

## **The Danger of Keeping Score**

*“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.”* Matthew 7:1, 2

Score keeping is okay in sports and card games. But why do we Americans constantly “add it all up” and make judgments, at the expense of others, about our importance?

Jill Duffield says, “We never seem to outgrow our childish ways of judging - judging who got the bigger portion of dessert, or how many presents our siblings got at Christmas compared with our gift count, or even trying to figure out which among the kids is grandma's favorite. We may change the categories we count and measure, but we still count and measure... We scrutinize peers' posts to see who among us is aging well, doing well, living well, and in so doing we can discern where we fall on the spectrum of success and well-being... We can assure ourselves that our children are all above average. We can tally up the aggregate score of our worldly worth and, depending on the day, judge that we are better than some, usually better than most...” And when we come out better, we're happy.

Garrison Keillor once wrote a review of a book called *Against Happiness* by Eric Wilson. Keillor says about the author, “He is a gloomy man who tried jogging, yoga, tai chi, Frank Capra movies, smiling, good grooming, and eating salads, and finally decided to embrace his gloominess. This makes him an odd duck in America, a land of ‘crazed and compulsive hopefulness,’ settled by seekers of utopia, a Promised Land that quickly became a shopping mall where ‘the typical American, the American bent on discovering happiness through securing stuff,’ consumes Paxil and Prozac, Ambien and Botox, while seeking the instant gratification of the cellphone, the Internet, and smiley faces...” We Americans think we ought to be “up with no downs.” Being “up” makes us happy. And if we compare ourselves with certain people, we're up rather than down.

Leicester University in England did a study and came up with the happiest country in the world, Denmark. But how can that be? Compared to Americans, they're rarely “up”. The weather is only so-so, Danes eat herring by the ton, and their neighbors, the Swedes, are not only healthier, but blond and have more fun. The reason that the Danes are judged to be the happiest people in the world is that their expectations are rather modest, specifically, in this sense – they don't think they can have it all or do it all so they don't kill themselves trying. And when things work out better than they expect, they're happy.

*“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get,”* said Jesus. This is like another of his sayings – if we don't forgive others, God won't forgive us. If we judge or constantly find fault with others, God will do the same with us. And why would we judge in the first place? Jesus makes it clear that God values each individual simply because we're human beings. Remembering this verdict after a bad day ought to bring a smile to our faces. When we already count with God, comparing ourselves to others in an attempt to feel better about ourselves is senseless score keeping. – DJ