

In search of...

Truth & Right

Volume 11 Issue 15

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Competitive Christianity

As this article is being authored, the NCAA season of college basketball and it's "March Madness" is coming to a close with the 2016 champions to be crowned within the next few days; the NBA & NHL's regular season games are down to single digits for most teams, with the impending play-offs imminent; "America's favorite pastime" is about to burst onto the scene as Major League Baseball is ready to begin with everyone's' favorite team tied for first place; and local spring sports are springing forth on fields and in sports complexes everywhere. The heartbeat of the American sports scene is alive, abuzz, and absolutely thriving... and unfortunately it seems, still spilling into the church of our Lord in places on a level it should never be allowed to.

And no, this is not an article on

the atrocity of church leaders being reminded not to schedule gospel meetings or other activities on evenings when major sporting events are occurring because Christ and Christianity cannot apparently compete anymore with such **"things of the world"** (1 Jn. 2:15-17) as currently capture the hearts, minds, souls, and attentions of men – even way too many men in the church of our Lord – although it certainly could be. But no, this is instead an article on the insidious seepage of the sports and competition mindset, into the one body and church of Christ. Please let me explain...

We, as the Lord's church, all preach, and teach, and claim to believe that we are all one in Christ Jesus just as Jesus and nearly every book of the New Testament states in one form or

another (Jn. 17:20-23; Acts 5:32-35; Ro. 12:1-18; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; 2 Cor. 13:11-14; Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 2:13-22, 4:1-6; Phil. 1:27-2:8; Col. 3:12-17; 1 Thess. 5:9-28; 2 Thess. 1:3-10; Titus 3:1-11; Hebs. 2:10-13; Jms. 4:1-12, 5:13-20; 1 Ptr. 3:8, 4:8-17; 1 Jn. 3 and 4; 2 Jn. 1:5; plus many more...). We are all on the same "team," so to speak. After all, we all wear the same 'uniform,' and team "Logos," having "put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27; Acts 4:12, 11:26; Ro. 16:16).

In other words, there is really no such thing as "**Competitive Christianity**" – or at least there shouldn't be (SEE: Matt. 23:1-12; Lk. 18:9-14!!!). A faithful eldership or evangelist who serves a congregation of 25, is just as worthy of our love, support, and respect, as a faithful eldership or evangelist who serves a congregation of several thousand! Someone who has tried for many years to lead someone to Christ and has been blessed to finally succeed – or even if they haven't yet -, should never be seen or made to feel insignificant or inferior by someone who has baptized a hundred. And this is ultimately true across the entire spectrum of our beloved brotherhood. It relates to everything from our publishing companies, to

our young people's bible bowls, to congregational attendance and everything else in between.

Every saint has a place and a service to perform in the body of Christ, having been put there by God Himself (1 Cor. 12:18). Every member is vital, important, essential, and special (1 Cor. 12:20-27), having been purchased by no less than the pure and spotless, sinless blood of Christ Himself (1 Ptr. 1:17-23). There is absolutely no room for pride, politics, or personal positioning for power that pits one brother against another, or that puts or portrays any of the rest of one's brethren in Christ at a distinct disadvantage or lesser level of importance in anyone's eyes in the Lord's Kingdom. James and John already tried that; Jesus derailed and sought to re-direct it (Matt. 20:20-28; Mk. 10:35-45). John must've learned something from that encounter by the way he later dealt with the pridefully disobedient Diotrophes (3 Jn. 9-10). Solomon had sought to show us repeatedly how desperately God hates such prideful, arrogant, and competitive attitudes in the Book of Proverbs. The Apostle Paul had to address it at length with one of the most pride infested congregations of self-promoters that probably ever existed when writing his epistles to the Corinthians – read through them again!

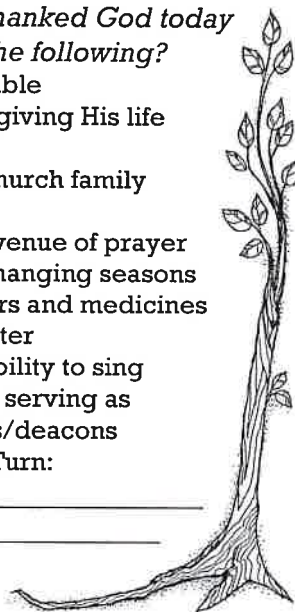
Look brethren, we're all co-workers and co-heirs in the same kingdom. All of us got into the Lord's church and onto the Savior's "team" by virtue of the same blood, and will only make it to heaven by the same great grace of God – and none of us are good enough to get there otherwise. God bought us, and blessed us, and assembled us to work together to expand His kingdom. This is not a competition, nor is it a game. Ours is a blood-bought privilege to work side by side with other blood-bought brethren; to be of like mind, faith, and doctrine, as we all work together as one, for the One. Our battle is not against one another but **"against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"** (Eph. 6:12)! That is a battle we can only win standing side by side, shoulder to shoulder, and completely united against a common foe (Phil. 1:27-2:7). And there is no room for prideful, sinful, personal self-promotion at the cost of others, or feelings of superiority over any of our brethren in any of us. See: **Matt. 18:4, 23:12; Lk. 14:11, 18:14; Jms. 3:13-4:10; and 1 Ptr. 5:6!** And then may God impress upon us, how **Competitive Christianity**, is actually not Christianity at all!

Doug Dingley

God gave you a gift of
86,400
 seconds today. Have
 you used one to say
THANK YOU?

*Have you thanked God today
 for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- Jobs
- The avenue of prayer
- The changing seasons
- Doctors and medicines
- Laughter
- The ability to sing
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Pray for all People

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R	O	F	G	A	P	S	T	Q	S	E	Y	P	J	R	A	N	S	O	M

DIRECTIONS: Look up the scripture in the Bible, and find the answer in the crossword above.

- 1 Tim. 2:1, *First of all, then, I urge that _____, prayers...*
 1 Tim. 2:1, ... _____, and thanksgivings be made for all people,
 1 Tim. 2:2, *for kings and all who are in high _____,*
 1 Tim. 2:2, *that we may lead a _____ and quiet life,*
 1 Tim. 2:2, *godly and _____ in every way.*
 1 Tim. 2:3, *This is good, and it is _____ in the sight of God our Savior,*
 1 Tim. 2:4, *who _____ all people to be saved and to come...*
 1 Tim. 2:5, *For there is one God, and there is one _____...*
 1 Tim. 2:6, *...who gave himself as a _____ for all,*
 1 Tim. 2:7, *For this I was appointed a preacher and an _____...*
 1 Tim. 2:7, *...a teacher of the _____ in faith and truth.*
 1 Tim. 2:8, *...men should pray, _____ holy hands without anger or quarrel;*