

Bellflower

Grace Communion International

Worship Services: Saturdays 10:00 a.m.

at The First Christian Church

17003 Clark Avenue

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gcibellflower.org

Larry Dietrich, Senior Pastor

Pastor's LETTER

Sharing the Joy of Living in the Grace of Jesus

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Grace = No More Score-Keeping

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.—1 Corinthians 13:4-5

Keeping score is one of the fundamental predispositions of human beings. Keeping score is the way we operate, it's the way we gauge our progress and that of others and it is one of the primary ways in which our culture motivates us. I learned to keep score at an early age. While in High School, I took a job with Nehi Bottling Company, bottler of Royal Crown Cola and several flavors of soft drinks. My job was loading beverage trucks for the next day's deliveries. I was given a "load sheet," and had to make sure the proper number of cases of each flavor were on board five trucks. Even as a high school student, I did this six nights a week. It was hard work, and keeping the numbers correct was critical. Keeping score is all about performance—it's how we determine success or failure. Scorekeeping, both physically and spiritually, fascinates and motivates us. But God's grace functions on an entirely different economy, an entirely different set of principles.

Grace = No More Scorekeeping!

Numbers make the world go round, don't they? Numbers are the primary way in which we keep score. Our human financial economies operate on the basis of how much and how many—specific numbers are absolutely necessary for human economies to work. Who would accept a job if they weren't promised a specific wage? How would people shop for groceries, clothing or goods of any kind if no price tag was attached? You see, physical scorekeeping is not only fundamental to our human economy of work and production, of payments and bartering, but spiritual scorekeeping is at the heart of Christ-less religion.

We humans prefer to have a method that enables us to measure and quantify our relationship with God. Even though any and all such methods of keeping score are religious contrivances, we still like to think that we can know exactly "where we stand" with God. Legalistic religion is all about how much and how often—it's all about records—spiritual bean-counting and bookkeeping. It's been around a long time. The Bible gives several examples. Here are two:

The book of Numbers

Appropriately titled "Numbers"—here is an Old Testament example illustrating the futility of attempting to gauge, weigh or measure our relationship with God on the basis of human performance: Numbers is an entire book of the Bible which, from our Christian perspective, offers a comparison between the old covenant, based on counting, and the new covenant, based on God, in Christ, *who keeps no record of wrongs* (1 Corinthians 13:5). The book of Numbers lives up to its title—it is a book of specific instructions about amounts—it's a spiritual recipe book that gave the nation of Israel a way to measure their acceptability to God as well as a scorebook of some of their failed attempts.

Ephesians 2:8-10

By contrast with boasting and the pride of religious accomplishments which are kept and maintained in religious scorebooks by religious scorekeepers, Paul simply says this: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

In His Grace,

Larry

Senior Pastor