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- *Competition and achievement*
- *Elevate others*

God unites your souls in strength and receptivity. Your spirits are in unison with your guides now, and your guides are, in turn, close to one another. The result is a strong bond which is like a reservoir. It is capable of receiving and storing a great deal and it has the capacity to serve many. All of us are aware of your concerns, both of a spiritual and an earthly nature. We are even aware of your interest in athletics and the excitement of competition.

It is God's wish that we explore with you the implications of competition on a wider scale, the competition between individuals when the game is a matter of pride, of face-saving, even arrogance. It is a part of the human condition to compete, for competition provides evidence which adds a sense of security or confidence to the lives of those involved. This need for security, for a recognizable identity, lies at the very heart of personal competition and athletic competition. The tests of an athlete are a microcosm of the motivations and challenges of all human beings. Each of you experiences a sense of joy when you are proved correct, when you have achieved a goal that is uncommon and respected. Such pride is natural, but can often be damaging, because the focus is drawn inward and those who win, in the broadest sense of the word, become more aware of self and less sensitive to another.

Competition cuts through all phases of your earthly activities, be it athletics, business, teaching, homemaking, or whatever. Each of you experiences a sense of pride through your achievement, and each of you feels thereby a heightened sense of value. Some of you have a greater thirst for competition than others, but the tendency is there in each of your lives. God does not feel displeased when you recognize your own achievements, for all human beings and all of us in our spiritual journey thirst for achievement.

Achievement in itself is always desirable. It is the nature of achievement at the expense of another which is not according to God's desires. True achievement is the elevation of some aspect of humankind, not of one person. Competition in your life as individuals or as a group should be viewed as a test between collective mediocrity and collective success. It can be viewed as a realization of potential rather than the recognition of potential. True competition, therefore, involves a cooperative effort rather than individual achievement.

Each of you has experienced times in your life when you have worked with others for what you perceive to be a common good and have seen that effort fail. Your competition was between the possibility of failure and the realization of success. The failure which you experience may not always be a failure in reality, for failure is often the result of misplaced perceptions.

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Looked at another way, if you think back to events in which you have believed you have been unsuccessful, reexamine those events carefully and you shall find achievement. You shall find some benefit which has arisen from your efforts. You may have to look carefully and for a long time, but all efforts aimed at a collective improvement are successful in some way. The competition was there, but your perception of achievement was not directed appropriately.

In your earthly lives, and by "you" we mean all humankind, there is too much pressure or competition at the expense of others. You must remember that God perceives each of you as complete equals. There are none who are better than others. The competition which engages so many of you is vain and empty in God's eyes. In your daily lives, continually search for ways of elevating others. Emphasize common grounds of achievement, of needs, so that the bonds between all of you become strengthened in love. When love is present, one rejoices at the accomplishments of another. Neither individual stands on a higher platform.

The spirit of competition at the expense of another can be manifest in spiritual matters. Individuals may feel they have the exclusive answer to the ultimate questions. A religious sect may feel it has the exclusive perception of ultimate reality. The feelings of resentment, discouragement and bitterness which permeate so much of the earthly life can be traced back, in most cases, to a sense of competition in which one body or group must win through the reality of another's loss. Jealousy and greed are the natural outcomes of this type of competition.

In addition to reaching outward in an attempt to elevate others from their problems, you must also remember when you experience success to step back from the situation and give thanks to God, for it is God who provided the means for your success and it is God who can elevate others through your prayers. Therefore, as you thank God, pray for others to be given the wisdom to know God's strength in their lives. Competition, when viewed from this perspective, becomes constructive. It is oriented outward. It is concerned with those less fortunate. It elevates others.

We don't wish to imply that competition in sports is wrong, for that is natural. What is damaging is the sense of inwardly directed pride which can result from such competition. When athletes do a fine job, they may feel proud at their accomplishments. They may feel grateful for being given the ability and stamina and judgment necessary to accomplish their objectives. That in itself is natural and not to be condemned. It is only when they direct their awareness to themselves and feel others to be unworthy in some manner that the competition becomes destructive.

Reach outward. Accept the challenge of helping others. Compete against mediocrity and win. Give others a sense of worth, of value, of hope, and, most important of all, of achievement, for with that comes self-respect. It is God's desire that each of you achieves a strong sense of self-respect, for each of you is a part of God

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and therefore worthy of respect. That is the application of competition and its true value.

We rejoice that you continue to find times in your busy lives as individuals to draw back in quiet and solitude and search for ways of letting God in your lives that you may reach out to others. The task is a difficult one. It has its disappointments, it has its achievements, but each of you in your own way is competing against an ever-present tendency to leave things as they are, to accept the status quo. By not remaining satisfied, you are, by your concerns, your prayers and your actions, elevating others. The impact of your efforts goes far beyond your comprehension. You will never fully realize the effect that you have on the lives of others, whether it be positive or negative. Therefore, don't wait for evidence to be returned to you concerning your efforts, rather accept that what you do continues to affect those around you, and insure, therefore, that your activities are positive, are uplifted and illuminated by the light of God.

We bless each of you in your efforts to overcome anger, to overcome jealousy, bitterness, suspicion, depression, and we are with you constantly, guiding you, with God's light before us and reflected through us.

Amen.