruler he lacked, and what did this reveal about the ruler's priorities and understanding of discipleship?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. John told Jesus they tried to stop someone casting out demons in Jesus' name because the man was not following *them* (the disciples). The underlying reason

appears to be a sense of exclusivity and perhaps a concern for their own status or honor, as they struggled to cast out a demon earlier.

2. Jesus told them not to stop the man, stating that "no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me." He emphasized that those who are not against them are for them, suggesting a broader understanding of who is aligned with his mission.
3. These hyperbolic statements are not a literal call for self-mutilation, which was prohibited in Second Temple Judaism. Instead, they emphasize the urgent need to remove anything within oneself (symbolized by hand, foot, eye – representing totality) that leads to sin, self-promotion, and seeking one's own glory, which leads to divine judgment (Gehenna).
4. The Pharisees asked Jesus if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife. The common debate in Second Temple Judaism was not whether divorce was lawful, but *when* it was lawful, specifically what constituted legitimate grounds for divorce based on interpretations of Deuteronomy 24.
5. Jesus countered by referencing the creation account in Genesis, emphasizing God's original design for marriage as the union of male and female into "one flesh." He argued that Moses' allowance for divorce was a concession due to the "hardness of your heart," implying the Pharisees were focusing on a secondary provision rather than God's primary intention.
6. In private, Jesus told his disciples that whoever divorces his wife (without exception) and marries another commits adultery against her, and vice versa. This stricter teaching suggests that from God's perspective, a human certificate of divorce does not necessarily dissolve the marriage bond, and remarriage without divine sanction constitutes adultery.
7. The disciples were rebuking those bringing children because, in the ancient world, children had very low social status, and the disciples seemed to be acting as gatekeepers, determining who was worthy of Jesus' presence based on their own (flawed) understanding of social standing. Jesus was indignant because they were hindering those of lower social status, echoing the Pharisees' criticism of his association with "sinners."
8. According to Dr. Jennings, receiving the kingdom like a child is not primarily about innocent faith but about a humble, dependent faith that recognizes its own lowliness and need for God. It's about coming without pretension of status or



value, similar to the Syrophenician woman's acknowledgment of her dependence.

9. The rich ruler asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" The phrasing is potentially paradoxical because inheriting is typically something received by birth or grace, not something earned by doing. This highlights a potential misunderstanding of how one obtains eternal life.
10. The "one thing" Jesus told the rich ruler he lacked was to sell all his possessions, give to the poor, and follow him. This revealed that despite claiming to have kept the commandments, the ruler's wealth held a higher priority in his life, preventing him from fully committing to discipleship and surrendering his desire for material security and status.

### **Essay Format Questions**

1. Analyze the interactions between Jesus and the disciples in Mark 9:30-10:31. How do these interactions reveal the disciples' ongoing misunderstanding of Jesus' teachings on discipleship, humility, and the nature of the kingdom of God?
2. Compare and contrast Jesus' teaching on divorce in his conversation with the Pharisees and his private instruction to the disciples in Mark 10:1-12. What does this reveal about the intended audience and the level of understanding Jesus aimed to achieve with each group? Discuss the significance of the "exception clause" in Matthew's account in relation to Mark's.
3. Discuss the social and theological implications of Jesus' encounter with the children in Mark 10:13-16. How does this episode challenge prevailing social norms and offer insights into the characteristics of those who belong to the kingdom of God?
4. Examine the story of the rich ruler in Mark 10:17-31. What does this encounter reveal about the obstacles that wealth can present to genuine discipleship? How does Jesus' response connect with his broader teachings on priorities and the kingdom of God?
5. Trace the theme of true discipleship as it emerges in the various episodes within Mark 9:30-10:31 (the unnamed exorcist, the hyperbolic warnings against sin, the teaching on divorce, the blessing of the children, and the encounter with the rich ruler). What consistent message does Jesus convey about what it means to be his follower?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Discipleship:** The state of being a follower or learner of a particular teacher or philosophy. In the context of the Gospels, it refers to following Jesus Christ and learning from his teachings, often involving a commitment to a new way of life.
- **Gehenna:** A valley on the southern side of Jerusalem that, by the time of Jesus, had become a symbol for divine punishment and the place of eternal fire. It originated as a site of Canaanite sacrifices and later became a refuse dump.
- **Hyperbole:** Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally. Jesus often used hyperbole to emphasize a point or illustrate the importance of certain actions or attitudes.
- **Second Temple Judaism:** The period of Jewish history between the rebuilding of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (around 516 BCE) and its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE. This period saw the development of various Jewish religious and political movements.
- **Decalogue:** The Ten Commandments, a set of ethical and religious principles given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, foundational to Jewish and Christian ethics.
- **Porneia:** A Greek term often translated as sexual immorality, fornication, or unchastity. Its precise meaning was debated but generally encompassed various forms of illicit sexual behavior.
- **Eschatological:** Relating to the "end times" or the ultimate destiny of humanity and the universe, often involving concepts of judgment, resurrection, and the kingdom of God.
- **Social Status:** A person's standing or importance in relation to others within a society, often determined by factors such as wealth, birth, occupation, and social connections.
- **Covetousness:** Excessive desire for the possessions of others, a transgression against the Tenth Commandment.
- **Hardness of Heart:** A biblical concept referring to a state of stubbornness, resistance to God's will, and a lack of spiritual understanding or responsiveness.

## 5. FAQs on Jennings, Mark, Session 16, Discipleship, Rich Young Ruler (Mark 9:30-10:31), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on Mark 9:30-10:31

**1. Why did John try to stop the man casting out demons in Jesus' name?** John and the other disciples attempted to prevent a man from performing exorcisms in Jesus' name because he was not part of their immediate group of followers. Their concern was rooted in a sense of exclusivity and the belief that only those directly associated with them had the authority to act in Jesus' name. This incident highlights the disciples' limited understanding of discipleship and their inclination towards group-centric thinking rather than recognizing a broader movement aligned with Jesus.

**2. What was Jesus' response to John's concern about the independent exorcist, and what does this teach about inclusion?** Jesus rebuked John, stating, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us." This response emphasizes a principle of inclusion and recognizing the positive impact of actions performed in Jesus' name, regardless of group affiliation. It teaches that allegiance to Christ transcends adherence to a particular human collective and that those who are effectively furthering God's work should be affirmed, not opposed.

**3. What is the significance of Jesus' hyperbolic statements about cutting off a hand, foot, or tearing out an eye that causes one to sin?** These are not literal commands for self-mutilation, which would have been contrary to Jewish law. Instead, Jesus uses hyperbole to underscore the extreme seriousness of sin and the urgent need to remove anything in one's life that leads to it. The hand, foot, and eye represent the totality of a person's actions, direction, and desires. Jesus is emphasizing that if anything, even something seemingly integral, is a source of temptation and sin, it must be radically dealt with to avoid eternal judgment (Gehenna).

**4. How did the Pharisees attempt to test Jesus regarding divorce, and what was the underlying debate about divorce in their time?** The Pharisees questioned Jesus about whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife, intending to test him and potentially discredit him, especially given Herod Antipas' controversial divorce. The prevailing debate in Second Temple Judaism was not whether divorce was permissible (as Deuteronomy 24:1-4 seemed to allow it), but rather *when* it was lawful. The schools of Shammai and Hillel held differing views on what constituted "indecency" (the grounds for divorce), ranging from unchastity to even minor domestic issues.

**5. How does Jesus respond to the Pharisees' question about divorce, and what does he emphasize about the nature of marriage?** Jesus redirected the conversation by asking what Moses commanded, leading the Pharisees to cite Deuteronomy 24. However, Jesus countered by appealing to the creation account in Genesis, stating that God made them male and female and that the two shall become one flesh. He emphasized that marriage, from the beginning, was intended as a permanent union divinely ordained, where two become one, and what God has joined, no human should separate. He thus frames the original intent of marriage as a lifelong commitment, implicitly criticizing the lax interpretations of divorce based on the "hardness of heart."

**6. How did the disciples react to people bringing children to Jesus, and what was Jesus' response and its meaning?** The disciples rebuked those who were bringing children to Jesus, likely due to the low social status of children in that era. They seemed to be acting as gatekeepers, determining who was worthy of Jesus' presence. Jesus, however, was indignant and instructed them to let the children come to him, stating, "for to such belongs the kingdom of God... whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." This highlights that entry into God's kingdom requires a posture of humility, dependence, and a lack of pretension, like that of someone with low social standing who recognizes their need. It is not necessarily about childlike innocence but rather a recognition of one's dependence on God, contrasting with the disciples' striving for status and honor.

**7. What question did the rich young ruler ask Jesus, and what was Jesus' initial response?** The rich young ruler approached Jesus and asked, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus first responded by questioning why he called him good, stating that only God is truly good. This could have been a challenge to the ruler to consider the implications of calling Jesus "good."

**8. What did Jesus tell the rich young ruler he still lacked, and what is the significance of this encounter in the context of discipleship?** After the ruler claimed to have kept the commandments, Jesus, looking at him with love, told him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." This encounter reveals that true discipleship requires a willingness to prioritize God and others above material wealth. The ruler's inability to part with his possessions demonstrated a fundamental obstacle to following Jesus, highlighting the potential conflict between worldly attachments and wholehearted commitment to God. It also illustrates that discipleship involves not just outward obedience to commandments but also an inner transformation regarding one's values and priorities