

Who Really Wants to Be No. 1?

The politician was sitting at his campaign headquarters when the phone rang. He listened intently, and after a moment his face brightened.

When he hung up, he immediately phoned his mother to tell her the good news. “Mom,” he shouted, “the results are in. I won the election!”

“Honestly?” she asked. The politician’s smile faded. “Aw, Mom, why bring that up at a time like this?”

We all like to win, don’t we? We all want to be part of the crowd chanting, “We’re No. 1! We’re No. 1!”

“Winning isn’t everything,” said legendary coach Vince Lombardi, “it’s the only thing.” Lombardi complained he was misquoted, but there are people who believe that winning is the only thing that matters.

Joe Jacoby of the Washington Redskins once said, “I’d run over my own mother to win the Super Bowl.”

Hearing Jacoby’s boast, Matt Millen of the Oakland Raiders said: “To win, I’d run over Joe’s Mom, too.”



There are many people today who would divide the world into two groups, the winners and the losers. And it doesn’t matter how many people you have to step on, the only thing that matters is to win.

President Lyndon Baines Johnson was a man who loved to win. He was a master of political power. Helen Thomas, in her book, *Thanks for the Memories, Mr. President*, said that anything we might have heard about Johnson’s will to win is probably an understatement. But she said that there is a story she heard repeatedly from LBJ himself that helps explain his drive to be No. 1.

Johnson said his father would come into Lyndon’s room at 5 o’clock every morning, tweak his toes, and shout, “Get up, Lyndon! Every other boy in town has a head start on you.” That explains a lot about Johnson.

This calls to mind a story in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus and His disciples were coming into the town of Capernaum. As they entered the house where they would be staying, He asked His disciples, “What were you arguing about on the road?” They kept quiet, said the writer of the gospel, because on the way they had argued about who was No. 1 among them.

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The disciples were human beings. They wanted their names to be in lights. There is nothing wrong with that as long as it does not cause us to mistreat others or betray our values. It is likely that Jesus wanted them to be ambitious because ambitious people get things done. He just wanted them to be ambitious in the right way.

So Jesus called the disciples together and told them that to be great, you must learn to serve others.

Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all (Mark 9:35 NIV).

The best among us understand and practice that principle. It is especially true in health care and hospitality.

– Beecher Hunter