

## **ARE WE THE SAME OR DIFFERENT WHEN IT COMES TO CHARITY AND COMPETITION?**

Last week I was in attendance at two basketball games. The first game was a charity event at my daughter's high school having the senior boys' and girls' teams play against some of the teachers. Funds were raised by having teachers pay a certain amount of money to have their students come down to the gym for the event instead of being in class. For parents like me, I had to pay \$5.00 in order to get in. I know many of you will be surprised I opened up my wallet to do so, but it was for a good cause.

The gym was filled with students and teachers to take in this charity game. The first four minutes saw the senior boys' team play against some of the male teachers. There were a few dunks at the basket and some shots that went in, but what I noticed the most were the smiles and laughter shared by the students and teachers on the court.

Then my daughter's team took the court to play against some of the women teachers. The tip off was actually between a mother who teaches at the school and her daughter who plays on the team. The two of them were grinning ear to ear standing at center court. The smiles and laughter between the players and teachers were just as noticeable during this portion of the game as it was when the men were on the court. On the car ride home after the game I shared with my daughter how this event was such a great way not only to raise money for a charity but also to create good memories doing so.

The second basketball game I attended was between two university teams. Naturally, with this being a regular season game for both teams, I expected it to be very competitive. There were so many different emotions on display in this competitive game as opposed to the charity event. I saw some players get frustrated with themselves after missing shots. Other players got very angry with the refs at some of their calls, and naturally one team celebrated at the end while the other walked off the court dejected after a hard-fought loss.

Seeing this contrast in emotions and behaviors on display in a charity game as opposed to a competitive one got me thinking how we see this also happen when it comes to other aspects in life. This season leading up to Christmas is often a time when we see this contrast in emotions when it comes to charity and competitiveness. We see so much goodwill on display at this time of year

with people and businesses collecting toys for the needy, donating food and gift cards to the Food Bank, or giving a bit extra to charities that are dear to their hearts. We see the best of human behavior on display when it comes to doing good deeds like this for charity.

While a spirit of charity can be on display at this time of year, moments of competitiveness can also be seen. We often hear stories of angry customers competing for the same parking spot at the mall or fighting over the same item to put in their shopping cart or pushing each other in line-ups and so on. We may have seen this change in behaviour in others when they switch their focus from charity to competitiveness and maybe some have seen this in us too. Regardless of whether we find ourselves in a charitable or competitive environment during this or any time of year, Jesus expects us to be displaying a good, kind heart.

**A good person produces good things from the treasure of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. (Matthew 12:35)**

Jesus makes it very clear here how what we say and do reveals what is in our heart. We often see a kind, generous heart on display when somebody is focused on acts of charity but that can change in a negative way when the individual becomes competitive. As believers, Jesus reminds us that if our heart is truly good then we should see this nature on display even in competitive situations.

It will be important for us during this time of year to examine our hearts in situations of charity and competition to see if we are consistently seeing good things flowing from our heart. If we start seeing an inconsistency in ourselves during the stressful and competitive moments leading up to Christmas, may we seek the help of Christ's Spirit in order to fill our hearts consistently with the same attitudes and motives that we have in our charitable moments. We will be giving ourselves a gift by doing so and consistently living our lives as a gift as well.

**Keep safe and God Bless**

**Pastor Dean**