TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Don Taylor / Opening Prayer by: Ken Coleman
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#144 O, Worship the King
#731 Take Time to Be Holy

Scripture Reading by: Parker Balch
#904 Have You Seen Jesus, My Lord?
383 Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross

Communion Devotional by: Bobby Rader
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#851 I'll Fly Away
Sermon: Living in Fellowship
Philippians 4:21-23

#948 I Am Resolved
#867 To Canaan's Land I'm On My Way
Closing Prayer by: Zach Arthur

Our Small Groups meet tonight.
Robert Ward's small group will meet
at the building at 5:00 p.m.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

May 26, 2024

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

How to Know if Your Love of Sports Has Become Idolatry

I printed this article by Jack Wilkie in our bulletin a few years ago. He republished it this week, and I read it again, forgetting at first that I had read it before until I realized it was somewhat familiar. But it had caught my attention in the first place because it was and is so timely. For that reason, I thought I would share it with you again. It has been slightly reformatted for this space. BP

For most of my life it's been rare to meet someone who is a bigger sports fan than me. As a kid, I played what must have been thousands of hours of hockey and joined in basketball, football, and baseball games every chance I got. Once I outgrew the competing phase of my life, the consuming phase took up an even bigger portion of my time. I'm one of those guys who could recount decades of Super Bowl, World Series, NBA Finals, and Stanley Cup Finals champions, could name all the stadiums and coaches and even mascots, could recite stats from years ago in numerous sports, etc. Between getting married and the birth of our four children, the time required to be that invested has rapidly faded. But, I'm still a general sports fan and a die hard follower of a couple of teams.

I give all that context to say two things: 1) I don't think it's wrong at all for Christians to enjoy sports, and 2) I'm acutely aware of what it looks like to make an idol out of sports. I want to offer to fellow Christian sports fans a few words of caution about three areas of your life that can be consumed by the idolatry of sports.

1. Your Time. Of course, there's the one I'm sure you're expecting an article like this to cover— missing worship for sports. And that expectation is valid, because it's a needed critique. Churches all over America see membership drop as certain youth sports seasons start up. Some members will skip any time their team has a big game that overlaps with worship. I will always be grateful that my parents took a firm stand on this.

"But my kid is really good! They could get a scholarship or go pro!" First of all, *maybe*. Maybe. The odds are incredibly long. But secondly, that's not the point at all, really. There is no number of Super Bowl rings at which one can say, "Yeah, that was worth more than a devout walk with God." As Jesus asked, *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul*? And while their odds to get to the big show are pretty small, there's a 100% chance they will stand before God at the judgment. Choose wisely how you prepare them for the future.

"But it's only three or four Sundays a year!" It might be a small percentage of the Sundays. But it's 100% of the Sundays in which there's a conflict. If every time God goes up against sports He loses out, your kids will get the message. What a low view of God it would take to think we can withhold what we owe Him for some silly games.

However, it's not just about Sunday attendance. Plenty of Christians will tell you they struggle to find time for Bible study and prayer while also being able to give a recap of every big play from their team's three hour bowl game and reciting the lineups to their 4 fantasy football teams. God has blessed us with hobbies and leisure activities, and the time to enjoy them, but they need to be kept in their right and natural place. Only after the higher obligations to God, family, and work have been met can we find the time to enjoy hobbies properly.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Jo Ella McKewen is in Clear Sky Rehab in Baytown.

David Warren is in Kingwood Hospital in ICU with pneumonia and pancreatitis.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Wayne Noonkester, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Cathy Stifflemire, Ken Coleman, Dr. Hugo Thomas

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis, Debbie Merritt

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister no meeting this week.

We are working a new Friends and Family directory. A copy of the old one has been placed on the bulletin board. Please check your name, address, phone number and email to make sure it is correct.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, June 4th 16th at 8:00 a.m.

Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to Walden David and his family on the passing of his father, Wilson David. He passed away last Saturday and his funeral was yesterday.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Zach Arthur	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

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2. Your Mental Energy. This one largely overflows from the last – where we put our time is generally where we're going to put our focus.

- If you're at worship while the game's on but can't resist the pull to check your phone to see the score, it might be time to reconsider some things.
- If there's a family event—a loved one's birthday, a child's sporting event or extracurricular activity, an anniversary, or the like—and you spend the whole time trying to find a way to watch the game, it might be time to reconsider some things.
- If you can speak at length about all the sports analysis you've taken in through talk shows and podcasts all week but can't carry on a 2 minute conversation about the contents of that week's sermon, it may be time to reconsider some things.

These kinds of tests reveal the bandwidth we're dedicating to our different interests. It's in these manifestations that we can see what we really care about. If I spend more time thinking about and talking about my teams than I do my relationships with God, my wife, and my kids, the priorities are out of line. *No other gods before me* (**Exod 20:3**) can include the hobbies we love, too. And everybody around me will see it. My wife and kids will know if sports matter to me more than they do, or if sports are a bigger priority in our home than God. If I take a huge interest in their athletics but don't have much involvement when it comes to their spiritual lives, it will send a message loud and clear. The kind of focus and care we put into the things we do speaks volumes about what those things mean to us.

3. Your Emotions. The year was 1998 and my beloved Denver Broncos looked poised to put up the first 16-0 season in NFL history. Then, out of nowhere, the lowly New York Giants pulled off the upset and brought the winning streak to an end. 9 year old me was devastated. Tears began to well up in my eyes, at which point my mom offered a needed correction: "This isn't worth crying over. It's just a game."

Maybe I can be given a pass for being so young at the time, but unfortunately the passion we have for sports can still come out even as adults. Every year videos go viral of somebody throwing their remote through the television in response to their team losing a big game. While I'd venture to guess most Christian men don't take it that far, it's still considered fairly socially acceptable to spend the rest of the day in a bad mood when your team loses.

Frankly, that is flat wrong. If a team full of men you don't even know lose a game and it leads you to be short-tempered or sullen with your wife and kids, it's a clear sign sports mean too much to you. If some friendly trash talk from a buddy leads you to snap back in anger, it should put some things in perspective.

It's ok to care about the results, and caring means we're going to end up disappointed pretty consistently. I watched those same Denver Broncos lose a Super Bowl by 5 touchdowns a few years ago, so believe me, I know. But there's no asterisk in the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) for "unless your team just suffered a painful defeat."

Sadly, sports are one of the primary gods of choice in the world today. If you follow European soccer at all, you see just how easy it is for mankind to turn sports into a full-blown religion. Church attendance is at an all-time low there, but every Saturday and Sunday the entire nation gets dressed in their "worship" garments, migrates to their "cathedral," and spend two hours together belting out songs, chanting, and engaging in other time-honored rituals. They're going to church and they don't even realize it. It should serve as a cautionary tale for us, and a reminder that we are always worshiping someone or something. If it's not God, it will be something like sports.

So, we must exercise caution and intentionality. Sports are one of many of life's pleasures God has blessed us with, and, kept in moderation, we can find great joy and camaraderie in them. Let's just be sure to keep those guardrails up to keep from bowing before them and expecting the kind of fulfillment that can only be found in our walk with God.