



Nine Characteristics of an Effective Debater

Mark 3:20-26

TO: LEGISLATORS

FROM: RALPH DROLLINGER

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I am looking forward to our first in-person

**MEMBERS WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY
FAMILY ROOM OF THE CAPITOL
STARTING JUNE 8.**

For thinking and scheduling purposes please have your staff note the following: The dinner buffet will start after the last vote of your first-votes-back (either on Monday or Tuesday nights). The Bible study will begin punctually 15 minutes after the close of the last vote.

Member's spouses always welcome.

We 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 them that they, in this week's passage, become absurd in their attacks. Let us inductively 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...

INTRODUCTION

Jealousy is the fear that someone else will take what you possess whereas envy is the desire to possess what another has. Both were characteristic of the Scribes and Pharisees in the time of Jesus. Judaism was so degenerate and selfishly-led that the religious leaders jealously feared that Jesus would steal their limelight and undermine their authority. At the same time, they were envious of His large and increasing following. Jesus perceived these motives in the hearts of His enemies and openly combated them via debate. Notice how the interactions progress in the five encounters (I will list them) leading up to the absurdity and desperation they manifest in this week's passage. What are some lessons one can learn from a close examination of these Markian inclusions? What can one learn about debating skills from the world's greatest debater? Let us examine these passages with that pursuit in mind.

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. 21 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." 22 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." 23 And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 "And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 "And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 "And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished!

Jesus was attacked internally by members of His own household (v. 21) and externally by the Scribes and Pharisees (v. 22). It is important to observe from this passage that sometimes the worst attacks on one's person can come from those whom are the closest. Be it that one's adversaries are close or distant Jesus said that attacks are to be expected (in the lives of those who are courageous and stand for truth). "Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me" He states in Matthew 5:11. What follows are pertinent portions of each of the afore-studied passages pertaining to Jesus' response to His attackers via His Spirit-empowered debating skills. Again, what debate principles can be gleaned here?

I. DISTILLATIONS OF THE FIVE PREVIOUS DEBATES

Prior to this week's passage of study, Mark records five interactions between Jesus and the false religious leaders. Notice how He effectively wins His position in each debate.

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...



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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 grainfields 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.

II. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING DEBATE PRINCIPLES

Here are at least nine characteristics of an effective debater as evidenced in and by Jesus in the above passages.

A. An Effective Debater is Perceptive. Jesus was perceptive ("intuitive recognition," "intelligent discernment") intently looking into the heart of His opponent. He was not naïve regarding the base nature of man knowing that jealousy and envy are real and often the motives for actions.

B. An Effective Debater is Courageous. Jesus was not timid to unabashedly state 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.

C. An Effective Debater Summarizes. 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 to 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 conviction, His answers were tight and profound. He came across 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. Jesus illustrated His counterpoints with easy-for-everyone-to-understand parallels. In this week's passage He states four (vss. 23b-26).

H. An Effective Debater is Confounding. Jesus realized the first debate was not the last debate. By saying as little as possible He realized His opponents' charges would become increasingly desperate and absurd, far-out and illogical. His pacing led to their self-destruction as they undermined their own credibility by the words of their mouth.

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 biblically-based innovative ideas for societal problems.

SUMMARY

The Savior was silent when suffering (Acts 8:32), proclamatory when preaching (Luke 4:18), and as witnessed in this week's passage, a debater when defending. Jesus possessed the acumen to know what form of communication was most suitable for each and every audience. When it came to debate, He was the greatest of all time. He used the above principles to often silence His opponents. May we increase in this skill, not for the purposes of superiority or selfish advancement, but for the sake of the gospel, truth, and the service of our society.