

“The Competitive Christian”

“It is most difficult, in my mind, to separate any success, whether it be in your profession, your family, or as in my case, in basketball, from religion.”- John Wooden

“Material possessions, winning scores, and great reputations are meaningless in the eyes of the Lord, because He knows what we really are and that is all that matters.”-John Wooden

“Be more concerned with your character than your reputation. Your character is what you really are while your reputation is merely what others think you are.”-John Wooden

“The first man gets the oyster, the second man gets the shell”-Andrew Carnegie

“Number 1: Cash is king. Number 2: Communicate. Number 3: Buy or bury the competition.” – Jack Welch

1. What do you think of Wooden’s quote regarding the difficulty of separating success from religion?
2. What kind of competitions do we face on a regular basis? How are you doing expressing your faith in each of these areas?
 - a. Could unhealthy competition even sneak its way into a group such as ours? How so?
3. Why should kids be encouraged to participate in competitive endeavors such as athletics, academic contests, science fairs, etc.? What are the benefits of competition?
4. Is it consistent with Christian principles to always want to win, even when that means someone else must lose?
 - a. How should we reconcile the desire to win the biblical principal of humility?
5. Walter Payton once said, “I realized in my second year that for me, performing well on the field and doing well as a professional football player made little kids look up to me. God enabled me to communicate with them. I found that this was the way Christ wanted me to spread His message. My professional performance is God’s way of using me to reach out and touch kids and bring them to Christ”
 - a. What do you think of Walter’s quote?
6. Read 1 Cor. 10:31. This verse makes it clear that whatever we do, we should do it all for the glory of God. How are we to practice this in the areas of competition we face regularly? Obviously just saying, “I did this to glorify God”, doesn’t actually make it glorifying to God. What does?
 - a. Is it legitimate to pulverize the competition and then “give God all the glory”? I sometimes wonder after hearing a football player who just spent 3 hours smashing the other team what God would think of him giving “God all the glory” afterward. Do you think God is glorified by this? How about Ultimate fighting? Where do we draw the line?
 - b. Using a business example, does doing a great job and crushing your competition glorify God?
7. Romans 12:17-21 seems to describe a spirit that is in opposition to the “killer instinct” that is so cherished by many athletes, fans, sales managers, business owners, and coaches. How does a Christian obey this passage, and still retain a sense of competitiveness?
8. I have always loved the verses in **1 Cor. 9:24-27**. What is Paul telling us in this passage and how do you think it relates to competition in general?
9. How can we compete in a distinctly Christian way? Not just in sports, but in life. How can we compete in sports, in business, in the workplace? What other areas am I forgetting?

Scriptures:

- **Phil. 2:3-5:** 3Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
- **1 Cor. 9:24-27:** 24Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others; I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.
- **1 Cor. 10:31:** 31So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.
- **Rom. 12:17-21:** 17Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"^[a]says the Lord. 20On the contrary:
"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."