

## **The Best Kind of Competition**

Competition can take a variety of forms. Some of it is healthy, some not so much. It can be as simple as foot races between friends or as high profile and significant as Olympic games. Competition can be playful or cutthroat. It can inspire better performance or break the hearts of the hopeful.

Sometimes competition is seen in what we call "sibling rivalry" and it usually results in strained relations rather than positive outcomes. But scripture actually calls for a sort of "sibling rivalry" among spiritual brothers and sisters: "Love one another with warm affection; outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10). While most competition involves an effort to "get ahead" of others, the competition scripture urges is a sort that leads us to promote others, putting them ahead of ourselves.

We honor others by seeing them as valuable and letting our valuation of them be known. Speaking well of others, complimenting them, commending them, treating them with respect honors them. This is hard to do if we are insecure and afraid that giving honor to others takes something away from ourselves. If we are preoccupied with our own status, it is difficult to put ourselves aside enough to shine the spotlight on someone else.

Someone once said, "If you don't toot your own horn someone else will use it as a spittoon." Perhaps there is some truth in that statement and certainly no one should end up being anyone else's spittoon. We all deserve respect. But self-promotion can end up working against us, as Jesus warned in a parable about the hazard of taking a seat of honor only to be displaced by someone more important (Luke 14:8-11). Our Lord pointed out, "All who exalt themselves will be humbled" (Matthew 23:12).

The apostle Paul urged his readers to follow the humble and self-giving example of Jesus, saying, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4). Imagine what the world would be like if the focus on self-interest gave way to looking to the interests of others and if pride was replaced with an eagerness to honor others!

I want to live in that kind of world. But we have to start making the change somewhere. I believe God intends the church to be the pilot project for a new world. Let's start the godly competition of giving loving honor to each other right now.