



James The Less (Younger)

An Ordinary Guy

Adapted from “12 Disciples” series by Dennis Marquardt.

We all want to be special, popular, or famous. It was no different with some of Jesus' disciples. James and John wanted to have the right- and left-hand seats next to Jesus when he ruled the world.

Peter frequently declared to everyone how strong his commitment to Christ was. Simon the zealot wanted to conquer Rome and free the nation and be a hero.

Matthew, while he was a tax collector, wanted riches and fame from Rome. One guy however was content to just be the "ordinary" guy in the group. His name was **James the Less** or **James the Younger**. He was called the younger or “less” because he was Matthew's younger brother.

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Tradition says he, too, was a tax collector before becoming a Disciple. Evidently, he was not as famous or radical as his older brother, Matthew.

Most of us dream of being something greater than just ordinary. Whereas there will probably be a few times in your life when you will attract greater attention, most of life will likely be filled with boring ordinary days. While we may tend to look down upon this ordinary life of ours, it is here that much of the good of our lives actually develops. These “ordinary” times are just as valuable as the greater moments even if others don't think so.

The greatest work of God's kingdom is done by ordinary unknown believers! While the world is unaware of their names it will still be changed by their service. God will our honor and recognize faithfulness, not our fame.

Faithful service is the foundation of a healthy church and ministry, even if you never become famous. Being “ordinary” is okay and is the hallmark of greatness in God’s eyes.

“COURAGE” Level Questions

Exercise #1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Mark 15:40–16:3 (ESV) There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem. And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the

mother of Joseph saw where he was laid. When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”

Matthew 20:20–28 (ESV) Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” He said to them, “You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would

be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Matthew 25:31–40 (ESV) “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King

will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’”

C1: When you hear the name James the Less, what comes to your mind? How would you react to being called “the Less?”

C2: James was content to be an ordinary guy. Most men today strive for greatness, to be famous, or to receive honor and respect. What are some benefits of being an ordinary, unnoticed (yet faithful) man of God?

C3: James was faithful in not seeking the spotlight but in being faithful. No one can find any negative stories about James. What does that say about him?

C4: In living for Christ, what are some ways you can ensure that you receive recognitions from God rather than from men?

C5: How can you remain a faithful, ordinary guy for Christ?

C6: In Matthew, Jesus tell us that *he who wishes to be greatest should become least* (Mt 20:26). How did the Jesus exemplify this in his life? Be specific.

C7: In Matthew 25:35-40 (ESV), we find specific examples of the kind of service God desires. Look over the list and write down some specific ways you can be an ordinary guy serving and being a witness of Christ in your church and community.

- I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat...
- I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink...
- I was a stranger and you took me in...
- I was naked and you clothed me...
- I was sick and you looked after me...
- I was in prison, and you came to visit me.

“STRENGTH” Level Questions

Exercise #1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Mark 15:40–16:3 (ESV)

Matthew 20:20–28 (ESV)

Matthew 25:31–40 (ESV)

S1: Consider the life of James the Less. Does it take more strength to be ordinary, or to be in the limelight? If so, why do you think that?

S2: We can't find negative stories about James. Can the same be said of you and your walk with Christ? How can you go about making any needed changes?

S3: Following the leading of the Holy Spirit to serve in your church, how do you keep from craving credit or honor?

S4: Being faithful and consistent is exactly what God is asking of us in many areas of service. How can you increase your faithfulness and be more consistent with the things to which He has called you?

S5: In Matthew 25:31-34, you read of the reward of the ordinary guy. How does knowing you have a glorious future of eternal life with Christ keep you from being shaken in your faithfulness and obedience to God?

S6: The greatest work of God's Kingdom is mostly done by ordinary, unsung heroes. How can you find satisfaction in being one of those ordinary, unsung heroes for Christ?

Exercise #2: The kind of service that impresses Jesus is described in the lesson from Matthew 25:35-40. Go over the list below and write down specific examples of how you can serve Christ by serving others in the coming weeks.

- I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat...
- I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink...
- I was a stranger and you took me in...

- I was naked and you clothed me...
- I was sick and you looked after me...
- I was in prison, and you came to visit me.

“ENDURANCE” Level Questions

Exercise #1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Mark 15:40–16:3 (ESV)

Matthew 20:20–28 (ESV)

Matthew 25:31–40 (ESV)

E1: Many men seek fame. How do you feel about being an ordinary, unsung, or unrecognized follower of Jesus Christ?

E2: We can't find any negative stories about James. If you were to look at your walk with Christ, would you find negative things in your past that you need to change within yourself?

E3: Thinking about your answer to the previous questions, how does the Holy Spirit play a role in helping you make those changes?

E4: How can you share the Gospel of Christ with men who may feel generally ordinary or unnoticed in life?

Exercise #2: Write out a strategy or list of methods for personally going to other men in your church and complimenting them for the ways they help or serve. You might want to write a list of those men, and your strategy next to their name:

Man #1:

Man #2:

Man#3:

Man #4:

Man #5:

E5: In your walk with Christ, have you been faithful to Christian service without seeking earthly reward? What do you think is your reward?

Exercise #3: Referring to the *reward* you just mentioned. Describe it in as much detail as you can. Get excited about it!



E6: In Matthew 20:26-27, we read that *he who wishes to be greatest should become the least*. What does this mean to you?

E7: There is nothing super **glorious** about serving behind the scenes at church. How can the Holy Spirit help you be content and personally satisfied with your service in ministry?

Exercise #4: The list below is found in Matthew 25:35-40. Read over the list and write out specific two (2) responses. The first is a way you can perform the act of service to honor God, and the second response is how you can help encourage other Christian men to do the same.

- **I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat...**

How can I do this?

How can I encourage another man in this area?

- **I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink...**

How can I do this?

How can I encourage another man in this area?

- **I was a stranger and you took me in...**

How can I do this?

How can I encourage another man in this area?

- **I was naked and you clothed me...**

How can I do this?

How can I encourage another man in this area?

- **I was sick and you looked after me...**

How can I do this?

How can I encourage another man in this area?

- **I was in prison, and you came to visit me...**

How can I do this?

How can I encourage another man in this area?