

How To Get Along With Others  
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Anyone familiar with the term “early adopters”? Think electronics or gadgets.

PreachingToday.com gives us a great example of that term:

*When Apple's revolutionary iPhone hit the market in late June, 2007, it sold for \$599. Ten weeks later the price went down to \$399—a 33 percent reduction. While many who bought the iPhone at the original price were outraged, others would have paid any price to be among the first to own the new technology.*

*"If they told me at the outset the iPhone would be \$200 cheaper the next day," one customer explained, "I would have thought about it for a second—and still bought it. It was \$600, and that was the price I was willing to pay for it."*

*Early adopters—consumers who purchase new technology as soon as it becomes available—relish the prestige of taking home a new toy before anyone else. We want our neighbors looking over the fence at our gizmos and gadgets. We want someone else to experience the sting of envy. We're no longer satisfied with keeping up with the Joneses. We want to be the Joneses.*

*(Brandon O'Brien, assistant editor, PreachingToday.com, and Brian Lowery, associate editor, PreachingToday.com; source: May Wong, "Many iPhone owners relish being first," www.news.yahoo.com (9-7-07))*

In our lesson passage today Jesus teaches His disciples, AND US...that “the first shall be last.”

When our son Matt was just a little guy maybe three or four years old he became obsessed with being “first”. Whenever we’d all be headed to the car in a parking lot he would race ahead of his sister and slap his little hand on the van door yelling: “I’m first, I’m first!”

Childish right? Just something a silly kid would do, right?

Turn to Mark chapter 9 beginning in verse 33.

Mark 9:33-37

Who is Greatest?

33They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" 34But they kept quiet ...

- Let’s stop right there

- Now to get some context, look back at verse 31 of this chapter, look at what Jesus had told them just prior to making their way to Capernaum. Someone read just the words of Jesus (IN RED) in verse 31:
  - “The son of man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.”
- Jesus has just told them some of the most sobering words He could possibly have uttered and immediately as they came down the road they were arguing and debating among themselves
- What could they have been debating about?
- Were they arguing about the best way to support Jesus in the incredible trial He faced?
- Perhaps they were debating who should line up a prayer meeting to ask for God’s strength for Jesus?
- Maybe they were arguing about the great theological meaning of what He had told them?
- Back to verse 34:

34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

- Jesus has just told them He’s going to be betrayed and killed and then rise again and these men are fighting about who among them is the greatest. “I’m greatest! No, I’M GREATEST! Are NOT! AM TOO!”
- Sounds a little like a three year old running to the mini-van right?
- Jesus sees a TEACHABLE MOMENT and He takes the standard position of a Rabbi about to teach: (Verse 35)

35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."

- What do you think Jesus meant by those words?
  - Our Lesson Commentary puts it this way:  
*“The world views greatness in terms of self-promotion, power and prestige. In contrast, Jesus said the believer who WANTS TO rank first in the kingdom must be willing to BE LAST in line...must let others go first...and to minister to others. Christians are to demonstrate care for others by serving them.”*

A couple of questions:

Are we concerned about BEING GREAT or having others THINK we’re GREAT?  
 Are we rewarded by only Jesus knowing what we do to serve others or do we feel let down if it isn’t RECOGNIZED BY MEN?

- Do you think Jesus was saying that Christians shouldn’t have ambition?

John Piper says:

*Nowhere does Jesus criticize a person for pursuing true greatness or true significance. I think that's because he created us to be great and to be significant—to come to the end of our lives and feel that they were well spent and well invested. But what has happened to this God-given longing for greatness is that it has been corrupted by sin in two ways:*

- 1. It has been corrupted into a longing not to be great, but to be known as great; and*
- 2. It has been corrupted into a longing not to be great, but to be greater than someone else.*

*In other words, the joy of true greatness has been perverted by sin into the carnal pleasure we sinners get when others praise us and when we think we are greater than others are. Jesus sees this in his disciples and instead of destroying the whole distorted thing, he describes a pathway on which it will be radically transformed into something beautiful.*

- We'll have better relationships with others when, instead of worrying about being seen as GREAT, we focus on being UNSELFISH in dealing with them.

Leadership Guru John Maxwell advises leaders when dealing with their people:  
“People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

- Jesus makes the point further...
- Look at verses 36 and 37

36He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

- What qualities do we think of when we use the term CHILDLIKE?
  - Innocent
  - Teachable
  - Trusting
  - Dependent
- A child is a great example of someone who cannot take care of themselves...totally dependent on others.
- When you do something for a child, that child cannot pay you back...therefore you do it with the pure motive of CARING with no hope of REPAYMENT
- When you and I do something for someone who cannot fend for themselves we do it not for an EARTHLY PAYOFF but a HEAVENLY REWARD
- Jesus made it clear: If you want to be GREAT IN MY EYES be UNSELFISH toward others ESPECIALLY to those who CANNOT TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES

Mark 9:38-41

## Whoever Is Not Against Us Is for Us

38"Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."

39"Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, 40for whoever is not against us is for us. 41I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.

- Maybe the disciples were so embarrassed about arguing over who was the greatest that John was trying to change the subject
- Jesus, there's a man driving out demons in your name so we said: Hey, you're not one of us! You don't have a disciple's leather jacket! You don't know the disciples' secret handshake! Disciples of Jesus is a registered trademark...you can't just go around using Jesus name! CUT IT OUT!
- Can you think of a time when Christians today might have some similar feelings?
  - That church down there is NON DENOMINATIONAL!
  - That church down there is CONTEMPORARY!
  - They don't use the KING JAMES VERSION!
  - They raise their hands in the air!
  - They have drums and guitars and I'm pretty sure I saw somebody dancing!
- Do you ever sometimes think about the good laugh God is going to get when some folks get to heaven and find out who else is there????
- GASP – This can't be heaven...they didn't sing the DOXOLOGY right before the offering!
- This can't be heaven...they let METHODISTS and PRESBYTERIANS in here!
- Sometimes we tend to want our religion to be an EXCLUSIVE CLUB.
- The disciples wanted an EXCLUSIVE CLUB.
- We can't have just ANYONE serving in Jesus name!
- But Jesus set 'em straight
- Chill out John! If I'm getting the glory then that's all that matters!
- The work of the KINGDOM is not about COMPETITION it's about COOPERATION
- The work of the KINGDOM is not an EXCLUSIVE CLUB but an INCLUSIVE FAMILY
- If they're not AGAINST US then that makes them FOR US!
- By the way, does that line sound familiar? It should.

Matthew 12:30 (New International Version) Jesus said it works the other way too:

30"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

- When it comes to your position on Jesus there is no NEUTRALITY
- When it comes to your position on Jesus you can't be SWITZERLAND
- If you're not with Him you are AGAINST HIM

- There's no middle ground...you HAVE TO TAKE A POSITION

Mark 9:42-48

### Causing to Sin

42"And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. 43If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.[a] 47And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48where

"the worm does not die,  
and the fire is not quenched.'[a]

- Jesus again uses the child as an example
- What's the lesson for you and me?
  - If you cause someone who looks up to you to sin you'd be better off with a millstone around your neck at the bottom of the sea
  - This can refer to children or to young immature believers
- Oh what an awesome responsibility we have to live a life that our children can pattern their lives after
- We'll never be perfect and that doesn't matter because they need to see how we deal with our imperfections so they can deal with their own!
- And when it comes to NEW BELIEVERS or SENSITIVE SEEKERS rest assured they are watching our lives to see HOW we live as Christians
- When Jesus gets into verse 43 his teaching becomes pretty radical!
- Cut off your hand?
- Gouge out your eye?
- Was Jesus speaking literally? What do you think He was saying with this overstatement?

Warren Wiersbe writes:

Of course, the Lord is not commanding literal physical surgery, since He had already made it clear that sin comes from the heart (Mark 7:20–23). What He is teaching is that sin is to the inner person what a cancerous tumor is to the body, and it must be dealt with drastically. Some people are shocked to hear from the lips

- Anything in our life that causes another to stumble needs to be CUT OUT EVEN IF IT IS PAINFUL AND COSTLY TO DO SO!
- Our lesson commentary says:  
*“Whatever sacrifice must be made to genuinely know the Lord and to remain faithful to Him is worth it!”*

- When Jesus refers to hell the Greek words refer to the “Valley of Hinnom” which was a literal place outside of Jerusalem where garbage and corpses were taken and burned. Fires were always burning to consume the what was dumped there.
- Jesus knew that this description would make the point to his disciples that hell is a place of continual fire and everlasting punishment.
- In verse 48 He’s quoting Isaiah 66:24 when he says “the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.”

J.I.Packer writes:

*"Scripture sees hell as self-chosen . . . [H]ell appears as God's gesture of respect for human choice. All receive what they actually chose, either to be with God forever, worshipping him, or without God forever, worshipping themselves." (J.I.Packer, Concise Theology p.262-263.)*

- Whatever it takes to know Jesus and avoid hell is worth it!
- Bottom line: If you profess Christ as Lord but the quality of your life denies your profession, others can be led astray.
- We need to be willing to sacrifice whatever is necessary to live a life that glorifies God and draws others to Him
- Sacrificial living doesn’t come naturally, it requires constant vigilance.

Let’s look at two final verses and one final point:

Mark 9:49-50

49 Everyone will be salted with fire.

50 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

- Salted with fire.
- Salt and Fire represent purifying elements.
- Fire can also represent trials and persecutions that were ahead for the disciples
- One way to look at being “salted with fire” is this:
  - We’re either going to trust Christ and go through the “fire” of suffering for Him in this life so we can live free from pain in Heaven with Him. Or live a carefree life NOW and face the eternal fire of hell forever.
- Jesus used the expression salt in one more important way
- He said that we are to be SALT in this world.
- We are to be the SYMBOL OF Christ’s PURIFICATION and the FLAVOR of His love in this dark, dark world.

So what’s the takeaway?

- Whether we’re known as great people is of little importance; whether we are known as people who care about others IS of GREAT IMPORTANCE

- Since God also can work through other believers and their churches, we are to view them as coworkers and not competitors
- We are to refrain from leading others astray, even to the point of sacrificing something important to us for their sakes.
- We are to work toward improving the moral atmosphere of the world and increase our efforts to live peaceably with others.