



COURAGEOUS RELATIONSHIP Affinity Groups

EPIPHANY 2020

Week 4: Competition/Comparison versus Love

Big Idea: Our identity ought to be motivated by the deep love of God rather than the competition and comparison of others.

Get the conversation going:

A reminder that at Westwood, we have defined “vocation” in these terms.

·In our baptism each of us has been both CLAIMED and CALLED to be God's hands and feet in the world in all the realms of our life. We use the word vocation to speak of this calling. Therefore, we confess that we have a “vocation” as a family member, as a friend, in our work lives, as a citizen of the country and world etc.

In addition to the basic definition of “vocation” there are two other points to highlight in this reading.

1. The idea of “vocation” is not an idea that is about “doing more” or “being more” in any part of our life (in this case our family lives). It’s about an adjustment of how we understand our identity. In all parts of our lives, we are “God’s people in and for the world.”

Given what is said from Barbara Brown Taylor, What do you think is the vocation of (insert family role here)?

Work together to craft a definition of the vocation of (specific family role: grandparenting, parenting, friends as family, spouse, family elder, etc.)

What are we talking about? An example of competition/comparison vs. love:

I’m not sure when it started, but it has become common bumper sticker. “My child is an honor student at _____ elementary school”. The reason for this development is pretty straight forward. It’s a way to both acknowledge and encourage achievement. Publicly honoring a person is assumed to motivate a young person to succeed at a higher level. I was somewhat surprised at the much smaller, but noticeable backlash bumper stickers that emerged for a period of time. “My child beat up your honor student”. I imagine that we could all agree that this attempt at humor isn’t helpful. But, on the other hand, it probably isn’t a surprise that this would be one of the reactions in an honor/shame system. Sadly, it’s not unusual for those who see the first bumper sticker

as a comparison in which they are left out to react with contempt or even suggested violence.

1 Peter 1:22-25 seems quite interested in motivating as well, only in this text it's about motivating people of faith to love. "Now you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart." Truth here is in reference to God's gracious action for you in Jesus. As we've said before, we have an identity bestowed upon us in our baptism in Jesus Christ. To live faithfully is to love deeply as you have first been loved by God in Christ. For 1 Peter it is not comparison or competition that motivates. Instead it's an identity found and expressed in love for the community of faith and the world.

Who's rating system is the motivator? For 1 Peter it is not comparison or competition that motivates. Instead it's an identity found and expressed in love for the community of faith and the world.

Make it personal:competition/comparison vs. love

In your experience of family, was/is competition and comparison used as a primary way to motivate your behavior?

Were their benefits or shortcomings with that?

Spend a few moments reflecting on 1 Peter 1:22-25. Define what "loving one another deeply from the heart" actually means. In other words, in your calling in your family, what would tell you that this sort of "loving" is occurring.

What about this idea of being motivated not by how others rate us, but by our identity? How would that play out in your family callings?

Spiritual practice

Practice healthy adult talk to child within

Last week you thought of a difficult event. How old were you when that occurred? When we talk to ourselves from the balcony and eventually from our regular self-talk we are actually talking to someone at the age in which a painful event occurred, not our present age. Try making a decision to draw a boundary and only talk to yourself the way you would talk to someone at that age. This might help with more grace-filled self-talk.

Close with the prayer of good courage.

O God, You have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good

courage not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen