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I grew up in a large family. We did not have a lot of money, but our family had lots of love and we always had fun. Many of our vacations were spent camping—in a borrowed tent—and we used blankets because we didn't have sleeping bags. The neighbor kids would say, "You're lucky, you got to sleep in a tent. We had to sleep in a hotel. You got to play in a mountain stream, and we had to go to the pool." So in my young mind, we were "lucky." We were taught to be blessed with what we had and what we did. Not once do I remember hearing my parents say, "I wish we had a bigger house like this person or a nicer car like that person." And after visiting others, my parents would always say something thankful like, "It was very kind of them to invite us over to play games" or "grill hot dogs." So at a very young age, I learned not to compare, but to appreciate that we were all different and had our own strengths. We are going to take a look at what God's Word says about how we as born-again believers can celebrate each other's strengths as we function in the one Body God has called us to.

John 10:10 says that the thief (the Devil) comes to steal, kill, and destroy. One thing he tries to steal is our good thoughts by trying to get us to think ungodly thoughts, one of which is envy. I Corinthians 13 says, "...charity envieth not...."

I Corinthians 13:4:

Charity [the love of God in the renewed mind in manifestation] suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not....

The Greek word translated "envieth" can mean "to be zealous towards,...[that is,] for or against any person or thing." So we can be zealous for the right reason or for the wrong reason. The above verse is talking about being zealous for the wrong reason, and for this occurrence of "envieth," Thayer's lexicon applies this meaning: "to be heated or to boil with envy, hatred, anger." What a spiritually depleted state to live in! However, we can focus our thoughts toward one another with the love of God. Let's take a look at what God's Word says about where to focus our thoughts.

As God's children, we are members of His household, where we all have different capacities in the ways we serve.

I Corinthians 12:18:

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

Part of God's design was that we would work together as one Body to help others see His goodness and His love, His mercy and His grace. And we would accomplish this by living in one accord with one another, functioning in His household with each member doing his part.

I Corinthians 12:27:

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

You know, God had the ability to make us all the same, but He didn't. God called each of us to fill a place in the Body of Christ. He called you and me as members in particular, *not* because you or I do something just like someone else, but because each of us has a specific function and has the ability to magnify God and strengthen the household in our own particularly unique way. We get to do this by being members together in this one Body. And as we function together in the one Body and celebrate each other's strengths, it makes life wonderfully refreshing.

Romans 12:15:

Rejoice with them that do rejoice....

I so enjoy sharing in others' victories and accomplishments. It gives me a glimpse into their believing and faithfulness and determination and strength of character, and that is worth celebrating. When we view one another with the love of God, it makes life fun and exciting and rich and joyful! That was God's plan. He designed us to be strengthened as a Body as we rejoice together and move together in unity.

The love of God encourages us to value each member of the Body of Christ by recognizing God's plan of setting the members as it pleased Him. And to celebrate one another's accomplishments, successes, strengths, and victories is manifesting the love of God. This is how to enjoy the more abundant life God has called us to as members in particular. Let's enjoy building up one another in the Body of Christ by appreciating one another's strengths as we live the love of God together in His household.

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