

# Words of Truth

## **Sports Are More Important Than “Religion”**

*By: Brian A. Yeager*

Katrina and I were watching ESPN one morning in December while eating our breakfast together. At that time, the commentators were discussing how many basketball games were going to be played on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. As we all know, the biblically ignorant view the 25<sup>th</sup> of December as a special, religious day. One of the commentators (a former college basketball player) said something like this, “sadly, sports have become more important than religion.” Truly, her statement was made with a misunderstanding about God. Additionally, her statement was made with a misunderstanding that “Christmas” is a holy day. However, her point is true.

On the first day of the week the Lord desires us to remember the death of His only begotten Son (Acts 20:7 and I Corinthians 11:23-26). However, many fill sports arenas for basketball, football, baseball, and other sports to be played. We all know this is expected of worldly people who do not know God (I John 2:15-17). Thus, the comment on ESPN is likely not too surprising to any of us. Yet, the comment that was made on ESPN caused me to reflect on something that was surprising to me. A time when so-called “Christians” were much more interested in sports than in worshipping God.

### **Not All Steelers Fans, But These Steelers Fans Loved Sports More Than God**

In the fall of 2003 I was asked to come and preach a “Gospel Meeting” among the church of Christ in Georgetown, PA (The Tomlinson Run church of Christ). The preacher there (Paul Blake), who now also holds the title of an “elder”, cautioned me that I better not preach too long on Sunday morning. Among many of his reasons was that there were many Pittsburgh Steelers fans in the congregation who hated to miss kickoff. I was amazed at this statement and I privately and publically dealt with the error. That aside, the point was there. People who professed to love the Lord put him second to their favorite football team. I fully understand that not all football fans put the sport before the Lord, but some at the Tomlinson Run church of Christ were vocal about their love for their team above their love to worship. This is not what God wants!

### **God Wants People Who Love Him Above All Else**

*“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you... He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me... Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again... But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the*

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*knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Matthew 6:33, Matthew 10:37, Matthew 22:37, II Corinthians 5:14-15, and Philippians 3:7-8).*

To serve the Lord, God’s people have to be willing to give up a lot of things that are not necessarily sinful. To follow the Lord some have to give up their wealth (Matthew 19:16-22). To be a disciple of the Lord some have had to give up their jobs (Luke 5:1-11). Some have been asked to give up the comforts of a home (Luke 9:57-58). Some have been asked to skip burying a love one (Luke 9:59-60). Some have to forsake time with family (Luke 9:61-62). Some have given up the liberty of having a family (I Corinthians 7:6-9; 9:5). Some have given up their lives to be followers of Christ (Acts 12:2 and Revelation 2:13). To be a follower of the Lord you have to be willing to forsake everything (Luke 14:33). In light of all of that, how can anyone claim to love the Lord while choosing a football game over time to worship?

### **You Cannot Claim Fear The Lord While Rushing Away From Him To Sporting Events**

The word of God says: *“O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth... But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth... But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”* (Psalms 96:9, John 4:23-24, and I Peter 2:9). Which of these verses said we are to worship God in the express lane on the way to the ballgame? Which of these verses said that God seeks people to worship Him as long as it does not interfere with their game day plans (cf. Luke 10:38-42)?

When the Scriptures speak of people who are true worshippers of God we find people who fear God and take him seriously. The inspired Psalmist said: *“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him”* (Psalms 89:7). The Hebrew writer, being inspired of God, stated this: *“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire”* (Hebrews 12:28-29). How can someone say they love, revere, and fear God if they have a rush through mentality when it comes to worshipping Him? Congregations of God’s people are supposed to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21). How can glory be offered to the Lord when congregations are cutting services so that people can watch or attend a sporting event?

### **Conclusion**

Entertainment has its place in this world. That place is below God (Mark 12:30 and Colossians 3:1-4), brethren (John 13:34-35, John 15:12-13, Romans 12:4-5, Romans 12:9-10, I Corinthians 12:14-27), our immediate families (Ephesians 5:22-6:4), our jobs (I Timothy 5:8 and II Thessalonians 3:10), etc. If people would show the same devotion to God as they do their favorite sports teams a lot of things would be different. People would never miss a service. They would read up daily on the spiritual news. They would memorize Scriptures like they do statistics. They would devote days, not just hours, to God. When people miss their favorite sporting events they record the games, read about what happened, etc. Just think, if people acted that way when they are ill and cannot assemble to worship God, then we’d have people who show they really hate to miss times to worship the Lord. The question for all of us is: do you love sports (or anything else) more than the Lord?