

Mark 10:32-45 "Getting Ready for the Cross" [**\[1\]](#)

Main Idea: According to Mark 10:32-45, we need to get intentional about cross-focused living. In this passage we're confronted with three vital truths pertaining to the cross.

I. Jesus lived for the cross (32-34).

A. It's why He went to Jerusalem (32).

B. It's why He revealed what was going to happen to Him in Jerusalem (33-34).

II. We tend to marginalize the cross (35-40).

A. James and John ask Jesus for a favor (35-37).

1. We are prone to think that Jesus exists for us.

2. We must learn that we exist for Him.

B. Jesus corrects the brothers (38-40).

1. He helps them see their folly.

2. He reminds them of the Father's authority.

C. The other disciples have the same problem (41).

III. We need to be like Jesus (41-45).

A. We must reject the world's agenda (42).

1. To be successful is to be **over** people.

2. You exist for me.

B. We must adopt Jesus' agenda (43-44).

1. To be successful is to serve.

2. I exist for God and you.

C. We must delight in doing what Jesus did (45).

1. He came to serve others by dying for them.

2. He sets us free so we too can serve.

Application: Let's get intentional about cross-focused living.

1. Memorize verses about the cross.

2. Sing a song a day about the cross.

3. Invest time in a Bible study on the cross.

4. Help other people think about the cross.
5. Live the kind of life that speaks well of the cross.

In less than two weeks Good Friday will arrive. On Good Friday many people think about the cross of Jesus, perhaps and unfortunately for one of the few times in the year. Something as significant as the cross of Jesus deserves more than a day a year of our attention, to say the least. It ought to be foremost in our thinking on a daily basis, indeed, moment by moment.

I can assure you that our brothers and sisters in Nigeria are thinking about the cross more than once a year. Last week while attending the board meeting of ABWE, I heard reports that the churches in Nigeria recently engaged in a campaign of prayer and fasting. The result? They've committed themselves to send 10,000 new missionaries into the Muslim world of North Africa with the message of the cross. And when the Nigerians commission a new missionary he is sent off with the realization he may well never come home again.

And it's not just in Nigeria. I learned that the fastest rising missionary sending country in the world is the Congo. I also learned that church leaders recently met in Turkey to discuss a plan to mobilize churches in central and eastern Europe. For what purpose? To address the economic challenges at home? No. To launch missions movements to take the good news of Jesus Christ to the lost.

I'm so challenged by these reports. Our brothers and sisters around the world have so much less than we do materially, yet they are looking for ways to invest the resources they do have to make Christ known.

Are we really thinking about the cross? I heard the report on Friday that Easter sales are up this year by 20 percent, mostly for chocolate. That's the world's idea of getting ready for Easter, buying chocolate and a new outfit. How interesting. I thought Easter was about Christ, not chocolate. Nothing wrong with chocolate, but there's everything wrong with ignoring the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

I want us to spend a couple of weeks in a series I'm calling, "Getting Ready for the Cross." We're going to look at two passages from Mark's Gospel. Next time, which is Palm Sunday, we'll go to Mark 11, the Lord willing, and watch Jesus head into Jerusalem. And without even mentioning the word cross, the Lord makes it quite clear that He is getting ready for the cross.

But this morning, let's go to Mark 10. It's a powerful text, a convicting text, a perspective-shaping text. According to Mark 10:32-45, we need to get intentional about cross-focused living. Specifically, in this passage we're confronted with three vital truths pertaining to the cross.

I. Truth #1: Jesus lived for the cross (32-34).

One of the things you notice from a study of Jesus' life is that He lived with intentionality. He lived to accomplish the agenda His Father gave Him. Hear it from His own lips...

John 4:34 "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

John 5:36 "For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me."

John 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me."

John 17:4 "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do."

From the cradle on, this was Jesus' agenda, to go to the cross in obedience to His Father's will. Jesus

lived for the cross. We see two examples of His resolve in verses 32-34.

A. It's why He went to Jerusalem (32). "They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way." Stop there. Where were they heading? To Jerusalem. Why Jerusalem? Jesus has an appointment to keep in that city, an appointment placed on His calendar by His Father in eternity past. In a very real sense, Jesus has been on His way up to Jerusalem since the manger, indeed, since the divine council before time. It would be in Jerusalem that He would give His life as a sacrificial lamb.

Don't miss Jesus' location in the procession. He is **leading the way**. No one coerced Him to go to the cross. Hebrews 12:2 says, "Who for the joy set before him endured the cross." See Him, beloved. His gaze is set, His gate filled with resolve. He is going to Jerusalem and nothing will stop Him.

Note the perspective of those traveling with Him, at the end of verse 32, "And the disciples were **astonished**, while those who followed were **afraid**." Why were the disciples astonished and the other travelers [probably Jewish pilgrims traveling to observe Passover in Jerusalem] afraid? Because they knew Jesus was walking into a lion's den. They knew that the Jewish leaders were already plotting to kill Jesus (John 11:53) and Jerusalem was their headquarters.

You say, "Well, didn't Jesus know that too?" He sure did. Verse 32 ends, "Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him." Jesus knew what was coming. And He wanted His followers to know that He knew.

B. It's why He revealed what was going to happen to Him in Jerusalem (33-34).

"'We are going up to Jerusalem,' he said, 'and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.'"

Keep in mind this is a private conversation between Jesus and the Twelve. "We are going to Jerusalem," He told them. He told them what would happen, too. This is actually Jesus' third major prediction of His coming passion (the first in 8:31, the second in 9:31).

The sovereign Lord made eight prophetic announcements about what this trip to Jerusalem would mean for Him. He predicted:

- 1) He will be betrayed (by the very people who should have known better, the teachers of God's Law).
- 2) He will be condemned to death.
- 3) He will be handed over to Gentiles.
- 4) He will be mocked.
- 5) He will be spit on.
- 6) He will be flogged.
- 7) He will be killed.
- 8) He will rise from the dead on the third day.

Some scholars say these verses were added later, as part of "post-resurrection church tradition." The fact is, how you view Jesus will affect what you do with prediction-passages like this one. If Jesus was merely a man, then you will conclude there's no way he could predict His future like he did, and would consequently say his followers inserted these comments later. But if Jesus is truly the Son of God, then predictions like these pose no problem. If He is God, He certainly knows and can foretell the future.

Allow me to restate the obvious. Jesus went to Jerusalem knowing full well the unthinkable agony He

was going to experience. Why then did He go? It boils down to one very simple reason. He lived for the cross. And He lived for the cross because He lived to fulfill His Father's agenda for Him.

It was His Father's plan that He, the eternal Son of God, enter this world as a man, live a perfect life, and then die in the place of and for the benefit of undeserving sinners. It was His Father's plan that He leave the tomb alive on the third day, thus gaining eternal life for all who would repent and believe in Him. This was His Father's agenda, and it was this agenda that governed His every decision.

He lived for the cross. Think about that brothers and sisters. For our Lord the cross was at the center of everything He did, every plan He made, every trip He took, every conversation He had. It was all with His cross in mind. That's truth #1.

II. Truth #2: We tend to marginalize the cross (35-40).

Note the first word of verse 35, "Then." Right after Jesus announced that He was going to be betrayed and killed, two of His followers approached Him.

A. James and John ask Jesus for a favor (35-37). Verse 35—"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.'"

How's that for timing! The Lord had just poured out His soul to these men. "I am going to be condemned, mocked, spit upon, flogged, and killed," He shared. "It's going to happen when we arrive in Jerusalem," He made it clear. Their response?

"Yea, Jesus, okay. We want You to do for us whatever we ask."

Where did **that** come from? Didn't they hear what He just told them? He just revealed that He is going to suffer horribly, and they want to know if He will do something for them. They didn't deny the cross. They just marginalized it.

It makes me think of what happens in the typical home when mom says she's feeling like she's getting sick. How do dad and the kids respond? "Oh, mother dear. If you aren't feeling well, why don't you go lay down? You deserve to think of your needs. We'll take care of the chores." Hardly. A more typical response would be, "Oh no! Are you sick, Mom?! I hope you're not contagious! By the way, before it gets really bad, would you mind fixing our supper, ironing our clothes, washing the dog, and running me to my ballgame?"

The way James and John treated Jesus isn't so different from us, is it? We hear Jesus say to us in His Word, "I gave My life for you. If you want to be my disciple, you must take up your cross daily and follow Me (Mark 8:34)." And what do we say to Him? "Yea, Jesus, okay. I want you to do for me whatever I ask. I want a better job. I want better health. I'd like a better marriage. So how about it?"

It boils down to competing agendas. Simply put...

1. We are prone to think that Jesus exists for us. He is there to do our bidding, to help us get what we think we want out of life. That's what we sinfully assume.

2. We must learn that we exist for Him. "All things are from Him, through Him, and TO Him. To Him be the glory forever (Rom. 11:36)."

Matthew's account indicates James and John weren't alone. Their mother also approached Jesus and made this request (20:20).

Calvin had this to say: "This narrative contains a bright mirror of human vanity; for it shows that proper and holy zeal is often accompanied by ambition....They who are not satisfied with himself alone, but seek this or the other thing apart from him and his promises, wander egregiously from the right path."^[2]

Keep in mind that these aren't Jesus' enemies talking. These are His closest earthly friends. These sons of Zebedee have forsaken their fishing business to follow the Master. Yet they still struggle with competing agendas. Take heart if you can relate.

If I had just shared with my friends about my upcoming death and they responded with the kind of self-seeking request James and John gave, I think I would have lit into them... "Didn't you hear me! Get your self-centered eyes off of you and think about me for a moment!"

Not Jesus. He gently used the moment to teach His men an important lesson. He begins with a question in verse 36, "'What do you want me to do for you?' he asked." In other words, "Let's put your agenda on the table so we can see it for what it is." Sometimes if we're going to change we must be forced to see how ugly our self-promoting agenda really is.

Verse 37—"They replied, 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.'" We do see some commendable traits in James and John here. We see their **faith**—the very boldness of their request indicates that they believe Jesus is going to reign in glory, that death will not hold Him. We see their **dedication**—even though a hostile crowd awaits them in Jerusalem they are going with their Master no matter what. We see their **devotion** for Jesus—they want to be near Jesus, as close as possible, even right next to Him as He sits on His throne.^[3]

Yet no amount of faith, dedication, and devotion can justify self-promotion. What right do James and John have to ask for this honor? Do they think they deserve to be at Jesus' right and left hand in glory, and the other disciples **don't**? That's a question they're about to hear from the other disciples!

But let's be honest. We, too, think more highly of ourselves than we ought. That's because we are by nature **proud** people. And like these brothers, we need Jesus to set us free from our self-promoting agendas so that we might seek first His cross-centered, kingdom agenda. Watch what the Lord does next...

B. Jesus corrects the brothers (38-40). Verse 38—"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said." How's that for setting the record straight! "Men, you don't know what you saying. Your perspective is way too narrow."

To help them Jesus uses a question in verse 38? "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" By asking that question...

1. He helps them see their folly. To Jewish ears, the cup symbolizes trouble and suffering. The image comes from the Old Testament, for instance, Psalm 75:8, "In the hand of the LORD is a cup full of foaming wine mixed with spices; he pours it out, and all the wicked of the earth drink it down to its very dregs." Baptism in water also symbolizes suffering and trouble in the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g. Psalm 18:16; 69:1-2).

Can you join me in the suffering I'm about to experience? Can you share in my fate? That's what Jesus is asking. The brothers' response?

Verse 39—"We can," they answered." These words indicate that James and John are ready to take on whatever comes their way, such is their love for Jesus. But love can be blind...and misguided.

Jesus said to them in verse 39, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with..." Little did these men know the price they would pay for following Jesus. James would be the first apostle to die as a martyr. John would be boiled in oil and banished to the isle of Patmos, the last apostle to die.

In addition to helping them see their folly...

2. He reminds them of the Father's authority. Verse 40—"But to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

Note those words, “Not for me to grant.” They make it clear that even Jesus’ authority is delegated. Though He is God Almighty, He lives in submission to His Heavenly Father. He obeys His Father. He yields to His Father.

To paraphrase Jesus’ words, “What you’ve asked of Me is not mine to give. I didn’t write the plan. I came to carry it out. You want to know about who will sit on thrones. That’s an agenda question. I don’t make the agenda. You certainly don’t make the agenda. That’s the Father’s prerogative. He wrote the script. It’s His agenda that matters to Me, and it’s His agenda that should matter to you.”

One of the tragic characteristics of sin is that **it breeds**. It doesn’t stay alone. It spreads. It infects those with whom it makes contact. My initial sin creates a ripple effect that can turn into a tidal wave. We see this illustrated in verse 41, “When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.” Simply put, James and John aren’t alone...

C. The other disciples have the same problem (41). An **agenda** problem! When the ten heard what James and John asked Jesus, they were “indignant”—the word means “incensed, offended, irate.” Why were they upset? Was it righteous indignation, that is, were they upset because the brothers had brought Jesus a foolish, even sinful request? No. They were upset because the brothers asked for something they wanted **for themselves**. They too wanted the highest place. They too were marginalizing the cross.^[4]

The reason the ten could so easily spot pride in their partners is because pride lurked in their own hearts. J. D. Jones offers an important insight:

“It takes a conceited man to spot conceit in another; it takes a passionate man to detect bad temper in another; it takes a jealous man to discover jealousy in another. And so these ambitious disciples were quick to discover the ambitiousness of James and John, and were correspondingly irritated by it.”^[5]

Far too often we have a stain-glass view of the apostles. We wrongly think they were made of different “stuff” than we are, that somehow living for Christ came easier to them than it does for us, that they didn’t have the kinds of sinful hearts that plague us. The fact is, they were **just like us** and the Scriptures go out of their way to make that plain.

So answer this. What makes you angry? Do you get upset when other people get what you want? Do you see what that anger is revealing? You have a heart in which an agenda competition is taking place, and your anger is making it very clear which agenda means most to you.

Jesus lived for the cross—that’s why He went to Jerusalem. But just like the apostles, we tend to marginalize the cross—that’s why we’d rather talk about our thrones than His cross.

You say, “Yes, that’s me. What needs to happen?” It’s not complicated...

III. Truth #3: We need to be like Jesus (41-45).

Back in 2005 three Christian women by the names of Rebekka Zakaria, Ratna Bangun and Eti Pangesti were sentenced to three years in prison in Indonesia. Their crime? They had started a children’s program in Eti’s home and were using songs, Bible lessons, and games to teach children about Jesus. After 18 months the program was so popular that there were 40 children coming, many from Muslim homes, and all with the consent of their parents.

In spite of the parental consent, Rebekka, Ratna, and Eti were arrested. At their trial a hostile mob brought a coffin to the courtroom and made it clear to the judge that if he didn’t send these women to prison, they would take justice into their own hands and kill the women. And so these mothers were found guilty, separated from their families, and sent to prison with a three year sentence.

What's more, Rebekka was a medical doctor who had treated 30 to 40 Muslim and Christian patients every day in her clinic. But she was stripped of her license and sent with her two friends to a prison that housed 437 inmates, of which 16 were women. They were placed in a 16 feet by 16 feet cell that housed 8 women. They had no sheets or blankets, and had to pay a bribe to the guards to get water to flush the toilet.

What do you do when you've been falsely accused and are being unjustly treated? If you're living for the cross you do what these women did. I read in *Christian Today*^[6] how these women obviously cried, and then they transformed the prison by cleaning washrooms and toilets and scrubbing cells. They painted in bright yellow and blue the walls of the room they used for church services where they shared the love of Christ with prisoners. The effect of their presence was obvious to all. Quarrelling within the prison was reduced and because of Rebekka, Ratna and Eti's calming influence the guards overruled prison protocol and allowed each woman to have her own knife and spoon in their cell. The three ladies were actually released from prison one year early in 2007. ^[7]

I can tell you this. There are three followers of Christ who, like their Savior, did **not** marginalize the cross.

How can we become more like that? According to what Jesus said next, it requires three things.

A. We must reject the world's agenda (42). "Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.'"

According to the world's agenda...

1. To be successful is to be over people. Note Jesus' emphasis on the word **OVER** here. In the world successful leaders are those who lord it **over** their subjects, who exercise authority **over** them. As far as the world's thinking goes...

2. You exist for me. If you get the job that I want, I resent you. If your child gets the award I think my child deserves, I become sour towards you. And if I'm a leader and you are under my authority, I expect you to advance my cause because **you exist for me**. So it is in the world.

But listen carefully to Jesus' first words in verse 44. **Not so with you.** We must flat out reject the world's agenda. The world's agenda of success must go. It has no place in the minds of the followers of Jesus Christ.

Let's be honest. Every conflict that has ever occurred in Wheelersburg Baptist Church's 132 year history took place because there were competing agendas. Every conflict that's every happened behind the four walls of my house and yours happened for the same reason. People don't fight when they're living for the same agenda. Church members don't fight. Husbands and wives don't fight. People at work don't fight. Fights occur when people pursue competing agendas. That's why Jesus calls us to reject the world's agenda. In it's place?

B. We must adopt Jesus' agenda (43-44). "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."

What does Jesus say about true success here? This...

1. To be successful is to serve. Business owner, the world often says that you measure success by how many people are **under** you in the chain of command. God measures success by how many people you are serving. In other words, are you using your position of authority for His honor and the good of others? The world says that you exist for me. To the contrary, Jesus says...

2. I exist for God and you. This is not my world. This is God's world. Love God and love neighbor, this is the essence of God's Law, of God's **agenda** for us.

We need to retrain our thinking according to this agenda. It starts in our prayer closet. Remember how Jesus taught us to pray? "Father, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Those two requests have to do with our agenda. Whose agenda should matter in the life of a child of God? You can tell what's on a person's heart by what they pray.

Allow me to illustrate the point with two prayers...

Prayer #1: "Oh Lord, please give me a better job. And while I have your attention, please make my physical pain go away. And I'd sure like better neighbors."

Contrast that prayer with prayer #2: "Oh Lord, my job is hard but help me to honor You there. And my body aches, but help others to see You in the way I respond to my pain. And yes, my neighbors do offensive things, but please help me to model Your unfailing love to them."

Which of the above prayers comes from a heart that's fixed on the cross? It's obvious, isn't it? When we have our agenda in mind, we tend to view God as a Cosmic Bell-hop. But when our perspective of God is accurate and our focus is on His agenda, our constant cry will be, "Oh Father, cause **Your kingdom** to come and cause **Your will** to be done, on earth (and especially in my life) as it is in heaven."

Every day we make dozens of decisions and those decisions reflect the agenda that is controlling our hearts. Consequently, every day we must choose to reject the world's agenda and adopt God's agenda. What does that look like in living color? Our Lord pointed to Himself in verse 45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Simply put, when it comes to our agenda...

C. We must delight in doing what Jesus did (45). What did Jesus do? We're told two things about our Lord here.

1. He came to serve others by dying for them. He didn't come to get, but to give. What He gave was His very life, and He gave His life as a ransom payment.

Because of Adam's sin and our own, we enter this world in captivity. Jesus came to set sinners free. God's agenda was that His Son make a ransom payment at the cross. And that's what He did. What should have happened to the many happened to His Son. What sinners deserved, He took upon Himself. He took their place. He died as their substitute.

Who benefits from His ransom payment? Those who admit the truth about their bondage and place their faith in Him, accepting Him as Savior and Master. If you will call on Christ He will set you free today! But know this...

2. He sets us free so we too can serve. If Jesus' agenda was to serve, can ours be less? He doesn't set us free so we can do our own thing. He liberates us so we can follow in His steps.

He lived for the cross. We tend to marginalize the cross. We need to be like Jesus. To **know** Him and to be **like** Him...that's what we need and in that order. To know Him as Savior, and then to be like Him in ways that will attract others to Him.

Application: Let's get intentional about cross-focused living.

Here are five very practical things you can do to put the cross center-stage at this season and year round.

1. Memorize verses about the cross. Like Galatians 6:14, and 1 Peter 2:24, and Philippians 3:10-11, and Isaiah 53:6. Fill your mind with God-inspired statements about the cross. To help you, we've put the verses just mentioned to music and are learning them together as a church this year.

2. Sing a song a day about the cross. Sing wonderful old hymns like "At the Cross," "Hallelujah!

What a Savior!," "There is a Fountain," "Rock of Ages," and "Beneath the Cross of Jesus." And sing new songs about the cross too, like "Before the Throne of God Above," and "In Christ Alone." Sovereign Grace Ministries has produced a contemporary sounding CD "Songs for the Cross-Centered Life" that I have found meaningful.

3. Invest time in a Bible study on the cross. Work carefully through a good book on the cross, like John Piper's *The Passion of Jesus Christ*, or R. C. Sproul's *The Truth of the Cross*. Go deeper in your understanding of what happened to our Savior on that tree.

4. Help other people think about the cross. I urge you to open up your home on Good Friday and invite friends to join you for a Bible study about the cross. If you can't host one, then attend one and invite your friends to go with you. How can we keep the good news to ourselves? This morning, pick up a packet of invitations and then this week go invite your neighbors and friends to find out what Good Friday is really about.

5. Live the kind of life that speaks well of the cross. A life like our Savior lived, a life that's says no to self-seeking agendas because it's consumed with the eternal joy that comes from the Father's agenda.

****Note:** This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] This message has been adapted from an earlier study at WBC in an expository series in the Gospel of Mark.

[2] Quote taken from W. Wessel, p. 720.

[3] In fact, Jesus had just told them (see Matt. 12:28) that the twelve were going to sit on twelve thrones, so James and John are simply taking Him at His word...with a self-focused twist. We want the closest thrones!

[4] It's worth noting that in the previous chapter we find these twelve men arguing about...*who was the greatest!* At which time Jesus taught them about servanthood (9:33-37).

[5] J. D. Jones, p. 380.

[6] <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/imprisoned.christian.sunday.school.teachers.in.indonesia.establish.church/4178.htm>

[7] http://www.opendoorsuk.org.uk/news/news_archives/001913.php