

RELIGION

# Reevaluating our sense of winning and losing

KEEPING THE FAITH



DOUG CREAMER  
Guest Columnist

On Sunday evening my wife and I watched the Academy Awards. We enjoyed watching the red carpet fashions and the opening of the program when the hosts aimed their jokes at the nominees. It's interesting to see the reactions of the stars as they win an Academy award and to hear them express their appreciation to those who helped them achieve their success. I imagine it must be difficult for the actors

when they do not win the Oscar. Part of the problem is the perception that they lost the award. What so many stars overlook is the fact that they were nominated for the award in the first place. There are many actors who work hard at their craft and never get acknowledged by receiving an Oscar nomination.

I took my students to the state DECA competition last weekend. I know it's not the Academy Awards, but there is a big stage where the students are honored for achieving the best in the state. The students are required to dress up for the conference, so for them it is like the Academy Awards. They are so nervous and excited while they wait to see if their name is called to come up on the big stage.

The students get so excited when their names are called, but they are also very disappointed if their name is not called.

I have been teaching for many years, but I still do not know how to comfort a student who does not win one of the top awards. I try to explain to the students that the competition is fierce and that everyone wants the chance to advance to the national competition. Even though they won proficiencies, which are an honor to achieve at the state level, they really wanted to win big.

The concepts of winning and losing are often paradoxes in the kingdom of God. The Bible teaches us that the first will be last and the last will be first. We all like to win; it's fun to be the winner. In the Kingdom, the winners are often those who serve others. Living according to Kingdom principles means that we are willing to give up what the world or our society thinks is important in order to accomplish what is important to God.

Jesus posed the question to His disciples, what happens if you win everything, if you are wildly successful in the world's eyes, but it costs you your soul? Many people work tirelessly climbing the corporate ladder of success and through dedication and hard work achieve worldly success. However, in order to achieve that success they sacrifice time spent with their family and they give up going to church and maintaining their faith. That kind of success comes at a very high price.

I believe that true and honorable success comes through investing in other people's lives. Businessmen and women have that opportunity by providing excellent customer service; once again focusing on taking care of people. True success in the Kingdom comes when you help people grow spiritually and help them connect

with God. Often caring and helping people grow is not financially rewarding, but the eternal rewards will be priceless.

The question is in whose eyes do you want to be considered a winner ... in the eyes of other people or in the eyes of God? I want my life to be invested in building others up, encouraging and strengthening the faith of those I come in contact with. As a teacher, not only do I want to educate my students but inspire them to reach for the stars. I don't mean financial success, I mean success where they invest in others and have a positive impact on their community. I want them to reach their God-given potential.

I want to encourage you to reevaluate what

you consider winning and losing. While it is wonderful to be rewarded here, it is far greater to earn rewards in heaven. Look for ways that you can encourage and build others up. True winners look to put others first, to honor and esteem others, and to find the good in others and to help them bring it out. I wish each of you the success that comes when you hear your Heavenly Father say, "Well done my good and faithful servant. Well done."

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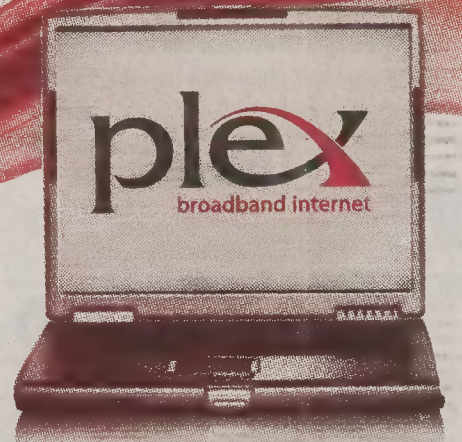
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