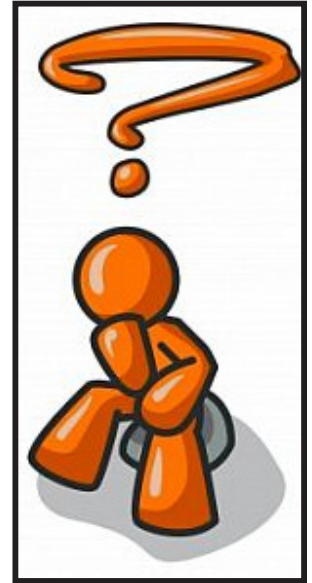


What About ... Fairness

By Rebecca S. May

Do nothing from selfishness ... but regard one another as more important than yourselves (Philippians 2:3). Perhaps you have heard the story about two children fighting over who would get the last piece of cake. What to do? What would be fair? How do we split it? Who would get the bigger piece? The solution: If one child does the cutting, and the other child does the choosing, then we will ensure a fair outcome. The child cutting the cake will do his best to make the pieces even, knowing that the other child will attempt to choose the bigger piece. So in the end, the cake is evenly cut and equally distributed—all is fair. Everyone is happy.....right?

I want to argue that this is the worst possible outcome. The first child will cut the cake fairly because he is greedy and wants the biggest piece. He is counting on the greed of the second child, knowing he, too, will want the biggest piece. Both children end up with less than they wanted, so they are both not truly happy. And each child is bitter towards the other since the demands of the other child has cost them the bigger piece of cake. This fair compromise only answered the question of how the cake would be distributed. But it did not solve any problems. And, in fact, it created new problems. Fairness both rewards greed and eliminates the possibility of giving. In other words, fairness encourages disobedience and prevents maturity.



**What would be a better outcome?
Any result that was not fair.**

Give the last piece of cake to one child and tell him he is free to do what he wants with it. If the child refuses to share, then make him eat the cake in front of you and the other child. In other words, teach the selfish child that when you choose to be selfish, you may get what you want, but you are choosing to disobey God, and you are choosing to hurt the ones you love. That is, you cannot have the pleasures of sin without the consequences that come with choosing sin. *Do not be deceived. God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap* (Galatians 6:7). The child who did not get any cake, because of the selfishness of the other child, will learn a valuable lesson, since there will be many times in life when you will not get what you want, and you will be hurt by people you love—that's life on this earth!

If the child who was given the whole piece of cake chooses to *be generous and ready to share* (1 Timothy 6:18), then both children will benefit. The giver has the joy of having obeyed God. *Do nothing from selfishness... but regard one another as more important than yourselves* (Philippians 2:3). The receiver enjoys the cake with gratitude since he would have had nothing but, because of the generosity of the other child, he has something to be thankful for. *In everything gives thanks* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

But something else could happen. The child who was given the whole piece of cake may not share but, instead, choose to give the whole piece to the other child. This has the most benefits for everyone. The giver has given up something

that was given to him, something he really wanted, for something greater, something he wanted more. The desire to give was more valuable to the child than the desire for the cake. He has chosen his spirit over his flesh. *For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please* (Galatians 5:17). He has given up something earthly for something heavenly, *the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life* (Galatians 6:8). And the child who received the whole piece of cake can be thankful for the gift and grateful for the giver who gave all he had, keeping nothing for himself. The receiver of the cake learns that God gives us more than we need, more than we deserve, and more than we ask for. *Every good thing given... is from above* (James 1:17).

Even if the child who received the gift of the cake is greedy and does not give thanks, still, this is a good lesson for the child who chose to give. Even when we are not recognized or thanked, God is watching, and He is pleased. We can tell the giving child to look for God's approval, not man's. And as a matter of fact, you should not expect to be thanked or appreciated. *As slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord* (Ephesians 6:6-8).

And, by the way, if everyone is always treated equally or fairly, no one is ever special...but that's another "What About."