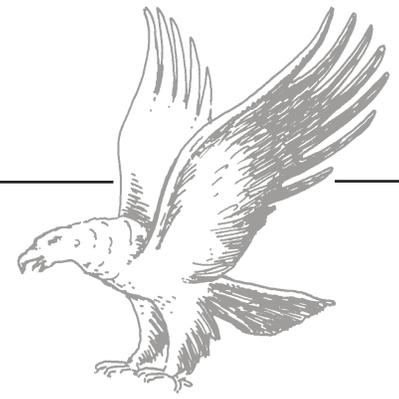


Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



February 21, 2016

Necessary Members

Each one of us is a unique creation of God, with our own distinctive qualities.

So why do we waste so much of our time and energy comparing ourselves to others?

“The body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? . . . But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. . . . And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary” (1 Cor. 12:14-18).



Paul’s metaphor of the human body to describe the Lord’s church is a classic study in *individuality*. No two of us are exactly alike, and that’s how God intended it to be. We generally have no problem accepting this fact of life, but we still struggle with its implications.

Paul identifies two ways in which we allow the dissimilarities among us to become a stumbling block. The first problem is the ease with which *we judge others* as inferior to ourselves. The points of comparison can be almost anything—intellect, looks, socio-economic status, talents, moral achievement. We

use those distinctions as a reason to label others as insignificant or weak. We see ourselves as superior, better, more accomplished than our lessers, so we treat them with the attitude—if not the words—“I have no need of you.”

The second problem is the flip-side of the first: *we judge ourselves* to be inferior to others. By comparing ourselves to others who are smarter, more talented, more advantaged than us, we neglect our own strengths, with destructive results. To follow Paul’s metaphor, if my foot decided one day that “because I am not a hand, I am not of the body” and suddenly quit working, my whole body would be severely impacted. It’s no different when we denigrate ourselves and quit trying just because we don’t have the same talents as others.

In both cases, the *fact* that there are differences among us is not the problem. The problem is how we allow these differences to influence our thinking about, and treatment of, others and ourselves.

How many of the character flaws that drag us down—pride, self-pity, envy, insecurity, greed, hatred, worry—

can be traced back to the universal habit of looking at others? We can never be what God wants us to be as long as we’re stuck in that frame of reference.

Paul applies this principle to the Lord’s church, but it regulates our dealings with the rest of the human race, too. God has placed every one of us here for a unique purpose, and we should devote our lives to fulfilling that purpose. But when we spend so much of our energy measuring ourselves against others, we are squandering our gifts in an exercise that can have no good outcome. This obsession with how we stack up against others is one of the great impediments to people accomplishing something productive in their lives.

Until we train ourselves to see everyone around us—and even ourselves—as unique but necessary members in God’s grand scheme, we will always struggle with the faulty attitudes and behaviors that keep us bogged down in dysfunctional relationships. Let’s stop comparing ourselves to others, and concentrate our efforts on doing our best with what God gave us.

– David King