

THE GREATEST

Who is the greatest? This question needs qualifiers. Greatest what? Historians debate generals or government figures. There's no end to arguments among sports fans about who's the greatest. No limit to topics, opinions and egos. The question even came up with Jesus' disciples.

WHO IS GREATEST? - Luke 9:46 notes, "*an argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.*" The disciples had been arguing with the scribes, and perhaps wanted to take the focus off their failure with the demoniac. Peter, James or John may have considered themselves greater, since they had accompanied Jesus on the mount of transfiguration.

They argued because they thought Jesus' conquering kingship was imminent. Any day now He would take His throne in Jerusalem, and His chosen twelve would line up as His cabinet. Like schoolboys they're elbowing to be first in line. They completely miss Jesus' instruction in verses 43-45 that He must be killed and raised. While Jesus wrestles with the eternal purpose of God, disciples quibble about their own preeminence, choosing to be ignorant about His words.

PRIDE PRINCIPLE - "Of all sins there is none against which we have such need to watch and pray as pride," relates JC Ryle. "It is a pestilence that walks in darkness, a sickness that destroys at noonday. No sin is so deeply rooted in our nature. It cleaves like our skin. Its roots never entirely die. They are ready at any moment to spring up and exhibit a most pernicious vitality.

"No sin is so specious or deceitful. Pride can wear the garb of humility itself. It can lurk in the hearts of the ignorant, the ungifted and the poor, as well as in the minds of the great, the learned and the rich. It is a quaint and homely saying but only too true, that no pope has ever received such honor as pope 'self'." Do you recoil at the disciples and want them roundly rebuked?

THE GREAT EXAMPLE - Verses 47-48: *But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by His side and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."* You could hear the mic drop. The air was sucked out of the room. All their posturing had come to this in answer to their question. Jesus points to a child.

What a powerful object lesson. And blow to their pride. The Talmud indicates that the priority of children in Jewish culture was to train them to grow up. Perhaps the disciples would have thought children were not important in comparison to the influential adults around them.

YOUR THOUGHTS? - Many today don't want to teach Sunday School or serve in a children's ministry such as Awana or VBS. No time for kids and that. *Pride*. They need to rub shoulders with movers and shakers and be thought of as 'somebody' important. *Pride*. They're not going to waste their time with down-and-outers and people with problems. *Pride*.

They won't attend a Bible study where their ideas might be questioned. *Pride*. They want to roll with the winners, those who can prop them up, feel elevated, and say what they want to hear.

Pride. Others see these thoughts in you. It comes out in your daily decisions, jockeying for position and possessions and power. *Pride*. Congratulating yourself on what you have over others, how you get your way, how you elevate yourself at home, work, community. *Pride*. You have to have the best and know the best. One-upmanship is always in your conversation. You know better, you know who or what, etc ad nasuem. *Pitiful pride*.

TRUTH ABOUT PRIDE - Perhaps the apostle John recalled this episode when he wrote 1John 2:15-17, "*for all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.*" Jesus turns worldly ideas upside down.

What can seem so right to you may be antithetical to why Christ came, and to what He has in His purpose for you. Romans 12 gives some practical applications about "*not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment.*" It reminds believers in Christ that "*we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another.*"

Therefore, we serve one another, living in harmony with one another. "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind*" as you discern the will of God from His written-down Word of grace and truth. Focus not on you, but on Christ alone! ☐