

Small Group Discussion Guide

Mark 9:42-50

“Not Worth It”

Based on Sunday's
Sermon 8/16/26

Background

With a frightening image, Jesus explained the sobering responsibility of leadership in God's kingdom. Having made the point that someone carrying out God's agenda in Christ's name offers reasonable evidence of genuine saving faith, He warned that accepting this visible role of leadership carries with it immense responsibility—great reward for faithful teaching, and grave penalties for leading others astray. If anyone should tremble, it's the people who lead others.¹

Some early church fathers took verses such as these literally and maimed themselves in order to attain heaven. But this verse is a literary device known as hyperbole, which uses exaggeration to make a point. Jesus was saying that the judgment he had just spoken of was so serious that it would be better to sacrifice yourself than to sin. Do not cause others to sin and do what you have to do to keep from sinning yourself. Sin is so serious that it calls for drastic measures to remove it from our lives.²

To lead someone to reject Christ is to face serious consequences. A cruel demise such as being drowned by the weight of a millstone would be a better fate. Even the least of those who belong to Jesus means this much to him. We must avoid being a conduit for sin.³

Discussion Questions

Getting Started

1. When have you seen someone's influence (positive or negative) shape another person's choices?

Observation

2. Who does Jesus say it would be better to throw into the sea with a millstone than to cause to stumble?

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *Mark*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Tyndale House Publishers, 2018), 255.

² Rodney L. Cooper, *Mark*, vol. 2, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 152–153.

³ David Turner and Darrell L. Bock, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 11: Matthew and Mark* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 482.

3. What repeated pattern do you notice in Jesus' statements about the hand, foot, and eye?
4. How does Jesus describe hell (Gehenna) in this passage?
5. What final command does Jesus give about "salt" and relationships?

Interpretation

6. Why does Jesus use such extreme imagery (cutting off limbs, plucking out eyes) to describe dealing with sin?
7. How does Jesus' teaching challenge the idea that sin is merely a private matter?
8. Read Luke 16:19-31. Discuss the characteristics of hell taught in Mark and Luke and why no one would ever desire to go there.

Application

9. Where might your life be causing others to stumble—through example, influence, or neglect?
10. What is one area of sin you've treated lightly that Jesus treats seriously?

Prayer List: