

# Discussion Guide

Week of April 21, 2013

Mark 9:42-50

## Passage Overview:

Chapters 9–10 of Mark describe the journey of Jesus and his disciples to Jerusalem. This is the way to the cross. In these chapters Jesus explains what it means to be his disciple. This teaching is built around three predictions of his death (8:31; 9:31; 10:32–34). We learn that to follow Jesus is to accept the way of the cross—a life of service and sacrifice. Here, in 9:42-50, Jesus uses hyperbole (an intentional overstatement) to show the seriousness of sin and the fact that nothing, even things of great importance to humans such as a hand, foot, or eye, can be more important than God. Jesus' words serve as a sober warning concerning the severity of sin, which can lead to hell and "fire that is not quenched" (vv47-48).

## Understanding God's Word—Read Mark 9:42-50.

- Who are the "little ones" referred to in v42? (Think back to vv35-37.) Why does Jesus illustrate his point with children again? How does it underscore sin's severity? How is sin (and its consequences) described in this passage?
- Jesus speaks more often about hell than any other person in the Bible. What does he tell us here?

## Living and Applying God's Word

- In v42, Jesus warns those who would cause "little ones who believe in me" to sin—those who would seek to destroy the faith of a child or a new believer. Why is this so reprehensible?
  - Surprisingly, Jesus says these words to his disciples, implying that the disciples are going to discourage and lead new believers to sin if they don't overcome their pride, party spirit, and self-righteousness (see vv34-37). How is this a warning to us? How does this play out?
- The disciples are thinking of their status and position in the kingdom instead of focusing on the needs of others (i.e., the "little ones" in their care). What do we learn here about leadership in the church (especially the characteristics that should mark pastors)?

## Turning to God in Faith and Repentance

- How does Jesus tell us to handle sin in our lives?
  - In what ways can saying "no" to sin be painful in the short-term? This is why Jesus describes it in such gruesome terms: as self-amputation. Why is this short-term pain worth it in the end? Compare this pain to the *eternal* torment of hell.
  - Identify a specific stronghold of sin in your life. Do you take it as seriously as Jesus tells you to? Why or why not?
- Hell can be defined as "a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked." In what way is the eternal nature of hell described in v48? How might an unbeliever respond to this teaching? How would you answer this response?

**Prayer:** Confess together that you are helpless sinners who are saved by Jesus and him alone. Thank God that he has saved you from hell and delivered you into his everlasting kingdom. Pray also for Jim McKnight as he serves with Navigators on Fort Benning.

## Announcements

- Meet & Greet (April 21, immediately after the service)
- "One Another" Member Meeting (May 5, 6–7:30pm)
- Starting Pointe classes (May 17, 6:30-9pm; May 18, 9-noon; May 19, 6-7:30pm)