Spirit Of Competition

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday September 5th, 2021

Text: I Corinthians. 9:24-27

# Intro

1. Competition: Some love it & thrive on it, while others despise it and languish from it.
2. Is competition good or bad?
3. An Oxford Journal article on Competition had this to say: (<http://antitrust.oxfordjournals.org/content/1/1/162.full>)
   1. “Competition is the backbone of US economic policy. Competition advocacy is also thriving internationally. Promoting competition is broadly accepted as the best available tool for promoting consumer well-being.”
   2. “Among competition’s many virtues, the Supreme Court observed, are its being ‘the best method of allocating resources in a free market’ and ‘that all elements of a bargain-quality, service, safety, and durability-and not just the immediate cost, are favorably affected by the free opportunity to select among alternative offers’.”
   3. Competition can yield:
      1. Lower costs and prices for goods and services (opposed to a monopoly)
      2. Better quality
      3. More choices and variety
      4. More innovation
      5. Greater efficiency and productivity
      6. Economic development and growth
      7. Greater wealth equality
      8. A stronger republic by dispersing economic power
      9. Greater wellbeing by promoting individual initiative, liberty, and free association
4. Not only is competition in business good for consumers but also good for individuals seeking jobs, raises, and promotions, because it keeps their minds sharp and at the top of their career-game.
5. Competition is good for people physically & mentally as it pushes them to grow, to be fit, to better themselves!
   1. We teach our children to compete from a young age – to be good at what they do.
   2. We should also be teaching them to be gracious winners & losers (good sportsmanship)
6. Despite all the good that can come from competition, there is an ugly side to competition:
   1. Businesses will often resort to stealing either product ideas or poaching employees, or worse!
   2. Individuals climbing the corporate ladder (or trying to get ahead in their profession) cheat or steal or hurt others to get to the top
   3. Athletes cheat in some form or another (performance-enhancing drugs), etc.
   4. Athletes, young and old, throw tantrums or break down when they lose (Unsportsmanlike behavior)
   5. Individuals that adopt a perpetual competitive spirit look down on others, compare themselves with others, and it leads to jealousy (envy) and strife!
7. Should saints have a competitive spirit?

# What Does God Say About Competition?

1. Prov. 27:17: One man sharpens another – a little competition helps us to grow!
2. Jer. 12:5: Competing with horses used as an example of having stamina and endurance.
3. I Cor. 9:24-27: Competition used as metaphor for Christian life!
   1. The Corinthians would have been used to the games as Corinth hosted the Isthmian Games every 3 years (some sources say every 5 years).
   2. The Isthmian games consisted of: Leaping, running, throwing the discus, boxing, and wrestling (could also consist of horse and chariot races).
   3. Winning a race requires purpose and discipline.
   4. Paul uses this illustration to explain that the Christian life takes hard work, self-denial, and grueling preparation.
   5. As Christians, we are running toward our heavenly reward.
   6. Don't merely observe from the grandstand; don't just turn out to jog a couple of laps each morning. Train diligently—your spiritual progress depends upon it.
   7. Not just one winner, just that we should all run as winners – We should all practice the same kind of self-denial that the Apostle Paul himself practiced!
4. II Tim. 2:5: Compete according to the rules used as a metaphor
   1. There are rules for the conduct of our life as Christians and we are to heed them in our race “to win.”
   2. Christianity requires the same preparation and determination to win that athletes possess!
5. Heb. 12:1-2: To win this race requires self-discipline to set aside sin and run with endurance!
6. The Scriptures say there’s nothing wrong with a little good honest competition, and even compares our walk with God to competing according to the rules!

# What Does God Say About a Constant Spirit of Competition?

1. Mt. 18:1-4: Greatest is the one who is humble!
2. Mt. 19:30: First will be last!
3. Mt. 20:25-28: Do not seek to be the greatest, but to serve!
4. Lk. 18:9-14: Trust in own righteousness and view others with contempt is condemned.
5. Rom. 2:11: No need to compete because God does not show partiality.
6. I Cor. 1:10-13: Should not be divided over who is better!
7. I Cor. 3:3-4: Jealousy and fighting with one another are condemned as fleshly.
8. Gal. 5:13-15: Do not bite and devour one another.
9. Gal. 5:26: Not to challenge one another or envy one another (abilities, etc.)
10. Phil. 2:3-4: Do nothing out of rivalry but think of others as better than yourself.
11. Js. 3:14-16: Jealousy and selfish ambition cause every evil thing.
12. Constantly competing against other people will cause one to suffer unproductive exhaustion and bitterness! Don’t compare yourself to others – compare yourself with Jesus (Rom. 2:16)!
13. Having an attitude of competition all the time or selfish ambition is condemned in the Scriptures.
14. We should NOT be looking for ways in which we are “better” than others!

# How Should We Think of One Another?

1. I Cor. 12:12-26: All members of one body with different functions – One is not above the other!
   1. **Ball-point pen analogy!** (Even the tiniest part, spring, is needed for it to work right!)
2. Rom. 12:3-8: Not think more highly of self – Each has different gifts (I Pet. 4:10)
3. Rom. 14:19: Pursue that which builds up, not tears down
4. I Thess. 5:11: Build each other up
5. I Cor. 13:4-6: Love is not jealous or proud, it rejoices in the truth!
6. Eph. 4:11-16: Each has different talents (I Cor. 15:58: Work together!)
   1. Use your talents to build others up (I Pet. 4:10: Serve one another!)
   2. Each individual doing their part will cause the entire body to grow
7. Spiritually, we must work together, not compete against each other – Build each other up in love!

# Conclusion

1. Competition is good when it is used for personal growth and challenging yourself (physically or spiritually) but can be bad if you constantly compare yourself to others for selfish motives!
2. We all have our own unique abilities (i.e.: parts of the body) that are all useful in different ways.
3. We should never envy each other or put each other down because we feel we are “better.”
4. Instead of trying to be “the greatest” we should look for ways to serve!
5. Celebrate each other’s differences and encourage one another to use their individual talents for building each other up and for the growth of the church!
6. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Repent and be baptized to join the race!
7. If a Christian living with sin, repent and He will forgive you.