

Exegetical Notes, Mark 9:33-37

“The Greatest!”

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Mark 9:33-37

Verse 33

They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?”

- Capernaum was the center of Jesus’ operations. He was probably staying at Peter’s house.
- On the way to Capernaum the disciples had been arguing with each other but they thought that Jesus did not know about the argument. His question was to let them know that he knew more than they thought.

Verse 34

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

- They were afraid to reveal the subject of their argument because they knew that it would displease Jesus. They did not understand that Jesus already knew.

Verse 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.”

- In Jesus’ day, rabbis sat down to teach. Jesus assumes this position of authority to show the disciples that this teaching was very important.
- In this teaching, Jesus showed the disciples that he knew the subject of their argument.
- He also laid down a principle for Christian living. Among us, the one who serves and puts himself last is the greatest of all.

Verse 36-37

He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, “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.”

- Jesus took a little boy. He hugged the child. Children are the least important. They have no real influence or standing. They run nothing. They have no wealth or prestige. Jesus said that we should welcome them in his name because they are the least among us. He said that those who welcome children welcome him and his Father.

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