

Identity Wars 13 – Stairway to Heaven

My daddy can ...

Every child looks up to their daddy as a super man. One child says, "My dad's stronger than your dad!" The other replies, "Yeah, but my dad is the champion at his golf club!" "Yeah, but my dad can play guitar and sing at the same time." "So what? My dad can grow a garden full of vegetables from just a few seeds!" And the comparisons continued.

What is it that drives a child to see their dads as the best in the world? Not to mention their mums: every child has the best mum in the world.

- As kids we used to invent words to describe how good our mums and dads were. If some one would say, "My dad's the best." We would reply something like, "Oh yeah, well my dad is the bestest." "No way! My dad is better than the bestest." To which the ultimate unchallengeable statement would be let fly with bravado. "My dad is betterer than the bestest." And that would end the conversation.

When it's amongst friends, competition can be fun. But when it's against another school or another club or another company or religion, competition becomes very serious. Why?

- We must win to keep our sense of self worth and value as a person intact.

Changing schools was a real problem for me as a very quiet child. I knew nobody, and nobody knew me. How was I going to be accepted?

- I was glad I could play sport to build bridges to other boys. This was my gate to acceptance in my new school. Performance built a bridge over which I could make a new group of friends.

But what about the kids who didn't have special talents or abilities, how did they cope? How did they acquire acceptance and friendship?

- Being 'different' makes you an obvious target when you are young and vulnerable.
- Children striving to build up their own sense of value and importance will often resort to putting others down; either physically or verbally.
- We had lots of names we could use to make others feel worthless. When I look back I feel terrible for the other kids I hurt. Name calling was a curse that could bring children to tears without a punch being thrown.

To try and defend oneself we would say,

"Sticks and stones may break my bones but names (words) will never hurt me."

- But you know what? We were lying: because each derogatory name penetrated deep into our hearts, destroying our sense of value and belonging.

Due to the internet, these days you don't even need to be near others to hurt or be with words.

- Bullying has taken on new dimensions in the 21st century. Where will it stop? Will it stop?
- Why do we 'need' to constantly put others down in the world of comparison?

The cruelty manifested in children is the raw, unbridled result of the principles of Satan's comparative kingdom in action. We often watch in amazement as children express their selfishness and ingratitude, wondering why they are like that. Where does that negativity come from?

- Do we naturally grow out of those terrible traits? Perhaps we have just become more sophisticated in our abilities to cut others down because, as we know, bullying is not nice. In fact it's now illegal.

From the playground to the classroom, from the sports field to the workplace, from parlour games to politics, we are taught to compete, compete and compete a little harder and a little longer until you succeed.

- We need to do what it takes, pushing the limits of good ethics, to make that little bit extra profit.
- When you've made it to the top of the tree in your field, you have no more worries, right? Well, maybe not! The fear of failure then grips you. What if you get beaten by someone else next time? What will happen to your hard earned reputation?
- You look over your shoulder for potential challengers and rivals who would dare threaten your hard earned position.
- You also look over your shoulder for the judges who might not appreciate your efforts, who don't understand your abilities and efforts, and therefore don't value you.
- The successful life, just as much as the apparently unsuccessful one, can be a strain on one's sanity. This is the nature of the kingdom of comparison.

How can we escape this mindset that is so fully entrenched in our thinking that it is second nature?

Many years ago one man,
who had the key to escape the kingdom of comparison and performance, said,
"I am the way, the truth, and the life." John 14:6

His life of building bridges to better relationships set a new standard of life for humanity. Sadly very few have followed His lead and example. Few see the value in the way Jesus Christ lived His life. But His offer is still there for everyone to receive.

- He said, "Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Mat 11:28 How good does that sound? Rest!

The constant battle between friends, enemies, opponents, and challengers is nothing new. It is the way of this world that has adopted the mindset of the kingdom of comparison and competition.

- Children compete against each other for their parent's attention.
- Children compete against their parents authority.
- Families compete to look the best – the 'keeping up with the Jones' ' syndrome.
- Citizens compete to survive under the dictates of government leaders who are 'doing their best' for them.

When and where shall we find rest from this constant competitive struggle?
Wouldn't it be like heaven not to have to compete with anyone any more?
How would that feel? In a word: peaceful!

Having said all that, the most difficult enemy in the kingdom of comparison and competition is self. I can't control or change what others think or do, but I am the one that must choose the option to change how I think and live.

- Jesus has offered us the key to the door of escaping the competition kingdom. But it comes at a cost: we must stop trusting self, depending on self, defending self... and begin to simply trust Him.

We must learn to hear His voice, trusting Him, and be content with where and how He leads us through life. We live in a world of very few content people.

- How can we be content if we are never satisfied with what we have: always wanting more?

Phil 4:11 "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content."

1 Tim 6:8 "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

Heb 13:5 "*Let your* conversation *be* without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

When we become content with having our daily bread, the clothes to wear, and Jesus at our side, then we will be ready to go home to heaven.

- In the Garden of Eden, that's all Adam and Eve had. That's all they needed.
- Why have things become so complicated?

The tenth commandment states "Thou shalt not covet ..." here is the root of all evil.

- This is the root of the comparison and competition kingdom.
- We want what we don't have or we want what someone else has. This leads us to an unending spiral of ups and downs, achievement and failure, never finding contentment.

There will be some great challenges for us as we come face to face with the control freak that lives in each one of us. We will discover that there is a very evil person living in us; and that person is called self. Jeremiah 17:9; Proverbs 23:7; Proverbs 4:23

To inherit heaven, with all its glories, we must die to self and live in Christ as Paul mentions in Gal 2:20:

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me**: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith **of** the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

The stairway to heaven begins at the point where we learn that we can no longer trust self.

At that point we will turn to the only One worth trusting,

the only One who got the victory over the comparison and competition kingdom – Jesus.

- When we do that, we will find the peace that currently escapes us, we will find the peace that the world can't give.

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

When we find this peace, when we find we no longer have to compete to have value, we will then discover we don't need to judge any more. We won't need to judge ourselves so harshly and we won't need to judge others. What a relief. That is why Jesus says

"You judge according to your flesh [that is obsessed with comparison and competition]; I judge no man."

Jesus is free from selfishness and insecurity because He perfectly knows His Father and trust His Father to take care of Him, and He will bring us into the fellowship also:

"My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

(Matthew 11:27)

This kingdom of loving relationships based on trust and empathy instead of comparing and judging is what Jesus taught His disciples, and it is what the invited the Apostolic Church invited the world into:

"We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

(1 John 1:3)