



SUNDAY, MAY 7, 2023

# Can't We All Just Get Along?

LUKE 22:24-27 NKJV

**THE DIVISION OF  
THE DISCIPLES | PART 1**

A SERMON BY  
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REV. DR. HOWARD-JOHN WESLEY, SENIOR PASTOR



**Date:** May 7, 2023  
**Preacher:** Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley  
**Sermon Title:** *Can't We All Just Get Along?: The Division of the Disciples, Part 1*  
**Scripture:** Luke 22:24-27 (NIV)

*A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it, not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."*

### **SERMON SUMMARY**

In preparation for Pentecost, Pastor Wesley's newest sermon series, *The Division of the Disciples*, highlights the most prominent challenge within the Church: communal strife and division fueled by ego. As we journey in this series, we will see examples of tension and conflict from Jesus' disciples, apostles, and the members of the early Church. In the forthcoming weeks, we will learn how the enabling work of the Holy Spirit allows us to overcome division and move forward in unity. This sermon series will ultimately teach us that the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to equip and empower us to be God's witnesses throughout the world.

Pastor Wesley borrows from Rodney King's famous 1992 statement, "Can't we all just get along?" In this sermon, we find the fourth iteration of an ongoing argument between Jesus' disciples on Maundy Thursday: "Which of the disciples is the greatest?" Jesus' last earthly lesson to the disciples reiterates God's definition of greatness as counter-cultural. When the world says, "Be served," God says, "Serve others."

Our sermon answers these three questions by inviting us to surrender to God's definition of greatness—submission, service, and surrendering to the image of Christ. As we continue in this series, may we continuously ask these three questions.

1. *Whose definition of greatness matters to us?*
2. *How can we overcome the infectious disease of ego?*
3. *Are we imitating the servanthood of Jesus in our service to others?*

### **KEY POINTS**

1. The most authentic evidence of the Holy Spirit is maintaining unity.
2. We must learn to surrender to God's definition of greatness: living according to God's values, not the world's.
3. Stop trying to live up to human opinion. God's opinion is the **only** one that matters.
4. The witness of the Church is always weakened when the people of God mimic what we hate in the world.
5. As believers, we must submit our lives to the image of Christ by serving others.

### ***Village Members and Facilitators,***

***The Curriculum Team does not expect you to cover all the questions.***

***We ask facilitators to choose the best questions for your Village from each section.***

### **GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS**

1. How were you taught to revere the Holy Spirit? What is your relationship with the Holy Spirit today?
  
2. In times of conflict, debate, and difference, God calls us to focus more on blessing others than being blessed ourselves (with power, authority, and recognition through titles). How has the Holy Spirit shifted your focus during a conflict? If so, what was the result?

### **INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS**

1. Pastor Wesley's message focuses on the fourth time the disciples have argued over who is the greatest among them. We find other instances in Matthew 18:1-5, Matthew 20: 20-28, Mark 10:35-45, and Luke 9:46-47. Pick one of these instances and discuss how Jesus handled the disagreement.

2. Pastor Wesley mentioned that the Bible gives us glimpses of how the disciples grew into and lived out their assignments through the power of the Holy Spirit (Ex. the books of Revelation and James). What are some of the disciples' finest moments? What were some of their worst moments?

### ***LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS***

1. What is *or* was one of your finest moments as you seek to fulfill God's purpose for your life? How did the Holy Spirit equip and empower you at that moment?
2. Through our actions, words, and testimony, we ***should*** direct others to God's saving grace and Jesus' transformative love. What are some ways we bear witness to the crucified and resurrected Savior and would lead others to God?
3. The sermon suggests that perhaps the real sign of the Holy Spirit is not how we fall out at the altar but rather how we do *not* 'fall out' with each other. What are some practices that we can implement to avoid or resolve conflict?

### ***"CAN I PUSH IT?" QUESTIONS***

1. Our sermon posits that the kingdom of God is counter-cultural. Are there church ministries that strike you as counter-cultural, and why?
2. Pastor Wesley noted that the disciples faced significant challenges in fulfilling their witness. What are some of the biggest obstacles in American/African American culture that prevent or dilute our witness?

***ACTIVITY***

In your devotional time this week, consider how differently your life would look if you followed Jesus' example in your daily living. How might your schedule, interactions, and relationships change? List, map, or brainstorm a few potential shifts.

***SPIRIT WORK***

When thinking about Jesus' illustration of greatness in Luke, how does your standard of 'great' compare to God's standard? Write a prayer asking God to align your definition of greatness with His.

## **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

***Within the structure of Village, there are various affinity groups. Each week the team creates questions specifically for these individual groups. However, any village may draw from the questions listed below if the Spirit so moves.***

### ***For Married Couples***

1. Some of the changing standards and norms of the world are in direct conflict with the covenant relationship of marriage. How do you keep these changes from compromising marital vows?
2. Non-mutual submission within marriage is often seen as counter-productive to true partnership. How does the Holy Spirit help successful marriages navigate roles and eliminate egos?

### ***For Young Adults***

1. Competing to be named the 'best' is rewarded in secondary school, college, and career settings. Frequently, it can cause us undue stress and anxiety. How can Jesus' illustration of greatness in Luke help us to calm our fears and balance competition with healthy collaboration?
2. As a young adult, are you more motivated to serve others when you know people are watching you in person or on social media? Why or why not?

### ***For Parents***

1. How can the authority of a parent get in the way during a parent/child conflict? How can the Holy Spirit help restore balance and unity in this relationship?

2. There is so much pressure for our children to be the best in their schools and extracurricular activities. How can you encourage your children to do *their* best and understand how God defines 'great' or 'best'?

### ***For Seniors***

1. When you reflect on challenging relationships, what wisdom would you share with your younger self on maintaining unity within your family, church, workplace, or other organizations?
2. Do you know someone who loves to argue with others? What guidance would you give them? If **you** are that person, what advice should you give yourself?

### ***For Women***

1. This week's sermon speaks of the Black community's "unhealthy attraction to title and position in the Church." How does a worldly/secular denial of title and position still influence how Black women engage in ministry, practice relationships, and find spiritual fulfillment in the Church today?
2. Pastor Wesley rebukes the practice of "sanctified sexism" in the body of Christ. How can we disrupt replicating what we hate in the world?

### ***For Men***

1. What are some examples of service that help you embrace the role of a servant while maintaining your sense of strength and masculinity?

2. We are urged to surrender to what God says is 'great.' In what ways does American society define what great is? How does God see things differently than the world, and what examples do we have in our walk with God?

***For Returning Citizens***

1. In many ways, service is seen as an act of redemption. Given we have *all* sinned and made mistakes, how can we be better servants in our personal and professional lives?
2. How has the Holy Spirit empowered you to lead others (directly or indirectly) to seek Christ? Is the Spirit leading you to something that you have not seen or done yet? If so, what steps can you take toward that unfamiliar territory?

***For Differently-Abled Persons/People***

1. This week's sermon suggests that we learn the value of serving others because this is what God considers greatness. How has the Holy Spirit equipped you to serve others?
2. Pastor Wesley instructed us to design our life in the image of Jesus Christ. What does that mean for *your* life?

***ADDITIONAL RESOURCES***

Pastor Wesley's sermon slides are available on ASBC's website. To view and download them, [click here](#).