



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V23 N6 February 7, 2021

KING JESUS

“All for One, One for All”

Mark 9:38-41

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Church

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Ephesians 4:15-16



Should the church compete or collaborate?

The Christian life is to be lived together with others in community, and ministry is to be carried out together with others through symbiotic partnerships. After all, the church is the body of Christ, and by definition, the diverse members of the body exhibit such mutually beneficial and essential relationships. Paul tells the Corinthians: “The body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body” (1Co 12:14-20). Of course, Paul is writing specifically to “the church of God in Corinth” (1:2) and generally to “all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2). And what Paul says about diversity within the body of Christ—which some call the church *universal*—manifests itself both within local churches and between local churches. Too often, however, relationships between Christians and between churches, which should be *cooperative*, become *competitive* and ministry becomes a zero sum game. If I win, you lose; if you win, I lose.

This unhealthy competitive spirit can manifest itself not only between pastors and their churches, but also between parachurch leaders and their Christian ministries. In the closing chapter of their book *Rooting for Rivals*, Peter Greer and Chris Horst give the following advice to all ministry leaders—and to all Christians for that matter: “God invites us to lay aside our own agendas in pursuit of a higher calling. Fishermen and fanatics, preachers and practitioners, Jesus is still what unites us. We need each other in this journey. Let’s be known as leaders who serve and glorify Christ through our radical generosity. Let’s be people who long to see God’s Kingdom come, even as our

earthly kingdoms fade. And let’s cheer one another on in the process. *We are in this together. We are on the same team. We are rooting for you*” (215, italics added). Jesus puts it this way: “Whoever is not against us is for us” (Mk 9:40).

Let me offer an example of *cooperative* rather than *competitive* ministry. Not long after Randy Frazee’s book *The Connecting Church* was published, a Canadian pastor obtained a copy, read it, and became excited at the prospect of organizing *geographical, intergenerational* home groups in Edmonton, Alberta. You know, of course, pastors who minister in a particular area, often gather for mutual support and encouragement. And on several such occasions over breakfast, this pastor touted the potential of such groups and talked with his Baptist pastor friends about wanting to transition his Evangelical Free church’s *stage-of-life* based small group ministry to a more *geographically* based ministry. One morning he shared his passion to start a home group in a particular neighborhood, well known to his soon-to-be, yet unknown-to-them ministry partners, but unfortunately, he couldn’t start the group because only one family in his church lived there. However, as they talked more, the three pastors realized that five families from their three churches lived in Cameron Heights—more than enough needed to start a home group. But how could three different churches, representing three different denominations, two of them Baptist, sponsor one neighborhood home group? Which church would claim the group? Which church would count the attendance? What’s more, if families were added to the group, which church would they attend? Petty problems reflecting a petty attitude, right? And yet, the same attitude is evident in the disciple’s words to Jesus: “‘Teacher,’ said John, ‘we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us’” (v. 38). Fortunately, these Canadian pastors exhibited a more ecumenical spirit and didn’t let petty problems and a petty attitude prevent them from establishing a gospel witness in a neighborhood that would have otherwise gone unreached by any one of their churches. Their willingness to *cooperate* made the difference.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

38 "Teacher," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."

39 "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, 40 for whoever is not against us is for us. 41 Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward."

Read in another translation

38 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." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, because no one who does a miracle in my name will be able soon afterward to say anything bad about me. 40 For whoever is not against us is for us. 41 For I tell you the truth, whoever gives you a cup of water because you bear Christ's name will never lose his reward." (NET)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "we" and "us" in v. 38.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in vv. 38, 41.
- Bracket "in your/my name" in vv. 38, 39, 41.
- Highlight v. 40.
- In the margin next to v. 40 write, "Cf. Mt. 12:30; Lk 11:23."
- Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 40.
- Underline "Truly I tell you" in v. 41.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Look closely at verse 37 and then at verse 42. What do you notice and what does it indicate about the relationship of verses 38-41 to the broader context?
2. The disciples have argued about who is the “greatest” (see v. 34). Explain.
3. Relate their attempt to stop the unnamed exorcist to their argument.
4. Why do you think John interrupts Jesus to tell him what the disciples tried to do?
5. See any *irony* in their opposition to the man driving out demons?
6. Do your best to defend the disciples’ attempt to stop the man.
7. Do you think the disciples were surprised by Jesus’ reply to John? Explain.
8. Jesus gives three reasons for saying, “Do not stop him.” Identify them (see v. 39, v. 40, v. 41).
9. Jesus also said, “He who is not with me is against me” (cf., Mt 12:30; Lk 11:23). Which is it?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about ways Christian people and their organizations *complete* and ways they might *cooperate*.

Commentary On The Text

The message of Mark 9:38-41 can't be recognized apart from an understanding of its context. It belongs to a longer section containing Jesus' teachings on discipleship (vv. 33-50). Jesus and the Twelve are on their way to Jerusalem (8:31-10:52), and along the way he tells them a second time, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise" (9:31; cf. 8:31). Unfortunately, they don't get it; what's more, they're afraid to ask him about it (v. 32). But instead of trying to understand what he has told them—twice—they chose to argue among themselves regarding who is the greatest, that is, the most influential (v. 32). They are ambitious men who desperately want to make a kingdom difference. Their argument, though inappropriate, comes as no surprise, since questions of rank and status are normal and play an important role in the life of Jewish groups in that day.

Now ambition is a good thing, but it's also a dangerous thing, a thing that can go haywire on short notice when mixed motives are involved. It's especially ugly in Christians whose spiritual ambitions are motivated by envy, pride, greed, and a competitive spirit, and especially chronic in ministers and Christian leaders. It's so important for disciples to guard against wrongheaded ambition that Jesus sits them down and tells them, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all" (v. 35). According to one commentator, "If they embrace this attitude, then they can hardly have feelings of jealousy and rivalry for someone else though whom God is at work" (Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol.34B, *Mark* 8:27-16:20). John's following words clearly indicate they have not. Speaking for the others, he butts in, perhaps to deflect Jesus' criticism or to escape embarrassment by courting Jesus' praise, but ironically, what he says only confirms the disciples' error.

They see a man driving out demons in Jesus' name and tell him to stop because neither Jesus nor they have authorized him to do so. They don't try to stop him because he's a religious charlatan; quite the opposite. He is driving out demons in the name of or by the power of Jesus, and ironically, is successful in his exorcisms, whereas they had failed in theirs (cf. v. 18). It seems that this unnamed exorcist is a follower of Christ, but just not one of the Twelve. One commentator writes: "The irony of the disciples' opposition to the successful exorcist is all the more striking because of their own lack of success in 9:14-29. Mark gives no hint of any deficiency on the part of the exorcist, and in light of the exorcist's success in 9:39, it is best to see him as a follower of Jesus who carried out his ministry

outside the circle of the Twelve (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3)" (Robert H. Stein, 446). Mark doesn't explain how this unnamed individual can cast out demons, having never been commissioned or given the authority to do so by Jesus.

It seems, too, that like Joshua earlier, they are jealous for their own sakes, not their Master's. Numbers 11:26-30 tells the story of Eldad and Medad, two Israelites who prophesy in the camp. A young man sees them and runs to Moses to squeal on them. Joshua then speaks up and says, "Moses, my lord, Stop them" (v. 28). But rather than commend him, Moses replies, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" (v. 29). Jesus responds likewise to John. "Do not stop him," Jesus says. In the first place, "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me" (v. 39). He's an ally, not an enemy. Furthermore, "Whoever is not against us is for us" (v. 40). His maxim attested in Cicero appears to contradict the one in Matthew 12:30, "Whoever is not with me is against me" (cf., Lk 11:23), which also appears in the context of an exorcism. The *apparent* contradiction can be resolved this way: "The 'whoever is not against us' saying applies to a man who makes positive use of Jesus' name to carry on the fight against Satan's kingdom. The 'whoever is not with me' saying refers to those who criticize and oppose Jesus' exorcisms. They are not with Jesus; that is, they are against Jesus. The man referred to in Mark 9:38 is not against Jesus but in fact is doing Jesus' work" (Evans, 65). Even the simplest expression of Christian kindness will be rewarded: "Whoever gives you a cup of water because you bear Christ's name will never lose his reward" (v. 41 NET).

As far as application goes, one author writes, "We must recognize that God's mission in the world is bigger than we are. We need to recognize who the real enemy is who must be exorcised from our midst and from others. In 1265-66 the Mongol Empire spanned Asia from the Black Sea to the Pacific Ocean, and Kublai Khan asked Marco Polo to persuade the Christian church in Rome to send one hundred men to teach Christianity to his court. The Christians were in such disarray fighting among themselves that it was twenty-eight years before a single man—let alone a hundred—reached the great court. Already retired, the emperor said, 'It is too late, I have grown old in my idolatry'" (C. Douglas Weaver, *A Cloud of Witnesses*, cited by David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*, 376).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 38 *we* John spoke for *all* the disciples, as indicated by the threefold “we/us.” They argued about who was the greatest after leaving the place where Jesus healed the demon-possessed boy they were unable to heal (vv. 33, 34; cf. vv. 14-32). They also tried to stop a man driving out demons because he was not a member of their troop. “John, who was one of those who aspired to kingdom greatness (x. 35-37 [cf. v. 34]), seems to have been anxious to change the subject, feeling rather ashamed of himself for his share in the foregoing discussion, and so he interrupts Jesus, and tells about a man whom they had opposed because he was casting out demons without following *them*. John, speaking for the others as well as for himself, thought to escape embarrassment by courting praise. Convicted of selfishness he would parade his zeal” (W. Graham Scroggie, *The Gospel of Mark*, The Study Hour Series, 169). “This may be the first time, but certainly not the last, in which ecclesiastical leaders have sought to hinder those who would minister in the name of Christ independently of their authority” (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 446).

v. 38 *a man* “The identity of the exorcist is uncertain. Was he a syncretistic, unbelieving exorcist who simply used Jesus’s name for pragmatic reasons (cf. Acts 19:13-17; Matt. 7:21-23), because it worked (Evans 2001:64)? Or was the exorcist a true follower of Jesus, and the disciples saw themselves as the only ones ‘authorized’ by Jesus (3:15; 6:7, 30) to do such exorcisms (W. Lane 1974: 343-44; Painter 1997: 138) Evans 2001: 65)?” (Stein, 446). The context suggests he was a true follower.

v. 38 *because* “Their reason for intervening? ‘Because he was not one of us.’ The complaint drips with irony. The disciples only recently bungled an exorcism [cf. v. 18], yet they do not hesitate to obstruct someone who is successful but who is not a member of their team. Jesus catches them by surprise when he does not commend them for their vigilance but instead reproves them” (David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*, 368). “It was not the man’s misuse of Jesus’ name (as in Acts 19:13-16) that troubled them but rather his *unauthorized* use of the name” (John D. Grassmick, “Mark” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 146). It seems the man got the disciples’ goat by not recognizing their authority; Jesus had given them authority over evil spirits (Mk 6:7). But he neither asked their permission to exorcise nor obeyed their command to stop.

v. 39 “*Do not . . .*” “Jesus opposed the narrow exclusivism of the Twelve with an open and generous spirit. The disciples’ action was an abuse of their authority, for they had presumed to speak for Jesus where they had no competence” (William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, 343). “Are the disciples jealous for Jesus or for themselves? Do they want to corner the exorcism market, which

would make them indispensable and revered, whereas Jesus wishes that all were exorcists casting out Satan in his name?” (Garland, 368). Evidently the disciples were ambitious to a fault craving spiritual influence for themselves alone. “Here is a man who, evidently, had faith in Christ, and was doing an eminently good work (38), and yet, because he did not attach himself to the apostles, they made the effort to stop his work” (Scroggie, 169).

v. 39 *miracle* Gk. *dynamis*, “mighty work” (RSV); “something good and powerful” (MSG).

v. 39 *in my name* “In the ancient world, exorcists used whatever name of deities they thought would work. Jesus’ explanation for condoning the exorcist’s success in Mark’s account is practical, not theological. He argues that they cannot use his name to do mighty works and speak ill of him later. Anyone who recognizes the power of Jesus’ name will not accuse him of working by Beelzebub, as the teachers of the law from Jerusalem had done (3:22)” (Garland, 368).

v. 39 *say anything bad* “No one can use my name to do something good and powerful, and in the next breath cut me down. If he’s not an enemy, he’s an ally” (MSG). “Ministry, such as that of this exorcist, that brings glory to the name of Jesus should not/must not be hindered, even when it ignores ‘we/us,’ for what is important is ‘he/him,’ not ‘we/us!’” (Stein, 446; cf. note on v. 40).

v. 40 *not against . . . for* Cf. “He who is not with me is against me” (Mt 12:30; Lk 11:23; cf. 9:50). “If one is not *with Christ*, of course he is against Him; but it does not follow, if one is not *with us*, that therefore he is against Christ. We cannot claim, as Christ could and did, to be the norm of truth and the test of reality. He that is not with us may be nearer to Christ than we are. In the one rule Jesus says, *he and Me*, and in the other, *he and us*. John did not say, ‘because he followed not Thee,’ but ‘because he followed not *us*.’ But what does that matter? Let God’s work be done, whoever does it. ‘Better a thousand times,’ says Ryle, ‘that the work of warring against Satan should be done by other hands, than not done at all’: and Paul said, ‘If Christ be preached, I rejoice, even though He be preached of contention.’ We have not right to judge other people by tests of our own, or to set up ourselves as the standards of orthodoxy of belief and practice” (Scroggie, 171).

v. 41 *cup of water* “The cup of cold water image suggests that those who bear Christ’s name will find themselves in grievous circumstances and desperate for just a drink of water. Later, Jesus will warn them that they will be persecuted and hated by all (13:13). Cups of water will be hard to come by, and then they will appreciate more the neutrality of those who do not join the persecution but extend only the most basic kindness” (Garland, 369).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Root for your ministry rivals rather than disparage them, since they're your allies, not your enemies, and there's work and reward enough for everyone

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

How many of you have mini mommies and daddies living under your roof? You've likely experienced some good ol' finger pointing from your "helpful" bonus parent. There's probably been a fair amount of foot-stomping and maybe even a little huffing and puffing to go along with the finger pointing. Anyone with me on this? At one point all my kids had chalkboard paint on their doors with Ephesians 2:9 written on it, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." It probably wasn't good parenting for me to be pointing at the verse stomping my feet with tears running down my face, but that's a story for another week. Our natural bent is to want to elevate ourselves. Humility, the practice of putting others above ourselves, is certainly not something we can materialize out of thin air. Apart from God's help our kids aren't going to wake up one day being humble, no matter how many times we drill it into their brains. We need the Holy Spirit to do His work, to fill them (and us) and lead us toward love for others. Help them learn humility by modeling it. Teach them to practice this trait through servant leadership as a family or home group activity. Praise them when you see them encouraging others. Help them learn to have a teachable spirit. Above all pray, pray, pray! You've got this, mom and dad. You're doing a great job and we're praying for you.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 9:38-41.

1. Why were the disciples upset?
2. What was the person doing?
3. What was Jesus' response?

What Do You Think?

What is the root cause of the disciples' frustration? Are you ever like the disciples?

What Do You Do?

What if? Imagine the disciples were supportive of the person driving out the demon and write how the story would have been different.

CORE COMPETENCY: Church

I believe God uses the people in the church to do His work.

MEMORY VERSE: Colossians 3:17

"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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