

## WHICH DISCIPLE WAS THE GREATEST?

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In Mark 9, as Jesus talks about his betrayal, death, and resurrection, he discovers that as they walked along, his disciples had been arguing about which one of them was the greatest. What? Their master is prophesying his own death, and all they can think about is who's better than whom? Sometimes I just have to wonder why Jesus ever put up with such nonsense.

But I'm so glad he did. And he's still putting up with you and me!

It seems that the disciples couldn't get past their longing for an earthly kingdom, where the Romans would be toppled from power and the land and the government would go back to being under Jewish control. And in this earthly kingdom, everyone wanted a position better than anyone else had.

This strange combination of pride and insecurity is just as firmly entrenched in our modern outlook as it was when Jesus taught his disciples. We're prone to comparing ourselves with others. Who's smarter? Who's better-looking? Who's more spiritual, or who does more? Nothing but insecurity!

And the other side of that coin is pride. We like to be in charge. We like to have things our own way. We're better than others, so we get to be the star. In short, we're more important than those around us.

When Jesus asked his disciples what they'd been arguing about, they were suddenly very quiet. The word "busted" comes to mind, doesn't it?

Nobody likes to get busted. We gossip, we say awful things about others, we exalt our self-importance at someone else's expense, and as long as no one calls us on it, we then proceed to forget we ever said those things. When the disciples realized that Jesus knew what their argument had been about, they were suddenly ashamed.

So here's the question. What if ... Jesus does actually know what every argument is about? What if our every conversation, every action, even every thought, is fully open and exposed to him?

Because, of course, he does know. Every single thing about us IS fully open and exposed to Jesus.

I guess the real question is, What if we remembered that? What if we remembered always that Jesus is right there, and can see and hear everything? Would things change? Would we change?

In Mark, Jesus called his disciples to come and sit down with him. He had something important to teach them:

"Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."

Jesus demonstrated this by the way he lived, and spoke, and made choices. He allowed himself to be humbled repeatedly. Even when he could have fought back and declared himself the better one, he chose not to. He never looked for glory or applause. His only passion was to do the will of the Father.

Impossible for us? No! It's not easy, of course ... but a good way to begin is to remember always that we're not alone. Jesus is there; he listens, and he hears. He never judges or condemns us; he knows human nature very well. But he shows us the way to

humility, and will continue to sit us down and teach us till we begin to get the hang of it. Let's not make his job any harder than it needs to be!