

Follow – Walking in the Way of Jesus

Arguing About Nothing

Mark 9:33-50

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January 18th, 2025



The disciples repeatedly misunderstand the nature of Jesus' mission. This passage exposes the deep roots of pride, rivalry, exclusivism, and moral laxity that must be purged for them to embody kingdom character.

True greatness in Jesus' kingdom is expressed through humble service, not self-importance, and it demands a ruthless rejection of anything (pride, rivalry, sin) that harms others or ourselves.

Three themes that target the heart:

1. Stop COMPETING, and serve the SMALLEST (vv. 33-37)
2. Stop EXCLUDING, and welcome ANYONE doing good in Jesus' name (vv. 38-41)
3. Stop causing HARM, and deal radically with SIN (vv. 42-50)

We can "STOP" by understanding our own hearts. This is NOT an intellectual or behavioural problem. It is through examining the WHY of our behaviours that we can judge whether our motives are FALSE or TRUE.

Jesus confronts the ego at every level: Our craving for status, our need to police others, our tolerance of sin, and our propensity for conflict.

- The gospel is our EXAMPLE when confronted by EGO
He emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, [8] he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death- even to death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8) CSB
- The gospel is our VICTORY over EGO
"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself... It is the Lord who judges me." (1 Corinthians 4:3-4)

The Gospel Solution: A New Source of Identity - The gospel does not say: "Think worse of yourself," or "Think better of yourself," But rather: "Look away from yourself." The gospel doesn't call us to think LESS of ourselves, but to think of ourselves LESS.

The Result: Freedom - When our identity is anchored in Christ rather than self, we are freed from:

- Needing validation
- Comparing ourselves to others
- Being crushed by failure
- Being inflated by success
- Defensiveness and insecurity

Personal Assessment:

- Who am I serving and why? (What do I need credit for?)
- Who am I competing with and why? (Where do I get validation?)
- Is there anything in my life that needs ruthless expulsion? (Why is it there? What is my sin symptomatic of?)
- Where does my contentment lie? (Does my calling lead to rest or performance?)

Date: Jan 18th, 2026

Series: Follow

Title: Arguing About Nothing

Primary Passage: Luke 9:33-50

Secondary Passage: Phil. 2:5-8

Big Question: What does it mean to be great in Jesus' Kingdom?

Big Idea: True greatness in Jesus' kingdom is expressed through humble service, not self-importance, and it demands a ruthless rejection of anything—pride, rivalry, sin—that harms others or ourselves.

Keywords: Dignity, Equality, Kingdom, Humility, Stop, Competing, Excluding, Harm, Self-Forgetfulness

Going Deeper Questions

When this week did you have to believe God for something (not necessarily “believe in God” for)? How did he meet you with truth and grace?

Read Luke 9:33-50. What stands out to you? According to Jesus in this passage, how is greatness in God's kingdom different from how our culture usually defines greatness?

What do you notice in yourself when you hear Jesus say that the greatest is the one who serves and welcomes the least? Resistance, relief, confusion, or conviction?

Where do you feel most tempted to compete, compare, or prove yourself rather than live from the security of Christ's love?

Is there someone you are subtly excluding, overlooking, or dismissing whom Jesus is calling you to receive with dignity and humility?

What is one concrete way this week you could stop focusing on yourself and quietly serve, protect, or bless someone else for Jesus' sake?