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Live in Harmony and Be Humble Toward One Another

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Live in Harmony and Be Humble Toward One Another

Jostling is part of what makes a crowd a crowd. We push back to keep our place in line, to stand our ground, or to reach our destination.

Jostling, while not physical, can be part of advancing our careers, making our point, or just looking out for ourselves. We are often both the jostlers and the jostled.

The passages below speak against vying for position and seeking to surpass others. We are presented with a view of living as Christians that, if anything, is downwardly mobile.

We are to honor others above ourselves and submit to one another. Slander, grumbling, pride, divisiveness, judging each other—these efforts to assert ourselves have no place in the Christian life.

Competition springs from scarcity. But as Christians, God has given us such an abundance of love, grace, hope, purpose, and forgiveness that we don't need to struggle against each other to get them. When we choose to **accept** how and when God provides for us, we are released from a self-fixated, desperate scramble to meet our own needs.

Perhaps these passages are meant to strike deeper than just convicting us of our efforts to avoid trusting God to provide for our needs. Fundamentally, they are about "us" and not "me." When we become Christians we are not only declaring God our **master** and His priorities more important than ours. We also declare that our needs, successes, desires, and plans no longer trump our community's. They can still be important, just not more important than others.

"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.... Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited." Romans 12:10,16

"Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister." Romans 14:13

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” Romans 15:7

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Ephesians 5:21

“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!” Philippians 2:5ff

“Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.” James 4:11

“Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!” James 5:9

“In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’” 1 Peter 5:5

The Philippians passage, especially, **points** out that our relationships with each other should be marked by humility and sacrifice. So from a place of accepting God’s abundant good gifts for us we are able to “make ourselves nothing and serve.” We no longer need to jostle each other for our needs are paradoxically met as everyone in the community puts others first.

Marriage vows depend on this paradox. As long as both people continually elevate the other’s needs above their own, each person’s needs are met, without jostling and with joy that comes from knowing another has noticed what you need and graciously given that as a gift.

Some Challenges

1. Imagine that when you became a Christian, you said marriage vows, but instead of being directed toward a spouse they were to all other Christians: “Will you love them, comfort them, honor and keep them, in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to them as long as you shall live?” Who can you love and cherish this week, as an exercise in un-jostling your life? How will you demonstrate that cherishing? Make a plan now and share it with a friend for accountability.
2. How do you honestly feel when someone close to you is recognized, honored, or rewarded? Does that reaction fit the spirit of the passages under consideration?
3. When was the last time you thought or said something judgmental or gossipy? What need of yours motivated those thoughts or words? How can you ask God to provide for that need? Has He already? While it might be humbling, share your answers to these questions with a friend and pray together for God to provide for those needs.