

The Point

Athletics is all about the competition, right? Every athlete prepares for that moment the referee blows the whistle, the crowd is in anticipation, and the game or match begins. This is the very moment that results matter, that long hours of training are put to the test, that the battle begins. Some would say competition is the point of sports, but if there were no competition would you still play? Think about it. The resulting question that may come to mind is what is the point of playing if it doesn't really matter? Without competition there would be no test of skill, decision-making under pressure, teamwork, endurance, and perseverance. But more than those things have you ever thought about the reason why you do what you do as an athlete, team physician, athletic trainer or strength coach? Is it because you like sports? Is it because you want to reach the highest level possible? Is it because you can earn a living or fund a college career? Do you play to please others, to maintain a reputation, to be seen or talked about? What is the real reason you compete, the reason you play or work in sports?

God's word in Proverbs 16:4 (ESV) says, "The Lord has made everything for its purpose," There is no talent or ability He has uniquely designed you with that lacks purpose. God has created you with the ability and desire to play sports, help others get stronger or stay healthy while they play. What will you do with that? As you seek to honor God, are you willing to set aside selfishness in order to play in such a way that reveals the true character of God? As Peter wrote in I Peter 4:2 (ESV) "So as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God"

At a recent sporting event I saw a shirt that had one large arrow pointing side to side and underneath it was written "I play for her". By wearing this shirt the team was stating, I'm not just here for myself, I play for more than myself, I play for the person standing next to me that God loves dearly. That girl's team was making a point to say that their purpose for playing was more than just winning or personal success. Rather, their playing was about what God has done in their life, and about reflecting that idea to others around them. It is about the TEAM, not just the individual. When we compete to represent who God is, that always leads to a real win.

Application: My natural tendency as an athlete is to use my abilities for selfish gain. Many times in the past I have sought to win no matter what it took or who stood in my way. Though I was dedicated, intense, persevering, I lacked discipline, self-control, and respect for God and others. In the end I won the competition, but lost my character and dishonored God in order to do it. As an athletic trainer and strength coach I will face similar issues in how I carry out my career. What is better, to win for God and lose a game or to win a game and lose for God? **Does misrepresenting God bother me as much as losing does?**

Now it's your turn. Take time to pray and seek God's forgiveness for making sports about you. Ask Him to change you and reveal to you how to play in a way that honors Him. Seek one scripture that you can meditate on which can become a reminder of why you are an athlete, physician, athletic trainer or strength coach and why you play or work in sports.

Prayer: Father, forgive me for my selfish ways and for how I have not put you in the center of my life, especially in the area of athletics. I pray you give me a heart willing to serve you first. May I sacrifice my own desires to honor You Lord and may you be glorified by that sacrifice. No matter what the final outcome of the practice or competition, may I reflect integrity, sportsmanship, discipline, self-control, and ultimately reflect character. Thank you Lord for the gift of sport and how you have begun to change my life, my attitude, and my heart through it. Amen.

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