

How many of you have been in a car where a man has been driving and is lost but they refuse to ask for directions? Why do men struggle in this? Apparently it is quite common. One research project in Britain showed that some men drive an extra 400 km a year trying to figure out where they are. A survey of 1000 motorists also revealed that 26% of men would drive for up to 30 minutes before asking directions. 12% flatly refused to ever ask for help.

Why do men do this? Well I went to the internet to find out since everything on there is true. Here's some theories as to why men don't ask for directions when lost.

One – men don't want to appear weak and incompetent. Their egos are very fragile. So they won't ask.

Two – men prefer to learn by doing not by being told what to do. That's why boys in general don't do as well as girls in school. They don't want to sit still and listen. They want to experiment and find solutions themselves. So a grown man doesn't want to ask for directions because it means he couldn't figure it out himself.

Three – Men want to win. So if they don't figure out the way themselves, they consider it a loss.

One man reflected on this and wrote the following. "On more than a few occasions I have driven around my city lost and getting more lost by the minute. I know I am not alone as a male in doing this. Why do I do this? Well, to ask for directions is to admit I am lost. To admit I am lost is to feel anxious and incompetent. To feel anxious is dangerously close to fears about many things. To feel incompetent is to feel less than other competent men. It seems easier to just fumble around and try to figure it out myself. To avoid dealing with this, perhaps it's better to just get a GPS in my car (which I have), but then of course I might have to ask directions on how to use that (which I haven't).

So men generally seem to have more of a problem asking for directions when they're lost. Yet, isn't this silly. If we would only be willing to ask for directions, we could learn the way. Yet this refusal to try another way is not limited to men when they're driving. We can sometimes slip into this "its got to be my way" attitude in our lives. We don't want to receive directions from God. But what if God's ways are better than our ways? What if Gods ways will actually lead us to His good purposes and our best interests?

So we get frustrated with God because He has not provided the solution we want. We might get angry with God because He's taking so long to answer our prayers. We might have distanced ourselves from God because answered in a way we didn't like. We struggle to accept the different ways in which God works.

Today I want to show you 3 examples of the upside down ways God accomplished His good purposes. Then we will see how we can accept these ways and embrace what God has for us through them. I pray that at the end of our time together, you will be encouraged to trust God and His upside down ways with whatever direction you need in life today.

**Mark 10:32-45 English Standard Version (ESV) pg. (714)**

<sup>32</sup> And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, <sup>33</sup> saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. <sup>34</sup> And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

<sup>35</sup> And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." <sup>36</sup> And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" <sup>37</sup> And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." <sup>38</sup> Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" <sup>39</sup> And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." <sup>41</sup> And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. <sup>42</sup> And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave<sup>1</sup> of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus and His disciples are on the move again. But this time they begin their final journey together. Verse 32 tells us they were going up to Jerusalem. Jesus shared with the disciples about His upcoming suffering at the hands of the chief priests and elders. They lived in Jerusalem. So they are going towards a confrontation. The disciples also heard him say that He must be rejected and killed.

But look what else this verse reveals. "Jesus was walking ahead of them." This was not the normal walking arrangement for a teacher with His disciples. They normally walked beside their disciples to receive questions. But it now seems Jesus resolutely sets His face towards Jerusalem to bring about the ultimate fulfillment of His mission.

At the end of verse 32 we read they were amazed and those who followed were afraid. Perhaps Jesus resolve amazed them. Their fear may have come from considering the implications of Jesus actually establishing His kingdom. Would they have to fight? Would there be bloodshed? How would they overcome the Romans?

Yet somewhere on this journey, Jesus again takes the twelve aside to further teach them. Verses 33-34 contain Jesus third prediction of His upcoming suffering and death. It goes into further detail about the coming events. His second prediction in Mark 9:31 Jesus revealed that he would be delivered into the hands of men. Here he reveals a double deliverance. First, he would be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes. Then after condemning Him to death, they will deliver Him over to the Gentiles. Then Jesus describes the suffering He will endure. In His first prediction in Mark 8:31, Jesus taught them He must suffer many things. Here are some of them; He would be mocked, spit on, flogged and then killed. After 3 days he will rise.”

Here we see the first upside down way of God. **He delivers His people by delivering His Son to those who condemned Him to death (10:32-34).** How is this an upside down way? If we set out to “deliver” a people, we would most likely do it by popular revolt or some sort of uprising that physically overthrows those in power or by winning some legal cases. But Jesus would deliver people by allowing Himself to be delivered over to corrupt authorities. They would condemn and kill Him. But in giving Himself up this way, He would deliver not only His people but all in the world who would receive Him.

When I started to seriously read my Bible in my mid-20's, it was revelations like this that really spoke to me. For some strange reason, I used to think God would do things like humans would. But so often He accomplishes His purposes in unexpected ways. Through the Old Testament we see Him put the youngest above the oldest again and again which went against common practice. We also see God choose a weak people called Israel to bring His salvation to the world. He didn't work through the empires of Egypt, Persia, Greece or Rome. He would rescue a people enslaved to the Egyptians and continually conquered by others. Here we see that He will deliver His people by delivering over His own Son. Whenever we see something happen in our lives that came together in ways we couldn't have planned or imagined, that might indicate God at work.

Well Jesus makes this announcement to the disciples. They continue on their journey. This leads to one of my favorite scenes in the Gospels. 2 brother disciples, James and John, somehow get Jesus alone after the 3<sup>rd</sup> announcement of His suffering. What might we expect a sympathetic disciple to say to Jesus after that? “Wow Jesus, what you face sounds

very tough. We want to pray for you and walk with you through this difficult time.” But what do James and John say? “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” Instead of offering support to Jesus they will ask something from Jesus. Parents, how would you respond to this statement from your kids? “Mom and Dad, I want you to do whatever I’m going to ask of you.” “Oh for sure kids. Whatever you want.” Jesus has a lot more wisdom than that.

He wisely replies, “What do you want me to do for you.” Then James and John come with the “ask.” They only ask for the two most prominent positions in His coming kingdom. Verse 37 – “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” This request probably made perfect sense to these brothers. In one way, it is kind of like their confession of faith in Christ. They believe He actually will bring in His kingdom. Remember last week we talked about the honor and shame culture? It was usual to boast or compete for position to maintain or elevate your status. So they believe that Jesus is about to establish His kingdom. They want to get the best positions in his cabinet or court. They thought it kind of natural.

And yet their ask shows appalling insensitivity to Jesus’ situation. He faces intense suffering and death. They ask for status and position in His kingdom. But James and John will be in for a huge shock. They think Jesus’ glory means He will soon sit on some throne in Jerusalem. They will then sit on his right and left. But Jesus’ glory will actually occur when He is raised up on the cross. There will be two people on his right and left. Mark 15:27 describes this using almost the exact same wording of James’ and John’s request – And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left.

But Jesus deals gently with James and John. Back in Mark 10:38 he states, “You do not know what you’re asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” The cup was a symbol of what comes into a person’s life, whether it be blessing or difficulty. Here it means a cup of suffering. And can they be baptized with the baptism that’s coming? This is not water baptism. It is also a baptism of suffering. It’s a flood of difficulties that threaten to drown them.

They reply, “We can.” Maybe they thought there might be a couple of scuffles with the temple guards or Romans that they could handle. Or it could be the optimistic naiveté of youth. But they are convinced they can handle whatever comes along.

Surprisingly, Jesus does not rebuke them. Instead, He affirms that they will drink the cup and experience the baptism of suffering. In fact, James will be the first disciple martyred in Acts 12:2. John, though he will live long, will endure many tribulations and sufferings. But Jesus also surprises them by revealing that it is not up to Him to decide who will actually sit on His right and left in the coming kingdom in verse 40. That appears to be a job for God the Father.

Then in verse 41, the rest of the disciples show up. They either hear the end of this conversation or they hear that James and John have asked for the two most important positions in Jesus' coming kingdom." How do the 10 respond? Have they absorbed and begun to practice Jesus' teaching that "Whoever wants to be first must be last?" Do they say "James and John, we can't believe you're asking to be first when Jesus taught us to be last." No. They are mad because the brothers beat them to it. They wanted those most honorable positions.

Yet Jesus seizes another opportunity to teach about God's upside down kingdom. So here's the second example of God's upside down ways. **He commands His followers to lead not by lording but by serving (10:35-44).** Jesus reminds the disciples of something they all know about – the way Gentiles rule. He's probably referring to the Romans. They lorded it over their servants and conquered peoples. They expected people to serve them. So if you weren't a Roman, you're sole purpose was to serve the empire and keep it going. They led by expecting others to serve them. But Jesus says "But it shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first must be last."

That is totally upside down to the way the way powerful people ruled. Instead of expecting the people to serve them, the disciples were to lead by serving the people. We must lead with the best interests of the people in mind.

We need to adopt this view of leadership in the church, our families and any other opportunities we have to lead people. It doesn't mean we become wimps or pushovers. But our focus and attitude towards people changes. They don't exist to just serve us and make our names great. We have the privilege of leading them for a while by God's grace. Therefore, we serve and go forward with their interests in mind, not our self-exaltation.

This passage concludes with Jesus showing how this servant leadership approach will be carried out in His own life. But this verse is not just some add on. It is a critical verse in this Gospel and it explains the gospel. It contains the third example of God's upside down ways. **He paid our ransom not from His riches but with His Son's blood (10:45).** Verse 45 – For even the Son of Man (that's Jesus) came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many." So

Jesus didn't come to make the front cover of Time magazine as person of the year. He didn't come to get five billion views on YouTube. He didn't come to snag the title of most famous person in the world. He came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for you and me.

The word translated ransom was used for compensation for personal injury or for purchasing the freedom of an enslaved relative. You and I were prisoners and owed a debt to God. Our sin violated our relationship with Him. The price for release was our lives – our blood. So we couldn't actually save ourselves without dying and being separated from God. But Jesus came along and said, "I will pay the ransom price for them with my own blood."

Now how is this an upside down way? If a human faced a ransom for a son, daughter, family member or friend, they would most likely pay it out of their own riches. Then they could live and enjoy reunification with the person who had been held captive. But God pays the ransom price for us by giving up the life of His own Son.

This ransom theme is picked up through the New Testament. Paul identifies Jesus' death on the cross as a sacrifice of atonement that pays for our redemption, or release and forgiveness of sins. 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:5-6 "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all."

Peter writes about this perhaps reflecting on Jesus words here in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:18-19 – You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." John, one of the brothers, explains that the the worship of the Lamb in Revelation comes back to this saying. Revelation 5:9-11 – "And they sang a new song saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth." So, 3 upside down ways of God that accomplished His good purposes. 1] God delivered us by delivering His Son to be killed. 2] God calls us to be led by serving. 3] God paid our ransom with His sons' blood.

So how will we respond to the reality that Jesus paid our ransom price with His own life? We must first, **Receive Christ and what He has purchased for you.** If you are not a Christian here today, you need to know that Jesus paid the ransom price to release you from slavery to sin and the debt owed to God. Jesus has paid it so you can be free. But you must actually accept this gift and not remain a captive or slave. You actually have to come out of the cell. You have to leave behind the life of slavery and receive what Jesus has done for you. You need to admit that you did sin; that you are

enslaved and that you can't release yourself from the debt you owe. Instead you trust what Jesus has purchased for you.

Will you take His hand today?

**We must receive/believe the repercussion of the gospel in our lives.** We Christians can easily dismiss this. We can say, "Oh yeah, I received Christ and the Gospel sometime in the past. I've done that. But can we? Might we still be living as slaves even though we've been freed? Might we have failed to embrace or fully believe the realities of the gospel about our lives?

Darryl Dash, a pastor friend of mine, has written a book entitled – How to Grow: Applying the Gospel to all of your life. I love his work because he reminds us that the Gospel is relevant today not just when we die. He writes about **7 truths about you because you have received the Gospel.** See if any of these might be a struggle for you to actually believe.

- 1) You're free from guilt and shame.** If you're feeling shame or guilt in general, don't believe the lies. God silences your accuser. He's re-clothed you with the righteousness of Jesus. The final verdict has been spoken over your life. Romans 8:1 – There is therefore NOW no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- 2) You're loved and accepted by God.** We might get criticized, justly or unjustly. Worse things could be said about us all, yet God knows the worst about us and has chosen to pardon and love us. The court's been adjourned. Or maybe you're disappointed by the actions of others, or feeling lonely, but you couldn't be more loved than you are in Christ. You have the love of your Father. He exults over you. He sings over you.
- 3) You've been given the power to change.** Frustrated by your lack of progress? Struggling with negative or damaging patterns of behavior? God is at work in your life. He promises His power. He's changing you from the inside out, and He always finishes what He starts.
- 4) You're part of a new family.** Tired of trying to make it on your own? He's given you a family, and that family is everywhere. He invites you to join part of His family near you to display His glory and to love and be loved.
- 5) You can have hope when you suffer.** We all go through hard times. God knows and God cares. He invites us to grieve, pray, and trust that He's at work even when it's hard. He will one day wipe the tears from our eyes and eliminate death, mourning and pain. Rev. 21:3-5

**6) You can know your life has meaning.** Looking for purpose? God gives us a new identity, meaning, and responsibility.

Your life matters because of the gospel. You're now called to faithfully use everything He's given you – your time, body and more for His great purposes.

**7) You have an example to follow in Jesus.** Need motivation? The blessings of the gospel motivate us to live lives of worship, gratitude, and service. We've been given an example to follow. Feeling insecure? The Gospel motivates us to stop looking at ourselves and instead look to Jesus, and to begin to put others ahead of us. It gives us a freedom of self-forgetfulness.

The final response comes in this areas of leadership. **We need a reformation of our understanding and practice of leadership to accord with Jesus' command.** Leadership according to Jesus is radically other-centered, focused on meeting the needs of others rather than controlling others to meet one's own ends. The values of the kingdom turn the world's system upside down.

Jesus taught His disciples the upside down ways of God. But those ways ultimately led to our ransom being paid and the deliverance of millions from the grips of sin and the devil. We need to let go of doing things our way and not be afraid to ask God for direction in our life. Maybe you can pick one of the 7 and ask the Lord to help you believe and live it out.