

IBL REC

IDLEWILD BAPTIST CHURCH - RECREATION MINISTRY



ADULT CO-ED ***VOLLEYBALL***

DEVOTIONALS

Champions in Christ

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Made in the Image of God, With a Purpose

Genesis 1:1,27 - "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." "So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

Psalms 139:13-14 - "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well."

Question: Have you ever thought about how wonderfully unique you are? What are some unique gifts or talents that you appreciate that God gave you?

Illustration: Tim Tebow's story is an amazing story about how we are wonderfully made by God and we each have a purpose. Doctors advised Tim's mother to abort her pregnancy because she had contracted a tropical disease in the Philippines. Pam Tebow, however, believed the baby in her stomach was created by God and had a purpose. Tim Tebow was born without any complications. The doctors said his birth was miraculous.

Tim went on to be a quarterback at the University of Florida, winning the Heisman's Trophy and the national championship in 2006 and 2008. He has always given credit to Christ. After college, Tim has continued serving Christ by speaking publicly for Christ and starting a Christian Foundation helping orphans and children with special needs. Tim has found his purpose in Christ.

Explanation: You also are created by God in His image and have a purpose. Your purpose might not be to win the Heisman trophy, but God has a unique purpose for you. The Bible says that you are wonderfully made. God made all the intricate details about you in your mother's womb. You are unique with no mistakes and God loves you. You have a unique purpose.

Jesus said, "For God so loved the world (...so loved YOU) that He gave His only Son, Jesus, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life." One of your purposes is for Jesus to be your Lord and Savior.

Take Away: "For I know the plans I have for you, "declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11). When you feel insecure or are tempted to compare yourself to others, remember that God made you uniquely you. What can you do to remind yourself that you are created by God with a purpose? Who can you share this with that will keep you accountable?

(Coaches – Find an object lesson or phrase to share with your players to remind them of this principle.)

Identity in Christ - The Performance Problem

*I John 3:1 - "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!
And that is what we are!"*

Question: If anyone were to ask you, who are you? What would you say? Would you say, "Well I'm good at football, or I'm good at school, or I'm good at this or that, or even I'm taller or I'm short?" That is describing what you do, what you're good at, or what you look like. But who are you really?

Explanation: An Athlete's world is a lot about PERFORMANCE. If they excel on the field, they become significant to the coach, team and fans. Once they become significant, they are accepted. Plus, they get to play. As long as they are performing to the coach's liking, everything will go well. Often, this becomes their identity. **"I am a football player!"** Many times, as humans, we define our identity by what we do or what we are good at. The problem with this approach to life and sports is that things can happen to an athlete that can take this all away. For instance, an athlete can get injured, or somebody better can come along, or they can get old and can no longer perform. If their identity is based on what they do and their performance, their identity is shattered.

Illustration: Once upon a time there was a kicker for Notre Dame football team. His senior year, they went to the Rose Bowl. In the final seconds of the Rose Bowl, he was able to kick the winning field goal. There was pandemonium. Everybody was excited and the fans stormed the field.

After the game they had a big banquet for the winners. At this banquet were all the rich supporters of Notre Dame football. Many of these would give a lot of money so that the football program would excel. The kicker, the hero of the game, noticed one of the biggest givers in the room. So, he went over and asked him, "What do you think about the kick that I did today?" This businessman looked at him and said, "Why should I speak to you? You're graduating in May. You are no longer eligible to play, so you mean nothing to me anymore!" And this was the very day that the kicker had won the Rose Bowl for Notre Dame. He was totally crushed, and his identity was down the drain.

For the Christian however, identity is not defined by our performance and nor by what we do. In fact, Jesus says that he's the one that created us, and he loves us.

And because he loves us, he accepts us. That gives us significance. As believers, our identity is in Christ. The Bible says that in Christ we are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Because our identity is in Christ, we are always solid. God always loves us. Nothing that we can do will take away that love. We are always accepted, and this motivates us to give our best for Him: to perform for His glory and to please Him. But whether we perform or not, he loves us, and our identity is solid in him.

Take Away: Have you ever struggled with who you are? Have you ever compared yourself to others or felt like you haven't performed well enough? God loves you just as you are. What truth will you tell yourself from today's lesson? Who can you share this with that will help keep you accountable?

(Coaches – Find an object lesson or a phrase to share with your players to remind them that they have their identity in Christ).

An Audience of One

Colossians 3:17 - "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Question: Have you ever thought about your motivation for playing a sport? Have you ever made it too serious? Or put the focus on you?

Explanation: You have probably seen a professional athlete in a big game who appeared to be playing for his own glory. Whenever he did something spectacular, he would point to himself or show off. It was clear that he wanted the accolades of the crowd or that his name would become widely known. He wanted people's praise. Maybe there have been times when you wanted people's praise on the recreation field.

In today's passage (Colossians 3:17), Paul tells us that everything we do, we should do it for the Lord not for man. Not for ourselves.

Illustration: A few years ago, Tim Tebow was quarterback for the Florida Gators. His team happened to be in the national championship (2008). Tim Tebow wanted to honor God with his football career. Traditionally, under his eyes he would put the verse Philippians 4:13 which says, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." But on this particular day, the National Championship, Tim felt God leading him to put something else under his eyes. He put John 3:16 which says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting

life.” He was trying to honor and glorify God with his sport. That day, 94 million people Googled John 3:16 to see what it said. 94 million people got to hear this verse about God’s great love and offer of salvation He has for everyone. Tim Tebow was playing for God, not for man.

Take Away: This week we learned that we should play and live for God, and not for man. What is one thing that you can change in your actions and in your heart that will help you live for God and not for man? Who is one person that you can share this with that will help keep you accountable and help you with your desire to live for God, and not for man?

(Coaches – Find an object lesson or a phrase to share with your players to remind them that they are to play for God and not for man.)

*Adapted from Athletes in Action, Audience of One Bible study

What is Winning in God's Eyes?

2 Timothy 4:7 - "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

*1 Corinthians 10:31 - "So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do it all for the glory of God.**"*

Question: So, what is winning? How do you define winning and how does the world define winning? How do you know if somebody won?

Explanation: Winning. That's always a big topic. The world defines winning as the one that has the highest score at the end of the game, but I wonder if that's how God defines winning. Let's look at what God has to say about winning.

In today's verses, Paul says "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race; I have kept the faith." Here Paul uses two sport metaphors. First, with "fighting the good fight," he is referring to boxing or wrestling. To fight a good fight, you must play by the rules and give it your best. Then he says, "I have finished the race." It is easy to start a race, but it takes preparation, motivation, perseverance and determination to finish a race. In other words, giving your best effort. Lastly, "I have kept the faith." Paul is saying that he kept the right motivation and kept his eyes on Jesus. He did his very best.

ILLUSTRATION: One of the hardest things to do in life is run a marathon. A marathon is 26 miles or 42 km. It's like running from here to Clearwater Beach! It's a really long way! For some people, it takes 5 to 6 hours to run. For others, it only takes a little over two hours, but either way, it's **REALLY REALLY** long distance. At the Boston Marathon every April, there are over 26,000 people that run, but amazingly only one of those 26,000 wins the race! What

about everybody else? Does that make 25,999 runners or losers? Not at all! They must train hours and hours, day after day, just to get their bodies ready to run the Boston Marathon. When they run, they run not to win the race, but just to finish the race. It's quite a feat to finish the Boston Marathon. The point is not to win in the world's eyes, but to do your best and finish the race. (**Coaches, add a personal story here, in lieu of my example, that illustrates the point**).

Paul also says to “**do all to the glory of God.**” This means seeking to honor God in giving my best in effort and attitude. Having an attitude of Christ being magnified instead of having everyone's eyes on self.

ILLUSTRATION: After winning Super Bowl LIX, Jalen Hurts, quarterback of the Philadelphia Eagles said, “My faith in Christ has always been a part of me. I have always wanted to keep Him in the center of my life and in everything that I do. Through the highs and the lows, Jesus is greater than all of them!” This coming from a Super Bowl champion – he gave the glory to God.

Winning to God is 1) Doing the best you can do, trusting God for the results. And, 2) Doing everything for the glory of God. If you do these two things, **you are a winner**, no matter what the score says!

Take Away – Be a winner for Christ and do all for His glory.

What do you have to change in your heart or your attitude to be a winner in God's eyes? Who can you share this with who will keep you accountable?

(Coaches – You may add your own example or use an object lesson.)

The Dangers of Idolatry in the Sports World

Matthew 6:33 - "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things will be added to you..."

Exodus 20:1 - "I am the Lord your God...you shall have no other gods before me."

Question: Have you ever put something more important than God in your heart? Has a sport ever become more important than God?

Explanation: The Bible says that you should have no other god before God and that you should not bow down to any idols. Now, most of us when we hear that verse, we think, "Well no, I don't have any idols. I don't have any other gods." But the reality is, sometimes we make other things more important than God...especially sports! What is an idol? An idol is "whatever your heart clings to and relies upon for power, control, prestige, approval, dependence, and achievement – apart from God."¹ It is anything that takes the place of God in our heart. God says we're supposed to worship only Him. There is nothing else that we should set our hearts on that becomes more important than God.

Illustration: If a man went to his wife and said to her, "Honey, you're the most important girl to me. I love you so much." I'm sure that she would be very happy. But then, in the very next breath, he said, "But Lisa is number two and Sarah is number three, and so-and-so is number four." I don't think his wife would be happy at all. In fact, his wife doesn't want to be the most important girl to him. His wife wants to be the only girl to him! That is the same way with God. He does not want to be first on a list of importance. He wants to be ONLY in our heart. He wants us to love him, be devoted to him, and worship him only!

There once was a college football player that was a Christian, but his football games were VERY VERY important to him. He would look at his schedule to see who his opponents were that

season. He noticed that one of the games was against Baylor University, a Christian University. He realized that Baylor would have a lot of Christians on the team and that God might be tempted to give Baylor the win. He also saw that the player lining up against him on the offensive line was a 6-foot 5-inch 300-pound player studying to be a preacher. So, he decided that he was going to go to church every week and never miss a day of Bible reading and devotionals. He mistakenly thought that in this way, God would be on his side during the game. But on the very first play of the game, when he was just about to sack the quarterback, this "preacher" shoved him back so hard that his head hit the ground, and his mouth and teeth scooped up a wad of dirt. In the meantime, the quarterback threw the ball for a touchdown. As he got himself up off the ground, he turned to the "preacher" football player and said, "I can't believe you stuffed my head into the ground, and you're supposed to be a preacher boy!" The Baylor preacher boy looked at him and replied, "The Bible says that the meek shall inherit the earth. And you just inherited a mouth full of it."

This story illustrates the fact that sometimes we make idols in our heart. This football player had made football an idol. He was trying to use God to win a game. Not because he loved God but because he loved the game of football. God tells us that we should love Him above everything else. Jesus said you should "love the Lord of God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the greatest commandment." (Matthew 22:37-38)

Take Away: Have you ever let something become more important to you than God? What is something you can do to remind you to keep God first? Is there a prayer that you could pray before a game? Is there a verse you could read? You could write it on a piece of tape to put on your jersey or on your wrist. Who can you share this decision with that will help keep you accountable to keep God first?

*Adapted from *Athletes in Action*, Audience of One Bible study

Pleasing God in Life & Sport

2 Corinthians 5:9 - "We make it our aim to please him."

Hebrews 11:5 - "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him."

Question: Have you ever wondered if your life was pleasing to God? To your parents? To your friends? Maybe it is something you never thought about.

Explanation: We don't know if Enoch was an athlete, but we do know that he is only one of two men in the Bible that went straight to heaven without dying. Before Enoch was taken up to heaven, the Bible says that he was a man that pleased God.

Quote: "If you please God, it doesn't matter who you don't please. But if you don't please God, it doesn't matter who you do please!"

Illustration: C.J. Stroud, quarterback for the Houston Texans after winning an NFL game said, "Of course I want to win, but more important than that is recognizing that God gives us the privilege to wake up every day to walk and talk, to run and play football. I thank God for His grace and His mercy and for laying his life down on a cross for us." C.J. Stroud is seeking to please God, even amidst the fame of the NFL.

Jason Bates, field goal kicker for the Patriot Lions after a game winning kick in the last seconds against the Houston Texans in 2024 said, "God put me in the NFL not to make field goals, but to spread the love of Jesus."

C.J. Stroud and Jason Bates are both seeking to please God in their life and in their sport.

Take Away: God wants you to please Him in how you live and how you play your sport. What is something in your life that you can change to please God? What is an action you can take that will please God? Who can you share this with that will keep you accountable?

(Coaches – You may add your own example or use an object lesson.)

Overcoming Fear in Sports & Life

Isaiah 41:10 - "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Question: Have you ever experienced fear in a sports game? In the days or hours before it began? How does fear prevent you from glorifying God in your sport?

Explanation: Fear is a problem for a lot of us. Fear of failure. Fear in disappointing others (coach, friends, parents). Fear can paralyze us emotionally and physically. In today's verse, God tells us not to fear because He is with us. Alone, maybe you can't do it. But you and God together, you can. He takes your hand.

Illustration: King David in the Bible was not afraid of what others thought of him. After a great victory over the Philistines (the enemies of Israel), David brought the Ark of the Covenant (which held the 10 commandments) to Jerusalem. He was so excited about worshipping God and what God had done for Israel that David was dancing in the streets, not caring what anyone else was thinking, besides God.

Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs said, "I am going to use the platform of football, win or lose, to bring glory to Him." (Feb. 2025)

Sydney McLaughlin, the world record holder in the 400 M Hurdles, says that she used to struggle with fear. She wanted to be perfect, but in this world, she knew that was not possible, so she was full of anxiety and fear. Competing against the world's best, she worried about if

she was ever good enough! She cried out and said, "God I need you!" God showed Sydney that Jesus is enough! She realized that in and of herself, she had nothing to offer God. But by the righteousness of Jesus covering her life, based upon her faith that her life is presentable to God. She started running for God's glory and He took her fear away.

Take Away: God says, "Fear not...I will strengthen you." You do not need to live in fear. What will you change in your mindset to help you live in trust and not fear? Who can you share this with that will keep you accountable?

(Coaches – You may add your own example or use an object lesson.)

Playing for God's Glory

*1 Corinthians 10:31 – “So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do it all for the glory of God.**”*

Question: What does it mean to do all for the glory of God? Does it mean we should be any less competitive? What is the opposite of playing for God's glory?

Explanation: Have you ever seen a football player score a touchdown and then point to himself or to his name on the back of his jersey? He is basically saying, “Look at me! I am great! Give ME your applause.” In today's Bible verse, Paul tells us to **do all for the glory of God**. What Paul is saying is that our heart's desire should be to perform for God and for His honor, not to bring honor to ourselves. He is really talking about our motivation behind what we do.

Illustration: The greatest playoff victory in NFL history was carried out by backup quarterback Frank Reich of the Buffalo Bills in 1993. His Bills were losing 34-3 at halftime. Frank Reich led the Bills to a 38-37 victory. At the post-game press conference, Frank was asked about being the quarterback to such a great comeback. Frank replied by quoting the words of a song, “In Christ alone will I glory, though I could pride myself in battles won. For I have been blessed beyond measure. And by His strength alone, I overcome. In every victory, let it be said of me, that my source of hope and my source of strength is Christ alone.” Frank is a great picture of giving glory to God. **(Coaches, you may add a personal story here, in lieu of or in addition to this example, that illustrates the point).**

Paul says to “**do all to the glory of God.**” This means seeking to honor God in giving my best in effort and

attitude. Having an attitude of Christ being magnified instead of having everyone's eyes on self.

Take Away: How can you glorify God in your sport? What is something tangible that you can do or say to bring glory to God? Who can you share this with who will help keep you accountable?