

What Have We Won?

Will Anyone Win on November 3, 2020?

We talk about winning a promotion, a battle with an illness, an election and obviously athletic competitions. There are books about winning: *Designed to Win: What Every Business Needs to Know to Go Truly Global*, *Why Winners Win: What it Takes to be Successful in Business and Life . . .* But do we want our life's success measured by our winning? More pointedly, do we want to raise our children, the next generation, on greater and greater "steroids" of winning? Winning too often becomes the object of our efforts, rather than the more valuable means and purpose that should underly them: for example, the negative and damaging mentality of the politician versus that of the statesman, of whom we see fewer and fewer.

Winning a battle with a serious illness to return to the same old, same old? An election fought for the supposed fame it provides only to be surrounded by those in higher positions? To win a promotion for a few more dollars traded for more of our precious and limited hours? A best nothing gained – while more often losses. The short-term adrenaline rush of a win is a loss compared to the long-term peace of finding joy in cooperation and the many extended benefits this typically provides. Winning without a subsequent and associated responsibility exercised with the prize (if there is any to be had) is winning for the sake of winning, a hollow victory.

Scholars now "win" scholarships, not earn them as was true in the past. **Everyone** seemingly has to be on a path to winning something or they feel themselves losers! Average, hard-working, being agreeable, helping others, working to have a harmonious life, being content and thankful with ourselves and what we possess, having good manners, generous . . . have been replaced with win or you lose, sacrificing all for **the** prize, being irritable to psyche out others, undermining (within the rules of course), being laser focused on any prize other the salvation of our (and others') soul(s), only being thankful when we win – hating it when others do, mean-spirited . . . a focus on winning, which is so often incompatible with long-term personal success or happiness. In short, we waste way too much in the way of emotions, perspective and time competing in trivial matters while ignoring the great possibilities that could be personally won when directed in far more meaningful pursuits. Many, as a result, lose much even as they supposedly win.

No, those majoring on a life of winning are seldom, in the long-run, greatly admired, rather they fade into obscurity as the time since their last win lengthens. At the same time, the shadow of those who inspire and motivate others grows and lengthens over time: the Churchills, Benjamin Franklins, Mother Therasas, Paul the Apostles . . . to ultimately Jesus Christ. These are examples of people growing in stature over time (well beyond any athletes) in spite of losing their last election, never holding elected

public office or dying gruesome deaths and departing, after years of teaching, with only a handful of followers . . .

Our great love affair with sports has dramatically increased in the recent past as even people who have no appreciation for a sport itself choose a team so they can vicariously ostensibly win as their team wins! The obvious consequences of our age of growing competition? It should be obvious; we are suffering a corresponding and equal loss of cooperation, harmony, synergy, service and many benefits teamwork brings with it. We see this vividly in our current political arena where **any** cooperation with “opponents” (versus the thought they have been duly elected by their constituents and should be respected as such – not considered and treated as “deplorables”) is shunned in fear the competitor may win more votes as a result. Any idea they serve for the welfare of a country as a whole is lost to “our side” winning (even if it means, as we have seen time and again, we all lose in the process – but lose less than our enemy, the main objective of a competitive spirit). We need to consider where this increasing and expanding emphasis on competition will lead if not significantly abated. A good place to start? Voters tell the two parties they will no longer vote for the greater, most abrasive, competitor, but only for candidates who have the skills and behavior of cooperation, otherwise what real value has any vote in a national election had in the recent past when the “winners” are stalemated by the losers so that the nation, as a whole, **always** loses? With the next candidates “put up” worse than the last! This has been going on so long we have forgotten what it is to win!

Note to politicians: most children are taught early on what most politicians have apparently forgotten – you cannot find the highest platform to stand on to ridicule others and expect, the next day, that they will be friendly and cooperate with you. Politicians, if the greater well-being of the country is **really** their goal, will boycott media outlets that operate these bully platforms (which is most of the media outlets today!) and, in the process, require the media (who incite and feed much of today’s unhealthy competition) to operate in mature ways.

Does competition have **any** place in life? Yes, if limited to “not all that serious” activities and enjoying “good” games and appreciating good play, even in and by competitors. And that games end in camaraderie, not sulking after losing.

Will the result be that kids, if playing sports with this mindset, will fail to develop into great athletes? Probably. But very very very (remember this any parents among the vast great majority of parents thinking their children are somehow especially greatly talented) few will reach the college ranks, far less will become Pros where, more often than not, their lives, a few years after retirement, end in failed marriages, bankruptcy . . . big losing. In other words, a minuscule number of people ever become great athletes while many suffer from life-long personality disorders resulting from a distorted win/lose upbringing. In short, there must be as much strong

coaching in attitude as in the mechanics of a game. Beyond this (except in war where reluctant competition is required), rivalry almost always means every participant loses!

What and when then can anyone win?

People only win **when**
others are somehow blessed by their being.

And God promises that **what** we win by valuing and **cooperating** with others is that:

Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. ^{Pr 11:25}

So, let's personally be blessed
(even in a surrounding and communally competitive atmosphere)
by reclaiming this great historical, commonly-known, truth
lost in our recent love affair with competing.

By seeking the blessings of cooperation
that pay dividends competition never can!

Then, we **will** win for sure!