



**Dear Students,**

Has anyone ever stopped you from doing something you wanted to do?

That happens all the time, right? If you want to do something dangerous or wrong, there are guardrails and rules and laws (and teachers and parents and cops) to stop you.

But has anyone ever tried to stop you from doing something *good*?

Has anyone ever tried to stop you from following Jesus?

Maybe they weren't even *trying* to stop you - maybe they said they were a Christian but you could see that their words and actions didn't match. Maybe they were mean or a cheater or liar, or just someone you didn't like much. And you felt like "if that's what they are, I don't want that".

Or... have you ever been that person to someone else? (I'm sure that I have been, sometimes!)

In [Mark 9 and 10](#), Jesus is trying to tell his disciples something important. Jesus was teaching his followers (and us!) to put others first. Back then, kids were considered almost like property, or as extensions of their parents. Jesus was telling his disciples that kids are special to God just the way they are.

So... what were the disciples doing? Arguing about who was the greatest. Worrying about who was in their group or out of their group. Trying to look important. Trying to keep kids from bothering Jesus.

Here's how Mark describes what he saw and heard:

**Mark 9:33-42; 10:13-16**

**33** After they arrived at Capernaum and settled in a house, Jesus asked his disciples, "What were you discussing out on the road?" **34** But they didn't answer, because they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest. **35** He sat down, called the twelve disciples over to him, and said, "Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else."

**36** Then he put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, **37** "Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not only me but also my Father who sent me."

**38** John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he wasn’t in our group.”

**39** “Don’t stop him!” Jesus said. “No one who performs a miracle in my name will soon be able to speak evil of me. **40** Anyone who is not against us is for us. **41** If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah, I tell you the truth, that person will surely be rewarded. **42** “But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone hung around your neck.”

**13** One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him.

**14** When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, “Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. **15** I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn’t receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.” **16** Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.

Notice what Jesus says: “Don’t stop him.” “Don’t stop them.” Jesus wants his disciples to stop getting in the way of how other people follow Jesus.

- Who do you relate to in this passage? Are you the one who is left out and pushed away? Are you the one bringing someone closer to Jesus? Are you the one who is stopping someone else, thinking they don’t belong? Do you sometimes block someone by accident, by setting a bad example or not making your words match your actions?

The point isn’t to feel bad but to start noticing:

- Who are you tempted to exclude? Someone with opposite ideas from you? Someone that’s too loud? Maybe it’s the jerks who use bots that ruin your favorite game?
- Who makes it harder for *you* to trust in Jesus? Have you accidentally let someone else block or distract you from following God?

**Memory verse:** “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.” (Romans 1:16)

Salvation is for everyone, and believing is for everyone - even people you might not like or respect right now. Jesus loves those people too, and wants to save them and change their hearts.

**Close in Prayer:** “Dear Jesus, thank you for welcoming me into your family. Help me keep my eyes on you and not get in anyone’s way as we follow you. And please don’t let anyone stop me from getting closer to you. Amen.”

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