

Mark 9:30–41 — The Way Up Is Down

October 13, 2019

Good morning CrossWinds. It is football season, so I am going to open with a football illustration to get into our topic. How many of you remember Albert Haynesworth? He was a defensive tackle that played in the NFL. He was a first round draft pick for the NFL Draft in 2002. He was drafted by the Tennessee Titans. He was 317 pounds of muscle with amazing athleticism. While he was considered one of the most valuable players in the NFL draft, today, he is considered the worst free agent signing in NFL history. What destroyed this amazing athlete that the coaches didn't see coming? This morning we will find out.

Haynesworth's fatal flaw became public in a game between the Tennessee Titans and the Dallas Cowboys. Dallas had scored on the Titans. Andre Gurode, the Dallas center, was on the ground after the play. Haynesworth came up to him and tore off his helmet, then with cleated shoes attempted to stomp on Andre's face. The first stomp of his foot missed Andre's head. The second stomp met its target, leaving a severe wound on Andre's face and narrowly missing his eye. Andre needed 30 stitches to repair the wounds.

Immediately after this happened, someone asked Albert Haynesworth why he attacked the Dallas center and stomped on his face with cleats. He said, "I am a prideful guy. I hate to lose."¹ That was the beginning of Haynesworth's decline

¹ <https://thesportjournal.org/article/when-pride-goes-wrong/>

in the NFL which eventually led to him being known as the worst free-agent signing in NFL history. What destroyed this man was his pride.²

Pride isn't just deadly for football players. It is also lethal for you and me. Today we will find out why.

As a church we are studying our way through the Gospel of Mark. Currently, we are in the second half of this Gospel. The second half of this Gospel is all about answering the question, "Why did Jesus come?" The answer is that Jesus came to die for our sins and rise from the dead. At this point in our study, Jesus only had six months until he died so he was doing everything he could to prepare the apostles for his departure. We just began a section of Mark where Jesus was providing extensive instruction on how followers of Christ were to live in his absence. This section began in Mark 9 and goes to Mark 11. It began with the story we studied last week which instructed his disciples on how to live by faith. Today, Jesus will teach on the danger of pride and the importance of humility. Next week, Jesus will teach about the seriousness of sin. The following week, Jesus will teach us about divorce and remarriage. The week after that, Jesus will teach on the importance of caring for the weak and vulnerable. The next week, Jesus will teach us about money and true wealth. The week after that will be Jesus' lessons on leadership. The next week, Jesus will return to the topic of how we live by faith in the story of blind Bartimaeus. Then, we are at Mark 11, which begins the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, which is the final week of Jesus' life. So for those of you who want a roadmap of what the

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Haynesworth

next few weeks hold, that overview should be helpful. We have Jesus teaching a lot of practical material for the next few weeks. Today, we are on the first of these topics, the topic of pride and humility. Let's read the text together.

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "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. For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward." Mark 9:30–41 (ESV)

Believe it or not, all of this relates to the topics of pride and humility. You will see that as we work our way through the text.

As we go through this text, first, Jesus will teach us what humility looks like by the example of his life. Next, Jesus will give us five precepts and principles about the way pride and humility work affect our lives, our relationships with God, and our relationships with one another. Let's start with Jesus being the example of humility.

Jesus' life shows us what humility looks like.

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. Mark 9:30–32 (ESV)

Where was Jesus leaving? In previous weeks, we learned Jesus took a trip of at least 25 miles north from Galilee to Caesarea Philippi. From Caesarea Philippi, he took Peter, James, and John for a trip up a mountain. They probably climbed Mt. Herom. There Jesus was transfigured. Jesus then returned to Caesarea Philippi and the remaining nine disciples. There he found the remaining nine disciples frustrated because they couldn't help a father and cast a demon out of his little boy because of their lack of faith. After Jesus cast the demon out of the boy, Jesus took his disciples and headed south to Capernaum on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee.



While I traced the road typically traveled between these cities with a dotted line, Jesus may not have used that road. The text says Jesus did not go through populated places on this return trip because he was teaching his disciples. He may not have traveled that popular road. This may be what we call off-road Jesus for this trip.

Jesus had limited time to train his disciples and didn't want to run into people and become distracted while teaching them. Jesus felt like some of us do when our wives send us to Wal-Mart for a quick errand and tell us to come home in a hurry because they are on a tight schedule. When we go to Wal-Mart for what needs to be a quick trip, we hope we don't run into people we know. We wear sweatshirts, put a hood over our heads, then wear sunglasses in the store to be stealthy and unrecognizable. The reason we are trying to avoid people is

not because we don't love them, but because we know we don't have much time to talk to them. Jesus had that stealthy Wal-Mart trip feeling. He was trying to avoid people because he didn't have a lot of time for other people. He needed to train his disciples.

Mark tells us the main thing Jesus kept teaching his disciples at this time was that he must suffer, die, and after three days rise from the dead. In Mark, Jesus told this to his disciples in clear unambiguous words three times. They are Mark 8:31-32 and Mark 10:32-34. I imagine in real life that he told this to his apostles more than three times but Mark records the same thing three times to drive the point home that Jesus kept telling his disciples exactly what would happen to him in the future. Even though Jesus told this to his apostles many times, the problem is every time the apostles heard this, they were dumber than a block of wood when it came to listening to Jesus and understanding Jesus.

Why couldn't they understand this? There are a few reasons. First, I think they didn't understand it because it was intellectually hard to understand. It is not every day someone tells you the way they will die and that they will rise from the dead after three days. Hearing someone predict his own death and resurrection is mentally hard to understand. Secondly, I think it was emotionally hard for them to understand. They loved Jesus. They spent more than two years with Jesus. Jesus telling them that soon he would die was emotionally hard to hear. Their brains didn't want to absorb that truth because it was so emotionally painful.

Third, the reason it was hard for them to understand was because the Holy Spirit kept them from understanding the full significance of what Jesus told

them. After Jesus rose from the dead, what Jesus told them would be crystal clear, but for now it was fuzzy.

Let me show you what I mean. In the parallel passage in Luke, it tells us the Holy Spirit kept them from comprehending the full impact of Jesus' words.

But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.
Luke 9:45 (ESV)

So the Holy Spirit was enabling them to hear Jesus' words, but the Holy Spirit was also keeping them from understanding the full impact of Jesus' words because what was about to take place was so horrifying. One day, after Christ rose from the dead, it would all make sense, but for now, the Holy Spirit was gracious and kept things a bit fuzzy.

The reason God did this was actually to be merciful to them. Some of us think it would be nice to know the future in full detail. No, it wouldn't. If we knew the future, that would eliminate surprises. Worst of all, if we knew all the details about the future and suffering we would face in life, we would spend the rest of our earthly lives living in worry and anxiety, anticipating the suffering that we knew would take place later in our lives. For example, what if you knew you would die at age 70 in a horrifying house fire and be burned alive? What if you knew that would be your future at age 20? How well would you sleep at night for the next 50 years? I wouldn't sleep well! God in his mercy does not tell us the future and all the suffering we will face not because he doesn't love us but because he does love us.

This is what was happening with the apostles. They heard Jesus repeatedly telling them about his upcoming death and resurrection, but the Holy

Spirit was keeping them from understanding the full significance of the horrifying death that was about to unfold.

The most important thing for us to see in this section was that Jesus provided us an example of what true humility looks like. His life and death were humility in action. Jesus is the one who created the entire universe. He didn't have to but he chose to humble himself to take on a human body. In humility, he chose to die a horrid death on the cross for our sin while taking all of our sin upon himself to save us. Jesus didn't have to humble himself to take on a body. Jesus didn't have to die a horrid death for our sin. He did it because he was willing to humble himself and put the will of his father before his will. He humbled himself and put saving our lives before saving his life. Jesus didn't need to do any of this but he humbled himself and put our need of salvation in front of what would be comfortable for him.

Jesus warned about the dangers of pride and the payoff of humility.

Jesus moved from being an example of humility for us to follow to teaching about the dangers of pride and the payoff of humility.

And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. Mark 9:33–34 (ESV)

They arrived in Capernaum. That was the center for most of Jesus' ministry in that area. Peter had a large house there. James, John, and Andrew were fishermen that came from this city. Matthew was a tax collector that came from that city. Returning to Capernaum was like coming home.

While we don't know what house they went to, it is logical to assume it was Peter's house. Jesus always used Peter's house as his base of operations in this city. Peter's house was a large house.

While Jesus and his disciples walked the 25-30 miles from Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum, the apostles were talking on the road. It was an ugly discussion. It was a very ungodly discussion. It is the kind of discussion we hope grown adults never engage in because it makes everyone uneasy. It was a discussion about which one of them was the greatest. Which one of them was the G.O.A.T³. Jesus brought Peter, James, and John with him up the Mount of Transfiguration. I am sure they claimed they were better than others. Peter probably claimed he was Jesus' favorite. He went with Jesus up the Mount of Transfiguration and now Jesus was staying at his house. The apostles were like chickens putting themselves in a pecking order as they argued over who was the greatest in their little group. That brings us to our first lesson on what pride does to people.

1. Pride ruins relationships.

Notice what they were doing. It says they were arguing. When a group of people are talking about which one is the greatest, they will be arguing. This kind of conversation ruins relationships. It burns bridges. It creates a lot of tension in the room.

Pride ruins friendships. Their pride over which one of them was the greatest ruined the relationship they had with one another. There is no way to

³ Greatest Of All Time

hide pride. It starts in the heart but it will always leak into our lives, ruining our friendships. Remember when you were in high school sports? Do you remember that athlete that was really good and pridefully wanted everyone else to know it? Nobody wanted to be that athlete's friend. Pride ruins relationships. Humility creates friendships when you put other people and their needs in front of your own. Pride makes us become critical toward people. Pride makes us judgmental of other people. Pride makes us look down on other people. All of that relational friction comes from pride in our hearts.

This debate over which of them was the greatest didn't end here. It continued all the way to the Last Supper the night before Jesus died. Luke 22:24 tells us the disciples were still arguing over which one of them was the greatest on the night before Jesus died. At that time, Jesus got up and showed them what greatness looks like. He took off his outer garment, put a towel around his waist, and washed the filth off their feet. He did the job of the lowest servant. He gave them an example to follow. Greatness is found in being a humble servant, not in pride.

If we think of ourselves as better than others, not humble and caring of others, we will not have the experience of good friendship. Every good friendship is based on humbly loving, sacrificing, and serving other people. Pride ruins relationships.

Pride ruins marriages. In marriage, pride shows up when we think our spouses are there to serve us and to make us happy. If you think marriage is about you and making you happy, that is pride. It will ruin your marriage.

Marriage is not about you. Think about the vows we use when we enter into marriage. They are promises to be humble and put the needs of our spouses in front of our own. We promise to love our spouses for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, til death do us part. Those are vows of humility. If pride enters in your marriage, you are toast. You are headed for divorce court. When a marriage breaks down, we hear one person saying, "I don't deserve this. I deserve to have someone treat me better. I deserve to have someone love me better." Where do those statements come from? They come from a prideful heart. Pride in marriage will head you to divorce court. Your marriage will not last long. Humility in marriage, where you put the other person before yourself, is the only way for marriage to go the long haul.

Pride ruins churches. For any church to thrive, it does not just need decent music, decent children's programs, and sound Bible study. The church must be filled with humble people that genuinely care about one another and sacrifice themselves to serve one another. When a church is filled with prideful people who put themselves before others, the church will not last long.

How does pride and humility show up in church? It often shows up in the way we treat our schedules. If we hold to our schedules so tightly that we can't fit in time to love and serve other people in our church family, that is because we are prideful people that love our time and our lives too much. We would rather serve ourselves than humbly sacrifice ourselves to serve our brothers and sisters in Jesus.

When a church is filled with humble people willing to set aside their plans to help others in their time of need, great relationships are built and the church thrives.

I remember when we moved into our house a few years ago. It was on a Saturday move in October. That is the absolute worst time to move because in October, everyone is busy with kids' sports and fall travel. I realize that. Some people were so kind. They gave up their Saturday plans to humbly serve and help us move in our time of need. Their kindness to humbly give up their Saturday plans to help us in our time of need touched our hearts very deeply. It cemented a lifelong friendship. Humbling helping our brothers and sisters in Christ in their time of need does that. Pride shows up in churches when people guard their schedules and don't make time for one another in church. Humility shows up when people are willing to flex their schedules to serve others and make time for one another in the church family.

Pride and humility in relationships doesn't just show up when people face crisis moments in the church. It shows up in the everyday church life on Sunday. After church, it is easy to say, "This is my time. How can I get back to my day as fast as possible? How can I get out of here to do my own thing?" Instead, we should say, "No, this is God's time. This is God's day. These are my brothers and sisters. All my time is a gift from God. How can I be humble and give of some time to talk to people I don't know in church? How can I be humble and maybe even invite someone I don't know out to Jimmy John's after church?" When people have someone humble themselves and give them some time, and maybe

even buy them a sandwich, people come back because they love the humility and genuine care of the people for one another.

Pride says, “Church is about serving me. I have to get back to my day. I hope people don’t talk to me after church because that will slow me down because I want to get back to my schedule and my life.” Humility says, “People are more important than my schedule.”

I want to challenge us as a church family. Let’s get rid of the subtle pride we have as we prioritize our schedules, our lives, and our time over loving, caring, and spending time with our brothers and sisters in the church. Let us be humble people who help one another in our times of need and go out of our way to build friendships with one another, just like Jesus went out of his way to love, serve, and care for us.

2. Pride takes away honor.

And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” Mark 9:35 (ESV)

Proud people are always looking to be first. They want to be honored. They want to be recognized. That was why the apostles were arguing. Who was number one? Who was the greatest? Jesus said, “If you want to be in first place, you put yourself in last place and be a servant of everyone.” Don’t just serve people you think are better than you. Serve people you think are under you. That is the secret to true greatness. In God’s eyes, the one who puts himself last and serves everyone is in first place.

In our eyes, greatness is the person who has the greatest position. Greatness comes from CEO title. In our eyes, greatness comes from the size of

our paychecks. In God's eyes, greatness is found by going to the bottom of the ladder and being willing to serve others no matter how low the job. In God's eyes, greatness is not the title on the door. It is how low we will go to serve people.

Let me give you a few examples of what greatness looks like in action. By the coffee bar, we have a garbage can. It is probably too small. Sometimes after church it looks like a Jenga game. The coffee cups are stacked a foot high coming out of the can. People walk by the garbage and say, "I don't need to do that. Somebody is paid to empty that." Other may say, "I am the CEO of my company, I don't empty garbages." Still others may say, "I give lots of money to this church, emptying garbages is for somebody else." All those answers reveal missed opportunities for greatness. Greatness in God's eyes taking out the garbage so those who come after you will have an empty can to use.

Great are those who come early to greet. Great are those who stay late to clean. I think the greatest positions of all in the church are those who work in the church nursery. The nursery is a thankless job, but it is an important job. Some of those diapers are cruel and unusual punishment. Greatness in God's eyes is found by anyone who humbles themselves to change them.

In the office, greatness is found when people stay late to complete a job, even when they could leave early. It is found by humbling serving others in the office, even when it is beyond your job or you are not paid for a particular job. God honors not those who see how high they can climb up the corporate ladder but those who go low and serve others no matter their position. Greatness is found when someone serves ordinary people in unnoticed ways.

Why is greatness found in humble service, not in pride and position? In God's economy, pride comes from the devil. The devil wanted to pridefully exalt himself over God. That was his downfall. Pride comes from insisting on being first. Humility and serving others is the pattern of Jesus. Even though Jesus is first, he chose to take on a body to identify with us. He chose to die the most horrific death known to man to die for us. If you think the filth of the diapers in the church nursery are bad, Jesus soaked in all the filth of our sin when he died on the cross for us. That is going low. That is going to the absolute bottom to serve us and save us.

As Christians, we need to choose the pattern we will follow. Will we be prideful like the devil and exalt ourselves over others or will we be humble like Jesus? Even if we have the top position, will we pursue greatness in God's eyes by being willing to go all the way to the bottom position to serve others?

3. Pride separates us from God.

And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." Mark 9:36–37 (ESV)

In Luke's parallel account, he says this child was standing by Jesus' side. We know this child was large enough to stand up, but we also know this child was small enough for Jesus to pick up. That is important information.

We also know Jesus says whoever receives one *such* child in my name, receives me. If we read this verse quickly, we can miss what Jesus is saying. At first, it sounds like Jesus is simply telling us about the importance of loving children. That may be true, but if we read it closely, we see Jesus is saying much

more than it is important to love children. Jesus said, "Anyone who receives one *such* child receives me." The word *such* is very important. It means one *who is like* this kind of child. What quality of a child in this age group was Jesus wanting us to identify?

If you have a child that is old enough to stand up but still young enough to pick up, you know what they are like. They are human pinballs. They never stop. They are filled with energy. They run everywhere. As a parent, you can't sit down for a minute because you are always running to your child to either save your child or get control of your child. They take a lot of time and energy at this stage of their lives. You feed them and half of their food goes in their mouths. Who knows what happened to the other half of their food. It can be anywhere. In the morning, you make the bed, but you always need to check it because he or she wet the bed. The Wal-Mart parking lot is terrifying because if you are not holding his hand, you know he will run away from you and play in traffic. Children at that age are a lot of maintenance.

When Jesus said, "Anyone who receives one *such* as this child," he was not just talking about little children that take a lot of time, but all people who take a lot of time. Have you met adults where you don't get a lot of energy out of the relationship but at times they can be draining? Anybody met those people? It is not that we don't love them or care about them. It is just that being with them takes a lot out of us, like caring for a child. We are constantly giving to them to meet their needs.

Jesus said when we avoid Christian brothers and sisters that can be draining, the reason we do that is the pride in our hearts. It is our pride that makes us want to only be around people that give us energy and excitement.

Notice what Jesus said here about loving those who can be a little draining on us. There is a hidden blessing. When we love on those relationally taxing people, we are actually loving Jesus. As we love those relationally draining people, we will actually grow closer in our relationships with Jesus and in our relationships with God the Father! As we get to know them better, we get to know Jesus and God the Father better!

Humbly caring for people of low status in this world will be rewarded by God by giving us a close personal experience of God the Father and Jesus the Son. On the other hand, those who are too proud and avoid people that take extra relational energy will not experience a close relationship with Jesus and God the Father.

Let me just show you an example of what this can look like practice. Sunday afternoons many people in the church get together to watch football. Who do we invite over to our houses? We usually invite people who are like us. We invite people the same age as we are. We invite people with the same hobbies we have. The reason we only invite over the people who are like us is because they give us relational energy. We don't invite over Christian brothers and sisters that are different from us because we are prideful. We don't want to humble ourselves and invite over people that take too much energy. When we cut out of our lives those people that can be a little relationally draining, we forfeit

the blessing of inviting Jesus over to our homes and knowing Jesus and God the Father better. Don't miss that blessing! Pursue knowing and loving people that can be like small children and wear us out a bit. We will experience the blessing of knowing Jesus and God the Father better because of it. That is a promise from Jesus.

4. Pride creates an attitude of exclusivity.

John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "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." Mark 9:38–40 (ESV)

At this point, I think the apostle John was starting to feel guilty. He remembered an incident that happened. We don't know when it happened or where it happened, just that John told us it did happen.

The apostles ran into someone that was casting out demons in the name of Jesus, and the apostles told him to stop. It is ironic they did this. Last week, we just saw the apostles couldn't cast out a demon. Here was have a guy who was not part of their little group that successfully cast out a demon. Apparently they were jealous.

This unnamed individual was not doing anything wrong. He wasn't like the seven sons of Sceva in the book of Acts that were trying to pirate the name of Jesus for their exorcism business. No, this fella was a genuine follower of Christ that was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. The only problem was this guy was not part of the apostles' little group. He was theologically aligned with

the apostles but he wasn't numbered among the apostles. That is why the apostles told him to shut it down and stop helping people.

The reason the apostles told this guy to knock it off was because they had narrow prideful hearts that thought the only legitimate work Jesus could do was through their lives, not through other people's lives. The apostles wanted to have a monopoly in the Jesus marketplace. Jesus was not that way. Jesus pointed out that people can only do a mighty work in his name if they are in a right relationship with him. If someone is not in a right relationship with God through Jesus, they won't be able to do a mighty work through Jesus.

Jesus said, "Don't shut that guy down and be so narrow-minded, thinking I can only work through you. If someone is doing good work in my name, they are on my team."

The second reason Jesus gave for why they shouldn't shut the guy down was because whoever is not against us, is for us. The war is between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. There are only two sides. We are not to spend our time fighting other Christians. We are to spend our time fighting against Satan and his demons. The cutthroat pride of the disciples led them to try and destroy anyone who was not part of their little group, when in reality, the enemy was Satan, not other people doing work in Jesus' name.

This obviously has some direct application to us in the modern church. There are other churches in town. It is easy for us to become prideful and think God only works through our church and that he doesn't work through other churches. That just isn't true. Our inability to work with other churches for the

cause of Christ is rooted in the pride of our hearts. Remember that pride ruins relationships. When other churches do a good thing for Jesus and we are unwilling to celebrate that is happening, that reveals the deep-seated pride and jealousy in us. We must remember, we don't fight one another. We fight together against Satan. There are only two sides.

When it comes to working with other Christians and churches, there are two sides to this issue. They are like ditches on the side of an Iowa road. Too far in either direction can leave you stuck. Let me explain these two ditches.

The ditch of narrow-minded theological precision.

This is what we just talked about. This is assuming the only good thing happening for Jesus in our community has our logo attached to it. Too often we assume other churches that love Jesus, but are different from us, are not doing good things for Jesus. That just is not true. God can draw straight lines with crooked sticks. Jesus uses messed up people and he can even use some messed up churches to build his kingdom. Remember God came to save messed up people, and we are part of that group.

Churches may have different worship styles. They can have different views on communion and the way a church should look. We need to make sure those differences don't tear us apart. In history, Christians killed other Christians over what many of us would consider important issues, but they were truly secondary issues.

Does someone belong to Christ? Has he or she trusted Christ and been born again? If she has, then we need to celebrate that and to the degree that we

can work with her, we should work with her. Remember Jesus said there is one enemy. That is Satan.

The ditch of open-mindedness.

While we are to have a big-tent approach to working together with other Christians and celebrating the work God is doing in other churches and other Christians, we need to know that doesn't mean we should collapse all denominations and all churches into one. There are good reasons for churches and denominations to stay distinct.

One resource I ran across in my studies structured it this way. That pastor described three tiers of Christian connection we should consider when it comes to working together.

Tier 1 — Christian or non-Christian. This is what Paul called in 1 Corinthians 15, the doctrines of first importance. This is the lowest level connection. This is agreeing on the problem being sin and the solution being Jesus. These are the essential things of the faith and the most basic things of the faith. The issue here is, "Will this person be in heaven because of Jesus or not?" If he hasn't trusted in Jesus alone through faith alone, then he is not a Christian and we don't connect together. If he or she has trusted in Jesus alone through faith alone, we can join with these brothers and sisters in Christ on this basic level.

Tier 2 - These are the differences between Christians that have broken them into denominations. These differences primarily pertain to differences in the practice of the Christian life and church life. They are not differences that do not involve salvation itself but are the way Christians practice their faith. For example, some

Christians believe communion is just bread and juice. Some believe it actually becomes the body and blood of Christ. Some Christians practice communion once a month;, others practice it every week. Some churches believe infants should be baptized, while other churches believe only in adult baptism. Some denominations are pacifists and do not believe Christians should be involved in war. Other Christians believe it is important to have Christians in the military and sometimes God calls a nation to fight to protect freedom. Some Christians, like the Amish, believe that when the apostle John talked about the importance of separating ourselves from the world that means everyone should wear black, live on a farm and plow with horses, while others believe you can live in the city and drive an SUV.

While disagreements in the Tier 2 area will not keep these Christians out of heaven, they are still legitimate disagreements that give rise to different denominations and churches. That is OK.

Probably the most significant difference between churches in the Tier 2 area are the way different denominations and churches look at this book. Some denominations treat the Word of God casually and let trends of culture redefine what they believe. Other denominations, such as our own, treat the Word of God very seriously even if it is not culturally acceptable.

Tier 3 - Differences within congregations. These should never become a division in Christian churches, but unfortunately, they occasionally become a division. These are issues like homeschooling versus private schooling. Some parents are committed to homeschooling. That is good. Other parents feel their children are

best served in the public school. That is also good. While Christians can have different opinions on this issue, they should not let these kinds of differences divide them apart. They should be able to work together in the same church.

So we want to avoid these two ditches when it comes to working together with other Christians and churches. There is the ditch of narrow-minded prideful exclusivism that never works with other Christians on one side and the ditch of open-minded inclusivism that sees no legitimate differences between churches on the other side.

5. Jesus promises every humble act of service will be rewarded.

For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward. Mark 9:41 (ESV)

The disciples have rewards on the brain. They want to be rewarded. They were looking for a payday. Jesus flipped things upside down. There is no payday for proud people. There is only a payday for humble people. For humble people, even the smallest act of kindness, the giving of a glass of water to another believer will be noticed by God and rewarded by God. Those who are humble and serve others cannot lose! Whatever service they do will be recorded by God and rewarded by God!

Conclusion

We began with Albert Haynesworth who stomped on another football player's face saying, "I am proud. I don't like to lose." It ended him on the bottom, the absolute worst free-agent draft in the NFL. I want to offer you someone better to follow. He didn't come to us as proud, he came to us as humble. He didn't come to us saying, "I don't like to lose." He said, "I choose to

lose.” He didn’t stomp on anyone’s face. He chose to let others stomp on his face. He chose to let others crucify him on a cross. Where did he end up? Not at the bottom but at the top. He was given the greatest place in the universe by God the Father because of his humble service for us. His name is Jesus.

As we close, let me read to you Philippians 2 which tells us about Jesus doing that.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:3–11 (ESV)

Today, everyone tells you to claw your way to the top. God says, "Go low and be willing to go to the bottom to serve others." That is the way to greatness. In God’s eyes, the way up is down.



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