

THE GREATEST



A HOUSE DIVIDED

On June 16, 1858, senatorial candidate and future president, Abraham Lincoln gave a speech after accepting the Illinois Republican Party's nomination as a US Senator. The speech, now known as the "House Divided Speech," said in part, "*A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free.*" Lincoln's prophetic words came true as the Civil War erupted soon after he became president. More than 650,000 men died, but Lincoln's dream of a united United States continued. That truth he leaned on in such a critical time came from Jesus himself.

In Mark 3, Jesus faced the accusation that he's playing for the wrong team. Jesus responded, "*How can Satan cast out Satan?... Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven...but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin*" (Mark 3:23,28-29).

That statement has worried some people over the years. Do not fret. The Holy Spirit seeks to elevate Christ by drawing people to him. The only unforgivable sin isn't a momentary doubt or sinful words. Rather, it's denying the salvation offered through Christ by resisting the Spirit's work. Jesus wasn't playing for the wrong team—he came to give his life so we could join the right one.

MARK 3:13-21, 34-35

¹³ And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. ¹⁴ And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and have authority to cast out demons. ¹⁶ He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); ¹⁷ James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); ¹⁸ Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

²⁰ Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹ And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."

³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"All to Jesus I surrender, All to him I freely give." Throughout our study, we've seen the greatness of Jesus over every aspect of Creation. We've also seen a significant difference between how all humanity *should respond* to Jesus versus how they *do respond* to Jesus. These stories exist, at least in part, to help you see how *you should respond* to Jesus. Scan the QR code to worship Jesus and be reminded of the only requirement to knowing him—our surrender.



DISCUSSION

What's the best advice you've ever received?

1. Where did Jesus go and why? (13-15)

2. What else were these men called and what were they to do? (14-15)

3. What did Jesus' family think of him and how did Jesus respond? (21, 34-35)

4. How did Jesus prioritize his closest relationships? (13, 35)

5. What characteristics do you look for in a friend?

6. Of the three application points in the notes, which one stood out and why?

Friendships can build up and strengthen your relationship with Christ or pull you away. Choose your friends wisely. If you have questions, talk to your Coach today!

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

THE GREATEST

STUDY NOTES

FRIEND REQUEST

How many “friends” do you have on social media? As you know all too well, social media “friends” may not translate to real life. A *New York Post* article from several years ago quoted one influencer as saying, “I have 2 million followers, but no friends.”

The article goes on to describe the loneliness felt by several people that have a huge online following. Sometime they look like they have it all together in pictures and videos—they look like they’re living the dream. In reality, many are isolated, lonely, and some have even confess thoughts of suicide.

Our passage today isn’t the most exciting or eventful. Over the last three Weeks, Mark has been answering the question, “Who is this Jesus?” We’ve seen Jesus as greater than his own kingdom, spiritual powers, and religion. He has provided clear evidence of his identity, character, and power to thousands of people. However, in the midst of such relational chaos, Jesus modeled something for us that we all really need to take to heart—the value of friends. Maybe even more importantly, the counter-cultural notion that our relationships must be surrendered to Christ.

JESUS IS GREATER THAN RELATIONSHIPS

Jesus *went up on the mountain* and prayed all night to select who of his followers would become his close and constant companions—his apostles.

Most people think of Jesus’ disciples as “The Twelve.” A disciple simply follows another’s teaching. For example, long before Jesus, the Greeks used the term “disciple” (i.e. “a student”) of Plato or Aristotle. Just before Jesus, John the Baptist also had his own group of disciples (Luke 11:1).

These 12 disciples, *he named apostles* (see the chart below). What is an apostle? The word literally means, “sent one.” To put it simply, the apostles were all disciples, but not all the disciples were apostles.

These 12 (minus Judas) would later carry on Jesus’ work after his resurrection (adding the Apostle Paul later). The requirements of “apostle”: 1) Know Christ personally. 2) Witness the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:21–22, 1 Corinthians 9:1). 3) Receive divine revelation. 4) Possess special, God-given miraculous powers (2 Corinthians 12:12 and Hebrews 2:3–4).

To prepare the founders of the Church, Jesus intentionally selected these men *so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons*. Also, we’ll see many occasions throughout our time in Mark that Jesus specifically taught these guys things they needed to understand.

JESUS IS GREATER THAN OUR FAMILY CIRCLE

After this, Jesus’ family determined to *seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”* When they arrived, Jesus asked who is mother and brothers were. Then, *looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Jesus showed that sometimes we must surrender our earthly family in order to fully obey the Lord. Indeed, many Christians have lost loved ones because they decided to follow Christ.

As we close, I hope you really take to heart three things: First, we all need close personal relationships—people who know us inside and out. These kinds of friends require a relationship with Christ.

Second, pick your friends very very carefully. Jesus prayed through the night, what about you? Be careful who you trust, but freely trust those who want your absolute best.

Finally, no earthly relationship should stand in the way of obedience to Christ. If your parents abandon you because you accept Christ, it will be worth it. If you lose your family, God is still good. That’s easier said than lived, but true none the less.

<p>Peter ;Simon, changed to Cephas (Aramaic) or Peter (Gk. “the rock”); from Bethsaida; Capernaum fisherman; saw transfiguration; 1st to (1) preach the Gospel, (2) perform a miracle, (3) speak to Sanhedrin, (4) preach to Gentiles, (5) raise the dead; martyred in Rome (67 AD).</p>	<p>John: James’s brother; fisherman; saw transfiguration; “Son of Thunder”, “the disciple whom Jesus loved”; cared for Mary (Jesus’ mother); wrote gospel, 3 short letters, Revelation; led in Jerusalem & Ephesus; exiled to isle of Patmos; not martyred.</p>	<p>Thomas: Probably from Galilee; doubted Jesus’ resurrection; preached in India.</p>	<p>Thaddaeus: Son of James; aka; Judas (not Iscariot) possible Zealot; preached in Armenia, martyred in Persia w/ Simon the Zealot.</p>
<p>Andrew: Introduced brother, Peter, to Jesus; from Bethsaida; fisherman.</p>	<p>Philip: From Bethsaida; told Nathanael about Jesus</p>	<p>Matthew: Tax collector for Rome; son of Alphaeus; aka “Levi”; hosted great feast for Jesus.</p>	<p>Simon, the Zealot: Member of Zealots, attempting to violently oust Romans from Israel. Martyred in Persia with Judas.</p>
<p>James: John’s brother; Zebedee’s son; fisherman; saw transfiguration; “Son of Thunder”; martyred by Herod Agrippa 1 (44 AD).</p>	<p>Bartholomew: Probably “Nathanael” of John’s gospel; from Cana; Jesus saw this “man of no guile” under a fig tree; Martyred in Armenia.</p>	<p>James: Son of Alphaeus and Mary; aka, “the small” or “the Younger”; brother of Joseph.</p>	<p>Judas Iscariot: Possibly from Judea; betrayed Christ; “devil” and “son of perdition”; treasurer for The Twelve; committed suicide.</p>