

Prayer's role in competition

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

Competition is a natural part of school and life. In its higher sense, competition causes people to exceed their perceived abilities. At its worst, competition is winning regardless of the cost. How does prayer fit into competition?

Effective prayer is not pleading with God to have us win. This would make God the ultimate umpire rather than the infinite creator. God is infinite Love and loves all His children equally. He does not intervene on behalf of those who pray to Him, helping them play better. If those who pray play better, it is because they are acknowledging and using the ability of God which is available to all. God is speaking to each one and giving abundant ability 24 hours a day. Those who turn to God and listen, receive.

When I was in the 8th grade, the coach of the varsity debate team asked me to substitute. One of the regular four members was also the football quarterback. He wasn't able to participate in weekend debate tournaments requiring travel on Friday night. The varsity team was so good, no one had bothered to try out for several years. The coach had not developed a secondary team. He was forced to find a substitute among junior high students!

The other team members were not happy. I think they drew straws to see who would be stuck with me. I was overwhelmed. I had participated in an introductory debating program, but was completely unprepared for competitive public speaking.

My partner ended up being the older brother of a friend of mine. He was kind. We practiced after school. He let me use his evidence box or quotations as did the quarterback. He tried to help me as much as possible.

The fact remained, I didn't have a clue what was happening. There was no way I could prepare adequately for the tournament. I couldn't even remember the order of speeches to know when my turn was.

But I wasn't nervous. Why not? Although I didn't know much about debating, I did know how to pray. For years I had practiced praying in stress situations. When I didn't know the answer, I turned to God with confidence that he would give me the intelligence and ideas needed. When afraid, I turned to God knowing that He was present and would show me the way. When confused, I turned to God as the source of all ability. Through years of practice, I had learned to put my will aside and listen for God's guidance. He always answered.

One of the Bible verses I prepared with was Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding, in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths."

The day came. I listened to what the other team was proposing and then turned to God for ideas. The ideas came. I presented my speeches confidently, since the ideas were from divine Mind. We won. The coach invited me back, and I became an unofficial member of the high school varsity team.

Honestly, I don't remember our win-loss record. Although I have the impression we did well. I concentrated on one thing, effective prayer. If I listened to God, I knew I would perform better than I was ordinarily capable of doing.

To me, competition is not against someone else, but striving to improve our own performance. If our performance is divinely inspired and the best that we are capable of at the moment, we have won.

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