

The Pernicious Folly of Comparison

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In past years I have written about the folly of making comparisons, especially related to our Christian ministries in sport. Some of us don't deal with the temptation to compare while others of us, certainly I, are constantly driven by our competitive natures to think this way. Oftentimes we do it without conscious thought.

I'd like to share some scriptures that also warn about this tendency to foolishly make comparisons. This is not peculiar to our time. We can see the apostles dealing with it.

For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding

2 Corinthians 10:12.

The apostle Paul is aware of those among his peers who make some foolish comparisons. He refuses to play their game. He will not claim a title, a rank, or allow comparison of himself with these others. Further, he says that when the comparisons are made, the ones so doing are without understanding. Let's not be among them.

Some of us have teammates we envy for various reasons. We may be envious of their talents, abilities, their positions, their relationships, or any number of things. Some of us can become envious of the calling another has received from our Lord, its importance or profile, as compared to our more humble callings. Jesus' disciple Peter felt this way toward John:

Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, “Lord, and what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!”

John 21:20-22

Jesus does this so well by asking Peter, “...what is that to you? You follow me.” As I have found myself wondering about the nature of my calling and area of service vs. the higher profile nature of my colleague’s service, I have occasionally heard a voice in my ear saying, “What is that to you? You follow Me.” This gentle rebuke never fails to restore my perspective and to prompt repentance and confession.

Another form of comparison that ensnares some of us is comparisons of our friends, our networks, or other second-hand associations. This happens when people in organizations compare how they came to that group. It’s almost like a set of coaches comparing the “coaching tree” from which they have come. Somehow we think we have greater organizational status depending upon the people with whom we are associated. The apostles also deal with this behavior.

So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23

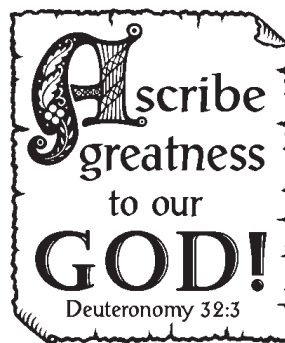
The apostle clarifies the issue of belonging for all concerned. Ultimately we are God’s. His alone. Our lesser associations are of little consequence. Let’s stop appealing to them for status.

If we are wise, we will properly grasp the scope of our service, thank God for it, appreciate its value, and boast only in God’s grace given to fulfill it.

To commend ourselves for something that is God's work seems rather foolish. But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. But he who boasts is to boast in the Lord. For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends (2 Corinthians 10:13, 17-18).

The apostle knows it is God's grace, love, and power that has enabled him to reach, even as far as Corinth. He knows that the only warranted boasting is reserved for The Lord Himself. He will not commend himself, nor will he acknowledge those who commend themselves. He will trust the Lord for His commendation. As should we all.

Please, friends and colleagues, beware the pernicious folly of comparison. It will diminish your relationships and sully your spirit. Be 100% who the Lord made you to be, and find the joy that comes with that fulfillment of purpose.



*This is an excerpt from "Heart of a Champion"
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