



Season 1, Episode 3 “Competition: Women Who Celebrate Well”

Punky Tolson:

Hi, guys. Come on in! Hey, it's a cold and windy day in Big D, Dallas, Texas. And there's a lot of clinking going on outside, and since we don't have the most professional recording studio, Michelle and I just want to warn you ahead of time that there might be some banging and clanging going on behind us because of the wind. But nevertheless, here we are with our cups of tea on this cold day and we are ready to dive into this episode on *competition*.

We've been talking about how much more effective and more powerful and just better we women are *together* and that as we intentionally strive to do womanhood well for the glory of God, we will have to constantly remind ourselves that the enemy is out to get us stirred up against one another.

Of course, he is! And what better way to get to us than to have us compete *against* one another instead of compete *with* one another, and then render us completely ineffective for the kingdom purposes of God. So if we are going to do womanhood well to the glory of God, we're going to have to make some exchanges. Last week, we exchanged comparison for contentment. This week, we're going to exchange competition, the really negative, wrong kind of competition for celebration... because there is work to be done and a race to be run and you and I are in it together to the finish. Michelle is going to read our scripture focus for today.

Michelle Schroeder:

I'm going to read from Hebrews 12:1-2

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Punky Tolson:

Okay, Michelle, let's talk competition for a minute. You know, *competition really isn't a bad thing*. It really can be healthy and even motivating as we strive together toward a particular common good, especially within the body of Christ, as we work together to build one kingdom: God's kingdom. Where competition goes awry is when the attitude of our heart becomes darkened with envy and jealousy because we're looking at everything in our life as lacking or less than, and we fail to see the goodness and the generosity and the abundance of our God.

There's not one single benefit to envy or jealousy ever. In fact, they will make you *sick*, killing gratitude in your heart and feeding a scarcity mentality in your head– duping us into thinking that if we can only have what they have or do what they do, then we'll be happy. We'll feel fulfilled and successful and loved, et cetera.

Moreover, it's not just a matter of wanting what someone else has, it's competing to get it because we don't want them to have what they have. So I don't have to tell you that when those two forces, envy and jealousy are at play in our mind and heart, we're not living for the glory of God. We're living for our own glory. The problem is when we fail to see and rely on and be thankful for the goodness and generosity of our God, we breed a scarcity mentality within us.

You know, when I think about scarcity– I grew up in a big family, I was the oldest of five. I've told y'all this before. Dinnertime was a big deal because there was a lot of food and everybody wanted to eat. There was always enough but we would grab a piece of chicken, and of course, everybody's fighting for the white meat. But we grab a piece chicken, put on our plate, and then we kind of lean over on the table with our arm wrapped around our plate as to guard our plate and ward off anyone possibly reaching across the table to snatch our breast of chicken. All my life I ate like that growing up. And there was always enough, my mom always had enough fried chicken. In fact, there was an abundance of fried chicken! But still, I just thought *someone is going to take my chicken and there's not going to be any left for me*.

So what is this scarcity mentality that keeps us stirred up and competing against one another instead of encouraging and competing with one another? And how do we know if we're inflicted with scarcity thinking? Well, it's usually difficult for you to be happy for those around you who are successful in what they're doing. You constantly compare yourself or your worth or value to others, feeling or thinking, I am less than, I have less than. Or you've bought into the lie that says, there's not enough to go around. If she or he has that thing or is doing that thing, then I won't be able to do it or have it. Or you've

doubted God's goodness and his sovereignty, agreeing with Satan that God is not fair, because he hasn't given me what I want. And what I want is to have what she has or to do it better than she does. And one worse, I don't want her to have what she has.

The opposite of scarcity is abundance, and *our God is an abundant God*. He made everything and therefore he *owns* everything. And he made everything in abundance to be never ending. The fact is that God is limitless, therefore, His provision is limitless. John 10:10 says that the thief comes only to kill, steal and destroy. But Jesus says, "I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly." A never-ending supply of life. "Life and more of it" is really how it can be translated. In God's economy, there's more than enough to go around, abundantly more. As Paul writes in Ephesians 3:20-21, "Now, to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen." He is able to do more abundantly, exceedingly abundantly more than we could hope for or imagine.

Michelle Schroeder:

Punky, I love that word, *imagine*, in the scripture, because I think that's so often where we get stuck in the scarcity mindset. If we can't imagine how God is going to provide for us, in whatever area it is in our lives that we're feeling scarce, if we can't imagine it or figure it out, then we just assume it can't be done. And it makes me think of 2 Kings 4, the story of Elisha and the Widow who ... She was tasked with finding jars to be filled with oil. And who knows how the Lord was going to fill all this up with oil! She could have gotten stuck right there and said, "Absolutely not. This is never going to work." But she didn't. *She got busy with finding jars*. She went to her neighbors and got their jars. And God showed up in a way that that matched the measure of her faith, and he did it in his abundance in a way that she could have never imagined.

Punky Tolson:

Right. Exactly. And so often His abundance is tied to what we see as a lack. In fact, I love that passage. It's one of my favorite passages in the Old Testament because this woman has a legitimate need and a concern. She has been widowed and she does not have enough money to pay her taxes, and the tax collectors are going to come take her two sons. So she makes her appeal to the man of God, Elisha, and she says, you got to help me. And he comes into her home and he says, okay, what have you got in your home here? And she says nothing. She sees only her lack. She's got nothing. And then she goes, except for that little bottle of oil. And he says, well, go get that. Go get that and now go around to all your neighbors and ask them for vessels, for jars to put this oil in.

And they did and he instructs her, *don't bring back too few*. Go collect jars and not too few. And come back and you and your boys go in this room, shut the door and start pouring oil. And they poured and they poured and they poured. And they filled up all of those vessels with oil. So much so that she not only paid her tax debt, she had enough to live on for the rest of her life. And it's just a beautiful picture of God's abundance.

We think we don't have anything or we look at everybody else and say they have more, and we want what they have. But God's saying, *No, I've given you everything you need, right here, right the way it is. You just need to trust me to be the one that becomes bigger in what you see as less than*. Every single time we see this as this cup overflowing.

In fact, how do you see your cup? Half empty or half full? Because in Christ, our cup is always overflowing, always over the top and running over and beyond which is what that word abundance means. God is the master of taking what we see as our little bit and making it abundantly more. What we see as a little bit of provision, God sees as an abundance in his economy. In fact, we see that in the loaves and fishes. He took a little bit of fish, and a couple of loaves of bread, and he fed multitudes. God is the master of taking what we have, what we see as our little bit of provision and multiplying it. He is not lacking or unable to provide for us. He's a God of abundance. He's a God who is more than able. He's the God of more than enough and not just a little bit or almost enough, but exceedingly abundantly more than you could ask hope, dream or imagine.

So what's your place of scarcity? Where are you in that scarcity mindset? Name your place of scarcity. What is it? What are you envious of? Why do you feel this way? And is there a person or an entity associated with how you feel? Is there a person you're comparing yourself to? Do you see yourself as being lacking or less than because of what they are doing or what they have? What does God say on the subject of scarcity versus abundance in His word? And what is he specifically saying to you? Because, according to His word, we see it all the way across the board. *Gratitude*. Gratitude is what busts the scarcity mentality in us.



SPIRITUAL LIFE HACK

Keep a gratitude journal and write down five things you're grateful for each night before you go to bed. Just get a little book, sit it right there beside your bed. And each night before you turn the lights out, just write down five things that you're grateful to God for. And throughout the day, take a daily gratitude

check. When you feel that competitive rubbernecking kind of thing creeping up on you, just stop and start reciting out loud the things you're grateful for. Tell God, tell him out loud. Let your own ears hear your own voice declare his goodness to you personally and what he has done and what he has given you. Just the full extent of his provision to you.



Y'all, we have so much to be grateful for, to be grateful for who God is and what God does, for who God made you and me to be just the way you are and just the way I am. What God has given to you and gifted you to do. What Christ has accomplished for you, and how God has provided for your needs. Sometimes we need to do more diagnostic work to really get at the heart of this.

I'm going to suggest these four things:

1. First of all, confess the things that come to your heart with regard to this scarcity mentality and this dark spirit of competition within you. Confess them to God, write them out. Confess them as sin because they are. And then pray through them. Ask Him to forgive you.
2. Break the mental stronghold by saying them aloud and assigning or answering them with God's abundant truth. Find something in his word that speaks over this stronghold with his truth.
3. Pray, pray, pray. Pray for any person associated with this particular area of scarcity in you. Pray blessing and encouragement and favor of them. If you see something they posted on social media, if you hear about something they did, if you run into them and they are sharing some particular success, and it starts to stir that thing up in you, do your gratitude check, and then pray for them. *Pray abundance over them.*
4. That thing that's eating you (like we talked about last week) that thing that's eating you in regard to this spirit of competition, this competitiveness that makes you compete against someone else— when it's eating you, starve it by celebrating the person that's associated with it in some way... send a note of congratulations to them or just a word of encouragement. Hey, throw them a party! Or post something about their success on social media.

You see, this is a heart matter because the ***heart of the matter is always a matter of the heart***, and our basic emotional needs that go met or unmet. Our need to feel loved, to be

known, to have identity, to have worth, to feel safe and secure, valued, purposeful, fruitful and forgiven.

When our hearts are unfulfilled in Christ's love and goodness, we begin to cultivate *ingratitude* for what we see as a *lack of provision on God's part*. The scarcity mentality stirs up envy and we shift from looking to Jesus to looking at what everybody else is doing, and then we begin to drift out of our lane and into somebody else's lane. And guess what? Our race doesn't get run unless we run it in our lane.

In Hebrews 12:1, we read earlier that we're to “throw off every weight or lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and then run with endurance the race that is set out before us.” So there are these weights and there are these sins, and both cling closely. Both impede our ability to run with endurance the race that is set before us and they keep us distracted from looking toward the prize at the end of the race, which is Jesus Himself.

Okay, let's get back to the races.

There is a race going on, and you and I are in it. And it's God's race. So picture this enormously broad track and we're each in our own lane, everyone running her own race in her own way, the way that God has marked out for us according to His will, in just the way He created you and gifted you to run it. So don't miss this. *Don't miss this*. Because you're in the race. *You haven't been left out of the race*. But the race is really more of a chase or a pursuit, because in Christ, we are all running the same race, and we will all win. We will all reach the goal of the upward call of Christ according to Philippians 3. And in Christ, we are all gifted to run the particular race that God has marked out for us to run uniquely. We may each run our race at a very different pace. Nevertheless, the race is on. We are competing in the pursuit of Christ, who is more than enough for every runner in the race.

Michelle Schroeder:

This makes me think about how several years ago, I was trying to be a runner, (emphasis on the “trying”) but I was training for a half marathon and I had a running coach at the time. He had told me when I run to pretend like I was holding potato chips in my hands. A potato chip between my middle finger and my thumb in each hand. Of course, I didn't want to break the potato chip. And it did two things. One, it kept my hands up so that all the blood doesn't rush to your hands. But the second thing is, it made me release the tension I was holding. Because in my run, you might tense up by clasp your fists together and that tension just builds in your body and it drains your energy. So that was a something that he gave me to do to keep myself from building that tension.

And so when I think about this verse in Hebrews and the weights and sin, I mean, of course, sin can weigh us down, but specifically the weights that we're carrying, that's that tension that we hold on to that *we've got to let go of in order to run our race longer.*

Punky Tolson:

Exactly. With endurance.

Michelle Schroeder:

With endurance.

Punky Tolson:

I think we lose the endurance part when we're tensing up, and I don't think anything makes you tense up more than when you're in a chase or in a pursuit, kind of looking over your shoulder or as I say, this "spiritual rubbernecking," you're looking over your shoulder, you're looking in the other lane to see what they're doing. And you lose energy, you lose focus, you lose all of that. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul writes, "So whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." And he lists a few things in there. But that term, *whatever you do*, is such a broad term, and it applies to all of our life, to anything and everything that we do. *Whatever it is, do it for the glory of God.*

So the question we have to continually ask ourselves is, why am I doing this? Why am I doing what I'm doing? Whatever it is. Why? So I'm asking you, why are you doing what you're doing? What's the motive behind it? In other words, what do you hope to gain by doing what you're doing? If you have that honest conversation with God and write some things out that come to your heart, I think you'll begin to see where your motives are right on and where your motives are awry.

Eric Liddell was a man who loved God and he loved to run. He was a Scotsman, a missionary with a passion and a calling to serve God in China. And he also happened to have a passion for running. And run he did straight into the 1924 Summer Olympics in Paris, where he was favored to win the 100-meter race. But because the qualifying heats were held on a Sunday, and Eric was a devout believer and follower of Christ, he forfeited the race to attend a worship service and ran instead in the 400-meter race, where he took home the gold in a race he'd not previously run before in his life.

His story is portrayed in this fabulous movie that came out in 1981 called *Chariots of Fire*, one of my all-time favorites, and one of the most beautiful soundtracks. Where Eric is reassuring his sister Jenny in the scene that he will most certainly return to the mission fields of China. And he says to her, "I believe God made me for a purpose, Jenny. For China. But he also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure." Eric Liddell didn't run for his

country, or for the crowds, or for his own fame and his own glory, or even to compete with the other runners. Eric Liddell's heart was for God and he ran for God, for the sheer pleasure of God, who had made Eric fast. And when he ran, God was well pleased and spectacularly glorified.

I remember one time coming home from teaching or speaking at some events, and I came in and I told John, I get it. I get that whole feeling, the pleasure of God on me and knowing that the Holy Spirit had totally taken over and was doing what he wanted to do through me running the race the way that he wanted it to be run. With God at the focus of our thoughts, we can be sure that what we're doing is all for His glory, for his name and for his fame. So whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.

I know I've thrown a lot of scripture at you today, and all of the references will be in the show notes. But each one of these is so important and so relevant to this theme of competition. Listen to what Paul writes in Philippians 1:27. He says this, "Only let the manner of your life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or I'm absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for faith of the gospel.

Now, can't you just see that on a runner's track? All of these runners running side by side, striving side by side in the same race for the faith of the gospel, keeping their eyes on Jesus, all heading toward the same prize.

That term, *striving side by side*, is an athletic term, and it means to be on her side or to be on the same team. I watched my middle granddaughter play in a volleyball tournament a few weeks ago, and it's just so cool to watch your kids do things like that and get out there and be fearless. But what I love so much was to see her and her other teammates, encourage one another and compete **with** one another for the same prize. I mean, they celebrated the entire time the game was going on. Every score, every point they made, there was a celebration. And that is what we have got to do as women who do womanhood better together, women who are determined that we're not going to compete *against* one another but compete *with* one another. We need to start celebrating more. So as women who do womanhood better together, we need to start celebrating more. We need to have more parties! Michelle is going to read to us a final verse from Luke 15:8-10.

Michelle Schroeder:

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with

me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Punky Tolson:

I love that she had a party. She found her lost coin. She had a success. And what is the first thing she did? She called her friends and said, "Come on over and rejoice with me! Let's have a party!"

Let's have a party together! It's time to start celebrating others and celebration happens together. It's time to start lifting one another up. You can always tell who the strong women are. They're the ones that are building each other up instead of tearing one another down. Girls compete, but women empower one another. It's time that we joined our hands together, instead of comparing what's in them. It's time for celebrating one another instead of competing with each other. You are without rival in Christ. Woman to Woman, side by side, striving for the faith, running in the same race, all headed toward Jesus. Every one of us saying, I got your back. You got my back. I'm with you. I'm for you. And you know what, friend, ***you are enough.***

Psalm 68:11. Okay, I said I told y'all I had already given you your last verse, but this really is the last verse. Psalm 68:11 says this, "The Lord speaks and many, many women spread the good news." Again, I can just see that runners track with all these women running side by side, shoulder to shoulder, running in this race to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

I'm going to end with this quote from Eric Liddell. It's just so perfect.

"Everyone runs in her own way or his own way. And where does the power come from, to see the race to its end? It comes from within." Jesus said, "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you. If with all your hearts you truly seek me, you shall ever surely find me." If you commit yourself to the love of Christ, then that is how you run a straight race."

All right, y'all. That's that for that this week. Let's just pray and ask the Lord:

Father, we thank you that you've given us this glorious race to run in. It's the race of Jesus. We thank you, Father, that you have given us the ability to run with endurance as we throw off every weight and sin that clings so closely. We thank You, Father, that you've given us a race to run with our sisters in Christ, shoulder to shoulder, cheering one another along, because we all have a different lane, and we're all headed in the same direction, and we're all building one kingdom.

So help us remember Lord, help us remember that we are competing with one another for the prize of the upward call of Christ and therefore we do not need to compete against one another. We love you Lord, and we pray to become every bit the women of God that so strongly resemble Jesus, women who are better together doing womanhood well to the glory of God. And it's in Jesus name that I ask this.

Okay, guys, don't you ever forget that you are greatly and dearly loved by the king. So go put on those running shoes and get after it. We'll see you next week.

xo -P