

# APPRECIATE THE THINGS YOU HAVE

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In his book with Steve Jamison, *Wooden on Leadership*, Coach wrote about his perspective:

Americans, perhaps by nature, are most competitive. In sports, business and almost all areas of life, they not only ask Who's number one?, they want to be number one and constantly compare themselves against that standard: Am I the biggest? The best? The fastest?

However, for most of my life I have believed these are the wrong questions to ask oneself. This comes mostly from what I was taught by my Dad back on the farm in Centerton, Indiana, population 49.

Although Dad suffered terrible setbacks and sorrows — deaths of two daughters', loss of his beloved farm, financial hardships during the Great Depression — he never complained, criticized or compared himself to others who were better off. Through it all he made the best of what he had and was thankful for it.

Joshua Wooden cautioned his three sons that: *Time spent comparing yourself to others was time wasted.*

It is very easy to fall into the comparison trap: *Comparing the current times to the old times; comparing somebody else's lucky breaks to your lucky breaks or comparing how much you're being paid for a job compared to somebody else.*

In his book *Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections on and Off the Court*, with Steve Jamison, Coach cautions against that type of thinking:

Don't compare yourself to somebody else, especially materially. If I'm worrying about the other guy and what he's doing, about what he's making, about all the attention he's getting, I'm not going to be able to do what I'm capable of doing.

It's a guaranteed way to make yourself miserable. Envy, jealousy, and criticism can become cancerous. They hurt the person who feels them rather than the person they're directed toward.

Coach expanded on this idea in discussing athletic salaries:

Coaches are paid millions of dollars today and players make tens of millions of dollars. It started happening soon after I left UCLA, so I'm often asked if I'm envious. Folks say, "Coach Wooden, imagine what you could make today!" It doesn't concern me in the least. What concerns me is that over which I have some measure of control, and I can't control what others make or employers pay them.

In responding to a question regarding a large salary an NBA player was making compared to what he earned, Coach put it in perspective:

He may know what it's like to earn a million dollars, but I know what it was like to be able to get a good meal for twenty-five cents. Neither of us should envy the other in this regard.

Yours in Coaching,  
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