

Hillcrest Encouragement

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"Praise to the Giver of Good Gifts"

Tom Brady is one of the most successful NFL quarterbacks of all time, playing the most important position in the most popular sport in the USA. He is also – so I've been informed – extremely attractive and is married to an extremely attractive fashion model and together they have a beautiful daughter. His success in his career has led to both fame and fortune. From a worldly perspective, he is the epitome of success.

When others experience success or appear to be blessed with God-given gifts, there is a temptation to envy their unwarranted blessings. For example, you may yearn for financial security and know someone who, through no effort of their own, has received a better financial start than one who had multitudes of school loan debt to repay. Or perhaps you have to work hard to stay fit – and even then it's not enough – but you know some individuals for whom staying in great shape is virtually effortless. We might be tempted to envy others with better health, intelligence, athletic ability, or superior friendships and likability. Or, maybe the issues are the same but the envy is directed at others' children relative to our own. Or, perhaps the envy is directed at the role or position of someone else, a role you wish you had or think you could better fill.

Paul asks "what do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7). If all of your advantages were bequeathed through no effort or goodness of your own, then the same is true of everyone else. And who is the giver but God? While we can certainly question the giver of good gifts, to make such questions our focus demonstrates an unhumble misunderstanding of our relationship with God and humanity. Paul tells us in Romans 12:4 that we are all one body with many members. Does it make sense for my left foot to complain that it is not my right hand? What if the pinkie toe on my left foot envied my right thumb and started a whispering campaign against it in order to subversively get its role? Or what if your right forearm envied the beauty of your eyes and refused to work until its beauty was properly acknowledged - or instead, began extreme beauty treatments in order to acquire the compliments effortlessly obtained by your eyes? Such ideas are absurd and if ever enacted they would be properly regarded as some terribly rare psychological condition on par with claiming to be a poached egg or mistaking one's wife for a hat.

But in the body composed of the world this psychological illness is far too common. It should not be so with us in the church. When viewed as one body, someone else's gifts help me by helping all humanity and the church itself. Hence, we should praise God for the gifts He has given others. We should praise God when others encounter success. This includes the gifts and successes he has given people like Tom Brady; and we should pray that these wonderful blessings are used to glorify God and advance his kingdom.

Ryan Jessup

The Hillcrest family is led by the Holy Spirit to glorify God, proclaim the truth of Christ which transforms lives, and encourage one another toward faithful service and maturity.