



*The Desire To Equal Or Excell
Others, Results In A Spirit
Of Emulation*

The Word and Prayer

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Emulations

Emulations Defined:

The desire to equal or excel, to imitate with effort equal or surpass.

Let nothing be done though strife or vainglory.

Philippians 2:3-4

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. [4] Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Selfishness can ruin a church, but genuine humility can build it. Being humble involves having a true perspective about ourselves (see Romans 12:3). It does not mean that we should put ourselves down. Before God, we are sinners, saved only by God's grace, but we *are* saved and therefore have great worth in God's Kingdom.

We are to lay aside selfishness and treat others with respect and common courtesy. Considering others' interests as more important than our own links us with Christ, who was a true example of humility.

Philippi was a cosmopolitan city. The composition of the church reflected great diversity, with people from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life. Acts 16 gives us some indication of the diverse makeup of this church. The church included Lydia, a Jewish convert from Asia and a wealthy businesswoman (Acts 16:14); the slave girl (Acts 16:16, 17), probably a native Greek; and the jailer serving this colony of the empire, probably a Roman (Acts 16:25-36).

With so many different backgrounds among the members, unity must have been difficult to maintain. Although there is no evidence of division in the church, its unity had to be safeguarded (3:2; 4:2).

Paul encourages us to guard against any selfishness, prejudice, or jealousy that might lead to dissension. Showing genuine interest in others is a positive step forward in maintaining unity among believers.

Run the race so that ye may obtain.

1 Corinthians 9:24

Know you not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

Winning a race requires purpose and discipline. Paul uses this illustration to explain that the Christian life takes hard work, self-denial, and grueling preparation. As Christians, we are running toward our heavenly reward. The essential disciplines of prayer, Bible study, and worship equip us to run with vigor and stamina.

Don't merely observe from the grandstand; don't just turn out to jog a couple of laps each morning. Train diligently—your spiritual progress depends upon it.

Do your work heartily, as to the Lord.

Colossians 3:23

And whatsoever ye do, do [it] heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.

Since the Creation, God has given us work to do. If we could regard our work as an act of worship or service to God, such an attitude would take some of the drudgery and boredom out of it. We could work without complaining or resentment if we would treat our job problems as the cost of discipleship.

Strive lawfully for masteries.

2 Timothy 2:5

And if a man also strive for masteries, [yet] is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

The body of Christ contains all believers who have ever lived, not just those who are alive now. When we suffer, we share in a common experience, not just with those alive today, but with all those who have ever suffered for the sake of the gospel. All the martyrs, missionaries, and pioneers of the faith had to face what we face.

Let us have the same courage, commitment, and willingness to renounce worldly pleasure in order to serve God. Can you face the challenge? "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 3:17

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

"The anger of God" refers to God's judgment on these kinds of behavior, culminating with future and final punishment of evil. When tempted to sin, remember that you must one day stand before God.

We must rid ourselves of all evil practices and immorality. Then we can commit ourselves to what Christ teaches. Paul was urging the believers to remain true to their confession of faith.

They were to rid themselves of the old life and put on the new nature given by Christ.

Let every man prove his own work.

Galatians 6:4

But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

When you do your very best, you feel good about the results. There is no need to compare yourself with others. People make comparisons for many reasons. Some point out others' flaws in order to feel better about themselves. Others simply want reassurance that they are doing well. When you are tempted to compare, look at Jesus Christ. His example will inspire you to do your very best, and his loving acceptance will comfort you when you fall short of your expectations.

Through God's strength, we can do all things.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Paul could get along happily because he could see life from God's point of view. He focused on what he was supposed to *do*, not what he felt he should *have*. Paul had his priorities straight, and he was grateful for everything God had given him. Paul had detached himself from the nonessentials so that he could concentrate on the eternal.

Often the desire for more or better possessions is really a longing to fill an empty place in a person's life. To what are you drawn when you feel empty inside? How can you find true contentment? The answer lies in your perspective, your priorities, and your source of power.

A man should enjoy his labor for the Lord.

Ecclesiastes 2:22-26

For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? [23] For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I? For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Solomon continued to show that hard work bears no lasting fruit for those who work solely to earn money and gain possessions. Not only will everything be left behind at death, but it may be left to those who have done nothing to earn it. In addition, it may not be well cared for, and all that was gained may be lost. In fact, Solomon's son, who inherited his throne, immediately made a foolish decision which split the kingdom—see 1 Kings 12.

Hard work done with proper motives (caring for your family, serving God) is not wrong. We must work to survive, and, more important, we are responsible for the physical and spiritual well-being of those under our care. But the fruit of hard work done to glorify only ourselves will be passed on to those who may later lose or spoil it all.

Such toil often leads to grief, while serving God leads to everlasting joy. Do you know the real reason you are working so hard?

Is Solomon recommending we make life a big, irresponsible party? No, he is encouraging us to take pleasure in what we're doing now and to enjoy life because it comes from God's hand. True enjoyment in life comes only as we follow God's guidelines for living.

Without him, satisfaction is a lost search. Those who really know how to enjoy life are the ones who take life each day as a gift from God, thanking him for it and serving him in it. Those without God will have no relief from toil and no direction to guide them through life's complications.

Do all unto the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Our actions must be motivated by God's love so that all we do will be for his glory. Keep this as a guiding principle by asking, "Is this action glorifying God?" or "How can I honor God through this action?"

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.

Philippians 2:3

Let] nothing [be done] through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Many people—even Christians—live only to make a good impression on others or to please themselves. But selfishness brings discord.

Paul therefore stressed spiritual unity, asking the Philippians to love one another and to be one in spirit and purpose.

When we work together, caring for the problems of others as if they were our problems, we demonstrate Christ's example of putting others first, and we experience unity.

Don't be so concerned about making a good impression or meeting your own needs that you strain relationships in God's family.

Selfishness can ruin a church, but genuine humility can build it. Being humble involves having a true perspective about ourselves (see Romans 12:3). It does not mean that we should put ourselves down. Before God, we are sinners, saved only by God's grace, but we *are* saved and therefore have great worth in God's Kingdom.

We are to lay aside selfishness and treat others with respect and common courtesy. Considering others' interests as more important than our own links us with Christ, who was a true example of humility.

Strive to obtain an incorruptible crown.

1 Corinthians 9:25

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they [do it] to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

Self-discipline requires an honest look at our strengths and weaknesses, with emphasis on the latter. It means building the will to say no when a powerful appetite inside you screams yes. For example, when you have self-discipline, you can:

- (1) Say no to friends or situations that will lead you away from Christ,
- (2) Say no to casual sex, saving intimacy for marriage, and
- (3) Say no to laziness in favor of "can do" and "will do."

Self-discipline is a long, steady course in learning attitudes that do not come naturally, and channeling natural appetites toward God's purposes. Where are your weak points? Pray with a friend for God's help to redirect weakness into strength.

Through God, we shall tread down our enemies.

Psalms 108:13

Through God we shall do valiantly: for he [it is that] shall tread down our enemies.

Do our prayers end with requests for help to make it through stressful situations? David prayed not merely for rescue, but for victory. With God's help we can claim more than mere survival, we can claim victory! Look for ways God can use your distress as an opportunity to show his mighty power.

God gives grace to the humble.

James 4:6

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Pride makes us self-centered and leads us to conclude that we deserve all we can see, touch, or imagine. It creates greedy appetites for far more than we need. We can be released from our self-centered desires by humbling ourselves before God, realizing that all we really need is his approval. When the Holy Spirit fills us, we see that this world's seductive attractions are only cheap substitutes for what God has to offer.

Christ demonstrated his love by laying down his life.

John 15:13

Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.

We are to love each other as Jesus loved us, and he loved us enough to give his life for us. We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways to practice sacrificial love: listening, helping, encouraging, giving. Think of someone in particular who needs this kind of love today. Give all the love you can, and then try to give a little more.

To be highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Luke 16:15

And he said unto them, ye are they which justify your selves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

The Pharisees acted piously to get praise from others, but God knew what was in their hearts. They considered their wealth to be a sign of God's approval. God detested their wealth because it caused them to abandon true spirituality. Though prosperity may earn people's praise, it must never substitute for devotion and service to God.

Be not weary in well doing.

Galatians 6:9

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

It is discouraging to continue to do right and receive no word of thanks or see no tangible results. But Paul challenged the Galatians, and he challenges us to keep on doing good and to trust God for the results. In due time, we will reap a harvest of blessing.

Nothing is impossible with God.

Luke 1:37

For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Jesus Christ, God's Son, had to be free from the sinful nature passed on to all other human beings by Adam. Because Jesus was born of a woman, he was a human being; but as the Son of God, Jesus was born without any trace of human sin. Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. Because Jesus lived as a man, human beings know that he fully understands their experiences and struggles (Hebrews 4:15-16). Because he is God, he has the power and authority to deliver people from sin (Colossians 2:13-15). People can tell Jesus all their thoughts, feelings, and needs. He has been where they are, and he has the ability to help.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness

Matthew 6:33

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

To "seek the Kingdom of God above all else" means to put God first in your life, to fill your thoughts with his desires, to take his character for your pattern, and to serve and obey him in everything.

What is really important to you? People, objects, goals, and other desires all compete for priority. Any of these can quickly become most important to you if you don't actively choose to give God first place in *every area* of your life.

Planning for tomorrow is time well spent; worrying about tomorrow is time wasted. Sometimes it's difficult to tell the difference.

Careful planning is thinking ahead about goals, steps, and schedules, and trusting in God's guidance. When done well, planning can help alleviate worry. Worriers, by contrast, are consumed by fear and find it difficult to trust God. They let their plans interfere with their relationship with God. Don't let worries about tomorrow affect your relationship with God today.

Prayer of deliverance:

Through heaven's door, The Blood of Jesus, I repent of the sin of emulations. I denounce and cast out this evil spirit that is influencing my life and disturbing my peace of mind.

In the authority of the name of Jesus Christ. I command this spirit of rivalry to leave and be cast into utter darkness never to return again.

Right now, I receive my deliverance from this spirit and receive God's peace. I pray in the mighty name of Jesus Christ, amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print