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Dear Daniel (sending copy to Laura, too--and g.parents might enjoy):

I found this little book around the house, which perhaps you saw before I did. It has a month's worth of "chew," in terms of insightful thinking.

It is named winners & losers and is by Sydney J. Harris. Actually, the concept that the world can be divided into winners and losers is a competitive notion which is not, I don't think, consistent with gospel teaching. I think Harris would agree, actually, but titled it so the book would sell.

I think the Lord wants us all to be winners in terms of achieving our own best potential, and He could care less how that stacks up with what we too often see as our "competition."

I tried to explain that to Laura the other day when she called us, so happy that she got an A- in English. She earned that. The teacher gave them the option to rewrite every essay (and he gave a lot of them), if they wanted to improve their grade. However, they had to choose an entirely different subject and totally rewrite the paper, improving in the areas the teacher questioned.

Laura rewrote every single essay, if you can believe! She deserved that grade and deserved to be ecstatic. All the grades are not in, but she is quite confident she got all As and A-s this term. We are encouraging her to take that and her senior-year high school grades and apply for a scholarship.

What thrilled us was how "up" all this made Laura feel. But then she got a little nervous and said the hard part about doing so well was now she feared we would just expect her to be an "A" student. She intended to work hard, again, but she was not so sure she could do as well in those "pit" general science classes where there are 400 students and illogical multiple-choice exams which are designed more to trip-up the majority than to truly test what a person has studied and learned. I think I got a "C" in one of those classes, after studying hard, too!

At any rate, I explained to Laura that the only person she's going to school for is that face in the mirror. She's the one who knows if she's doing her best to prepare for her own future. I told her if she feels good about her own effort, then she should feel good regardless of her grades--and we would, too. We are so happy for her. She's at Leadership Conference now--hope it's terrific.

Daniel, the mail just came, and we got your letter. I cried reading it. For empathy that you got "thrashed" (we returned missionaries understand that feeling--emotionally and physically) and for joy that you love your companion so much. I guess I just wept to have such a wonderful son. We love you and miss you so much. Laura is such a sweetie, too--the Lord was so merciful to send us two A students in the class called "Loving."

I am typing up this booklet for you because the pages are falling out, and it's too good to lose. It has one statement on each page--the accompanying drawings are a hoot! Daniel, you would have had fun illustrating this book. With Laura's A in English, she'll have to write