

## How to Win an Argument

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**Mark 9:30-37** <sup>30</sup> Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. <sup>31</sup> For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him. <sup>33</sup> Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" <sup>34</sup> But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who *would be the greatest*. <sup>35</sup> And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." <sup>36</sup> Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, <sup>37</sup> "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."

How many of you have watched young kids playing sports get confused and accidentally score in the wrong goal? It can be quite amusing. If you get it on video, you can save it for their wedding day. It's less funny however if the players are adults. If your favorite football or basketball player, did it, you would probably be quite irate.

What is even worse is when Christians forget which goal we are headed for.

In our text today, two opposite goals are clearly defined. On the one hand, Jesus is headed to the cross to die for the sins of the world. On the other side the disciples are arguing over who is the greatest. Every time we try to win by proving, "I'm the greatest or I'm the one who is right." We aren't winning. We are scoring in the wrong goal.

We win not by promoting ourselves but by lifting high the cross. We win because Jesus died for our sins.

### Remember the Cross

**Mark 9:31** <sup>31</sup> For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."

Everything is all about Jesus's death and resurrection. This is Jesus' goal. We win, that is our victory is this that Jesus died and rose again. In all things we need to remember that this is our goal, the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ.

In a minute we are going to sing "Lift high the cross." This song is in the evangelism section and is often sung on mission Sunday, but it is actually much broader than evangelism. What the song is really about is holding up the cross for your own sake as well as others in your daily life.

### **First verse**

**1 Come, Christians, follow where our Savior trod,  
Our King victorious, Christ, the Son of God.**

This verse reminds us to follow Christ to the cross, to put aside vanity and self-seeking glory and accept suffering for the sake of others.

### **Second verse**

**2 Led on their way by this triumphant sign,  
The hosts of God in conqu'ring ranks combine.**

This verse reminds us that when Christ asks us to do something really hard, like forgiving someone who has wronged us or refraining from getting in an argument, we receive strength and victory through the Lamb who died for our sins.

**3 So shall our song of triumph ever be:  
praise to the Crucified for victory!**

This verse reminds us that our true victory is found in Jesus and not in our own strength, or our cleverness.

The whole song is a reminder of exactly what Jesus is trying to tell his disciples in our text that our victory is in Jesus' death and resurrection. Not just our victory at the end of our life when we go to heaven, but our victory now each day.

**Hebrews 12:1-2 let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,**

We win when we remember the cross.

### **Be First to be Last**

**Mark 9:32-35 32 But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him. 33 Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. 35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."**

How much of our life do we spend trying to convince others or ourselves that we are the best, the greatest? How much time thinking and talking about why others are wrong, and we are right? When someone tells us something they are proud of, how often do we respond by either putting them

down or telling them how we did something better. How much time trying to get others to do things my way because obviously my way is best?

We spend so much time trying to win, yet we seldom are willing to consider the only way we can actually win: Jesus and his cross.

What we forget is that as soon as we engage in the argument we have already lost. Even if we get our way. We've only scored points for the other team.

The one who wins is the one who is first to let it go, first to forgive.

**Philippians 2:3** **3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.**

The disciples utterly fail to understand what Jesus is telling them. It is easy to judge them but remember that they were taught from birth a very different understanding of who and what the Messiah would be.

What excuse do we have who know the whole story and have been taught it correctly from birth? We might understand what Jesus meant when he talks about betrayal, death and resurrection, but when we engage in the same sinful behavior we have forgotten the cross. When we argue over who is the greatest. When we promote ourselves over others. These are examples of how we have forgotten what the cross means for our lives.

**Matthew 16:24** **If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.**

**Don't take advantage**

**Mark 9:36-37** <sup>36</sup> **Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them,** <sup>37</sup> **"Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."**

To receive in this context means to welcome someone into your home, to show them hospitality. We have a good example of what hospitality meant in the middle east in the account of Abraham. When he sees the three men walking towards him. He serves them and has them sit down.

To receive means to give them something to eat and drink, but it also means to give them your time and even to serve them.

It is easy to take advantage of children without even realizing you are doing it. As adults we think it is our right to tell children what to do.

Jesus tells us rather to serve the little children. Rather than the attitude "go away the adults are working," we ought to set aside those things we think are important to spend time with these little ones.

Since children cannot repay us for our service, such service is the ultimate example of Christian love. Just as we can never repay Christ for his service to us.

Children are the example here, but the application is wider. We should not take advantage of anyone, but rather freely offer service to one another expecting nothing in return.

**Luke 6:35 lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.**

Sometimes we give in or forgive, allowing others to have their way, expecting that then they will return the favor, and we'll get our way next time. This is just one more strategy to get our way at least some of the time. This is not the way of the cross. This is not what Jesus did for us. We win because Jesus died for our sins, not by taking advantage of each other.

**Lift high the cross.** In every aspect of your life your victory comes from Christ who died for your sins. In the cross you win; with any other strategy you always lose.

Despite the bickering and self-centeredness of the disciples, Jesus died for them. Despite our sins, Jesus has died for us. The victory is ours through him who loved us.

Let us rise and sing hymn **769 "Lift High the Cross."**