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**THOUGHTS OF A FATHER**

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Perhaps this reflection should be called "Food for Thought" to more accurately describe its content. Recently I heard the term 'competition' used while listening to a tape of a Sunday morning service, and once again, as it has so often in the past, I began thinking about how competition fits with the Christian life-style. Ponder with me, if you please.

During my life time I have had ample opportunity to observe competition at work in the lives of young persons and can only conclude that there are many facets to competition -- both beneficial and detrimental -- to society, and to the Christian. Striving for better marks can have positive results on a report card and that is good, but what about the motive behind the striving? Was it because of strong parental pressures, was it to keep face within some part of the community, was it to look better than someone else, or was it a desire on the individual's part to simply do what they believed they were capable of doing? All of these motives may result in improved marks, but perhaps only the latter could be considered healthy.

Sports thrive on competition. Most everyone is driven to be a winner when participating in sports. Proving yourself, or your team, to be a winner is what sports are all about. Even the fans thrive on the competition. At what level is this competition healthy, and at what point does it become detrimental to the individual, to the team, or to those connected in some other way? If sport is the opportunity for an individual to participate in something they enjoy doing, pushing themselves to do their very best, regardless of the result, then it is healthy. But go to a minor sports event and watch the actions of the players, coaches, and parents. If you have ever done so, you will recognize why a Christian needs to know how to properly deal with competition.

In a capitalistic society competition has had results that have improved quality, pricing, and availability of products. But at the same time those with motives that may be described as less than honourable, have allowed competition to drive them to treat the consumer in an underhanded way, by cheating or lying or misrepresenting a product.

How do I, how do you, deal with competition? What are our motives? How does our approach affect our family, or others? The Apostle Paul encourages us to 'run the race in such a way as to get the prize'. The prize he refers to is not won at someone's expense, but is a prize that is available to all who would seek it. He is encouraging us to do our best, to be disciplined, to want to be obedient children of the Father. A good balance that Paul gives is found in Philippians, in the first chapter: "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

I guess our best guide in dealing with ourselves or others where competition is involved, is to ask ourselves, "What would Christ do?"

Happy pondering,

Dave Croley