

## Competition and the Kingdom of God

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***Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.***

***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.***

***In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.***

***And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Ephesians 2:1-8)***

My fellow ministers and friends, we are gathered here on this occasion of the Oxford Pastors Forum Second Anniversary to be physically nourished at this Pastors Breakfast.

As we seek to be spiritually nourished as well, Apostle Paul exhorts us in the portion of scripture to imitate the humility of Christ.

The very opposite of being humble as a servant is to open the door for the spirit of competition within our ministries.

Let us therefore examine how competition relates to the kingdom of God.

Competition first originated in heaven as Lucifer, the most powerful angel, decided to strive against God to become number one (***Isa 14:12-14; Ezek 28:12-18***).

The same powerful spirit works in the world today seeking to cause each person or group to compete with one another to try to become number one, over all the others.

There are only two main fundamental orders of life:

1. Following God in obedience to Him and His ways.
2. Self will in competition against God's will and ways.

Either life is ordered by God and His will, or it is ordered by another will in competition against God.

Competition between individuals and groups or pastors and churches in our case is a major factor in the world today.

Competition is deeply ingrained in people's life patterns and practiced for so long that most people think it is a very worthy ingredient of successful life.

We teach our children to compete at home and in school; we praise them when they are better than others and when they win over others.

Many times we show up or we are screwed to our TV sets watching a football game and cheering like crazy when our team wins over the other. But it is all quiet when we lose to a cheering rival team.

In fact, competition is self seeking and involves covetousness, which leads to envy, which leads to strife and wars.

The first major human competitive incident occurred between Cain and Abel when Cain wanted to do offerings his way instead of God's way.

When Abel's offering, brought God's way was accepted by God and Cain's was not; Cain become angry and killed his brother (***Gen.4:3-8***).

Cain's competition with Abel began with Cain's competition with God concerning who was to be number one in his life.

Competition in our lives and ministries today also begins with our competing with God for number one status.

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Nimrod, great grandson of Noah was the first major player in the competition scheme of human living.

Nimrod departed from the faith of his fathers and tapped into the occult powers of darkness. He built the original great city of Babylon.

He was the first to put competition to work within his army to train and toughen his troops.

He enticed and controlled men through immorality, competition, and sorcery. He conquered his neighbours and ruled over them.

***Competition is not a kingdom of heaven principle - cooperation and collaboration are the kingdom ways.***

In Babylonian style cultures where businesses must compete with one another to survive competition does serve a valuable purpose for balancing greed and motivating quality service.

In a similar way it can motivate us to greater performance and is also generally believed by many to increase and stimulate production in the short range.

However, in the long range and in the bigger picture, competition decreases production and efficiency.

Cooperation and collaboration will always prove to be more productive in the end.

Competition is much like the law of the jungle which eliminates the weak and preserves the quality of the species.

Within many species males must battle sometimes to death for breeding rights. The survivor will be the most fit and will produce the best offspring.

In the same way, the individual or business that can become the most efficient and productive has the best chance for survival and should produce the best value in products or services.

In a Nimrod greed based economy these are noble principles. But the kingdom of God is not a competition oriented economy based on greed.

***The kingdom of God is a service oriented economy based on love.***

My fellow ministers we are called to transform the old Babylonian system of Nimrod to the new system of the kingdom and to restore the way things were designed by Christ our Lord.

In the Babylonian style system we compete to have more, to be better and highly esteemed and these are considered normal good behaviour.

It is normal for one business group (church) to try to get all the business for themselves (members) and force others out of business (have our church closed) if possible.

As we embrace the kingdom of God into our lives, we'll see the value of living according to God's kingdom patterns.

We'll seek the kingdom of God, the true number one, rather than seeking our ministries to be number one.

In generations yet to come, kingdom of God people will look back upon our time with wonder at how we could have been so greedy and self seeking.

As the transition continues, I pray that some of us will live long enough to look back on our own life time and wonder at the change.

***Love, not competition is the primary motivational force of the kingdom of God.***

Love is a giving thing that leads one to become a servant of others, not a competitor against others.

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One of the underlying desires of seeking to be better than others is seeking to rule over others, to be the boss.

Competition leads to unnecessary strife between individuals, families, tribes, and nations (in our case, strife between churches).

The root of competition is an inner need and fear of not having enough of anything; whether it is land, food, jobs, business, praise, acceptance, affection, love, or some other need.

The fear is that we will not have enough unless we strive against others to get more.

It is the belief that there is not enough for everyone that leads to wars and strife in an effort to strive to get mine before you do, or get it from you if you already have it.

That is why Apostle James in James 4:1-2 asks: ***Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.***

***In the kingdom of heaven lifestyle there is no strife.***

Apostle Paul in 2 Tim 2:24-26 says: ***And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.***

***There should not be competition between our churches. The only competition allowed in the kingdom of God is with the devil, not with flesh and blood.***

Apostle Paul explains the rules of that competition in Eph 6:11-12: ***Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.***

***May God help us to cooperate and collaborate, not compete with each other!***



**Competition**



**Cooperation and collaboration**