

---

## Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

February 9, 2014

Mutual Care

*“Don’t do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others.”* Philippians 2:3,4  
(Common English Bible)

T. J. McConnell, junior point guard for the Arizona Wildcats “makes everyone around him better,” writes Kelli Anderson in Sports Illustrated. Wildcats coach Sean Miller says that T. J. doesn’t really care about scoring. “I think he judges himself by how he plays the game as a true point guard: running the team, passing, playing defense, winning games.” Another team member, 6’3” junior guard Nick Johnson – himself a player of the year candidate – says that you can ask anyone in the Wildcats’ program who their most important player is, and they’ll all point to T. J. “We all like to score, and T. J. gives us that opportunity. He’s willing to make everybody else happy.”<sup>1</sup>

The Apostle Paul would point to T. J. as someone the church is to emulate. Ours is a world of rivalry and conceit. Self-interest seems to be part and parcel of everyday life. Humility is rare, and when noticed, often is regarded as weakness. Most unfortunate is that this is also true in the church of Jesus Christ. Pastors compare themselves with other pastors. Church members jockey for power, position and influence. Rarely is this for leveraging the resources of the church for advancing God’s mission. Often it is to advance personal preferences, opinions and taste. In each of the five churches that I have served as pastor, there is someone who regards his opinion as superior to the common wisdom of the leadership board.

Perhaps the most egregious example of self-importance is a well-known pastor who approached his alma mater with the promise of a rather large financial gift from the church he served on the condition that his name be placed on a campus building. The gift would be significant for advancing the mission of the graduate school so the condition was accepted. Apparently, this pastor missed these words from Paul in his personal devotions.

It seems to me that a gospel-oriented person would pay closer attention to these words in Philippians. Instead of pursuing their own prestige and position, followers of Jesus are called to make everyone around them better – and to care passionately about winning games rather than achieving personal scores. Naturally, in the church, winning games is all about how effectively the mission of God is advanced. T. J. McConnell and the Apostle Paul can teach us much about that.

*Forgive our selfish ambitions, O Lord. Change our hearts from self-importance to passionately pursuing Your work in our church and community. Amen.*

Doug Hood

<sup>1</sup> Kelli Anderson, *Catching Fire*. Sports Illustrated. January 27, 2014, pages 26-32.