



Biblical Insights That Will Help Improve Your Debating Skills

OCTOBER 13, 2014

A Public Servant can learn much about debating skills from this week's passage. As I strive to serve you and make the Scriptures practical and applicable I am constantly praying and thinking about your life in elected office and what is most pertinent in the passage relative to that (being careful to not sacrifice authorial intent).

This week I cannot help but observe the desperation of the enemies of Jesus to somehow discount His credibility. Their loss of previous encounters has so frustrated and infuriated them that they, in this week's passage, become absurd in their attacks.

Let us critically examine this and the previous passages relative to Jesus' debating skills and see what we can learn about improving ours. This promises to be a rich study – especially as you approach the upcoming November elections.

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Trent Franks, Arizona
Scott Garrett, New Jersey
Louie Gohmert, Texas
Tom Graves, Georgia
Tim Griffin, Arkansas
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Gary Miller, California
Jeff Miller, Florida
Randy Neugebauer, Texas
Allen Nunnelee, Mississippi
Steve Pearce, New Mexico
Mike Pence (Gov.), Indiana
Robert Pittenger, North Carolina
Mike Pompeo, Kansas
Bill Posey, Florida
Tom Price, Georgia
Reid Ribble, Wisconsin
Cathy McMorris Rogers, Washington
Austin Scott, Georgia
Tim Scott, South Carolina
Lamar Smith, Texas
Steve Southerland, Florida
Steve Stockman, Texas
Marlin Stutzman, Indiana
Glenn Thompson, Pennsylvania
Scott Tipton, Colorado
Tim Walberg, Michigan
Randy Weber, Texas
Daniel Webster, Florida
Lynn Westmorland, Georgia
Roger Williams, Texas
Joe Wilson, South Carolina
Rob Wittman, Virginia
Steve Womack, Arkansas
Rob Woodall, Georgia
Ted Yoho, Florida

Weekly Bible Study During Session

Immediately Following First Votes Back. Capitol Building Family Room H324
Dinner Served. Spouses Welcome.



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I. INTRODUCTION

The Scribes and Pharisees were jealous and envious of the new itinerant Rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth. Judaism under these leaders was so degenerate and so selfishly led that they quite reasonably feared Jesus would steal their limelight and undermine their authority. At the same time, they were envious of His large and increasing following. They wanted what He possessed.

JEALOUSY IS THE FEAR THAT SOMEONE ELSE WILL TAKE WHAT YOU POSSESS WHEREAS ENVY IS THE DESIRE TO POSSESS WHAT ANOTHER HAS

It should be noted too that courageous leaders exacerbate the sinful cravings of jealousy and envy in others to the point of fueling betrayal. Be aware of this human condition and guard against it as best you can. In so doing you must ask yourself, “how did Jesus deal with jealousy and envy?”

Interestingly, as this week’s passages show, Jesus perceived these motives in the hearts of His enemies; *His remedy was to openly combat them via debate.*

Notice in what follows from the third chapter of the Gospel of Mark, how the interactions progress in the five ensuing encounters (I will list them out for you) leading up to the absurdity and desperation His enemies manifest in this week’s passage.

What are some lessons you and I can learn from a close examination of these Markian inclusions? What can we learn about debating skills from the world’s greatest debater? Let us examine these passages with that pursuit in mind.

II. THE PASSAGE: MARK 3:20-26

And He came home, and the multitude gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. And when

His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons." And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? "And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. "And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. "And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished!

Here in Mark’s Gospel, Jesus is being attacked internally by **His own people**, members of His own household (v. 21) and externally by the **Scribes** (v. 22). It is important to observe from this passage that sometimes the worst attacks on one’s person can come from those who are the closest. Be the adversaries close or distant, Jesus said that attacks are to be expected – they are normative – in the lives of those who are courageous and stand for truth. Note what he says in Matthew 5:11....

Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.

What follows are pertinent portions from each of the interactions that precede Mark 3:20-26 that pertain to Jesus’ response to His attackers via His Spirit-empowered and Spirit-led debating skills. Again, what debate principles can you glean from these encounters in order to be more Christlike in this area of your life?

III. DISTILLATIONS OF THE FIVE PREVIOUS DEBATES

Prior to this passage of study, Mark records five interactions between Jesus and the false religious leaders. Notice from each of these biblical texts



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how He effectively wins His position in each debate.

I observe nine characteristics of an effective debater as evidenced in and by Jesus in and from the following passages. As you read over them, how many principles can you glean from Jesus?

A. THE DEBATE OVER THE AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SIN

Mark 2:7-10: *"Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 And immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? 9 "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Arise, and take up your pallet and walk'? 10 "But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" He said to the paralytic...*

B. THE DEBATE OVER WHO IS SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE

Mark 2:16-17: *And when the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax-gatherers, they began saying to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners?" 17 And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "it is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

C. THE DEBATE OVER THE PURPOSE OF FASTING

Mark 2:18-19: *And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they*

came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom do not fast, do they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

D. THE DEBATE OVER WORKING ON THE SABBATH

Mark 2:23-27: *And it came about that He was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees were saying to Him, "See here, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 And He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and became hungry, he and his companions: 26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he gave it also to those who were with him?" 27 And He was saying to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.*

E. THE DEBATE OVER HEALING ON THE SABBATH

Mark 3:1-4: *And He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there with a withered hand. 2 And they were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, in order that they might accuse Him. 3 And He said to the man with the withered hand, "Rise and come forward!" 4 And He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent.*



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IV. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING DEBATE PRINCIPLES

Again, I observe nine characteristics of an effective debater as evidenced in and by Jesus in and from the above passages. They are as follows:

A. AN EFFECTIVE DEBATER IS PERCEPTIVE

Jesus was perceptive (possessed of “intuitive recognition” and “intelligent discernment”) intently looking into the heart of His opponent.

JESUS WAS NOT NAÏVE REGARDING THE BASE NATURE OF MAN KNOWING THAT JEALOUSY AND ENVY ARE REAL AND OFTEN THE MOTIVES FOR ACTIONS

If you possess a Christian worldview you will be looking out for this all the time; if you have a Humanist worldview you will not.

B. AN EFFECTIVE DEBATER IS COURAGEOUS

Jesus was not timid; He unabashedly stated the truth of a matter. Courage is “mental or moral strength enabling one to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty firmly and resolutely.” Jesus never equivocated on the truth when debating. He called it like it was with no fear of the consequences.

C. AN EFFECTIVE DEBATER SUMMARIZES AND COUNTERS

When observing the aforementioned passages, notice that Jesus often at some point distills the other’s position while countering it.

D. AN EFFECTIVE DEBATER ANSWERS IMMEDIATELY

Jesus had anticipated where the debate would lead, and adequately prepared His responses enabling Him to answer quickly.

E. AN EFFECTIVE DEBATER SPEAKS WITH AUTHORITY

Jesus responded with a powerful and confident tenor. Because of convictions that are based in truthfulness, His answers were tight and profound. He came across as confident because He already knew what He believed.

F. AN EFFECTIVE DEBATER FLIPS AN ARGUMENT ON ITS HEAD

Jesus turns the tables, boldly and summarily exploiting improper inferences based on faulty deductions. He uncovers illogical statements with His lucid reasoning ability.

G. AN EFFECTIVE DEBATER IS ILLUSTRATIVE

Debaters and other public speakers are wisely advised, “Don’t tell me, show me.” A good example not only makes your point understandable; it will be remembered long after the debate is forgotten. Jesus illustrated His counterpoints with easy-for-everyone-to-understand parables. In this week’s passage He states four (vss. 23b-26).

H. AN EFFECTIVE DEBATER CONTROLS THE PACE

Jesus knew the first debate was not the last debate. He realized that by saying as little as possible His opponents’ would become increasingly desperate and absurd, their charges far-out and illogical. His pacing led to their self-destruction as they undermined their own credibility by the words of their mouths.

I. AN EFFECTIVE DEBATER IS TRANSCENDENT

Jesus thought with added dimension, always displaying an eternal perspective. His solutions were outside the box. If Jesus were a Legislator He would have proffered creative, biblically based ideas for societal problems.



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V. SUMMARY

**THE SAVIOR WAS SILENT WHEN
SUFFERING (ACTS 8:32), PROCLAMATORY
WHEN PREACHING (LUKE 4:18), AND AS
WITNESSED IN THIS WEEK'S PASSAGE,
GREAT AT DEBATE WHEN DEFENDING**

This is an interesting observation. Our communicative actions must be informed by similar wisdom. Jesus possessed the acumen to know what form of interaction was most timely and suitable for each and every situation and audience He faced.

When it came to debate, He was the greatest of all. He used the above principles to utterly silence His opponents. May we increase in this skill, not for the purposes of egotistical superiority or selfish advancement, but for the sake of the gospel, truth, and the service of our society. If you possess biblical truth, and your legislative ideas are solely founded on its precepts, then you are in a position to win the debate over secularist-based ideas every time.

May I add this: In a debate, don't be afraid to cite the Bible as your authority for a position you hold. When you opponent questions or challenges its authority simply respond by saying, "are you suggesting that you authority on this matter should be trusted over and above what the Scripture says about this?" Are you suggesting that you are smarter than God? Should I trust God's opinion or in your counter opinion?