

Digging Deeper: Redeeming Sports

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THE MAIN THEME

Sports are not the problem—the human heart is. God created sports as a good gift that can cultivate discipline, community, joy, and human flourishing. But because of sin, sports can also become a place of pride, unhealthy identity, exploitation, and misplaced priorities. God invites His people to redeem sports by placing Christ at the center and using athletics as a platform to glorify God, make disciples, serve others, and help people flourish. When Jesus becomes our ultimate goal, sports become more than competition—they become missions.

VERSE OF THE WEEK

1 Corinthians 10:31

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

WHAT NOT TO MISS

1. The Issue Isn't Sports—It's the Heart

Sports themselves are not sinful. The deeper issue is how our hearts approach competition, success, identity, and achievement.

2. Sports Can Lead to Human Flourishing

When approached God's way, sports build character, health, relationships, purpose, and joy. When distorted, they can produce burnout, unhealthy identity, toxic environments, and misplaced priorities.

3. A Biblical Framework Changes Everything

Followers of Jesus should approach sports through a biblical worldview centered on Christ, shaped by God's mission, guided by biblical ethics, and producing spiritual maturity.

4. Mission Is Greater Than Competition

The purpose of sports extends beyond winning. God can use athletics to build relationships, develop people, and create opportunities to share the gospel.

5. James Naismith Modeled Redeeming Sports

The inventor of basketball believed sports should develop people, not simply entertain crowds or make money. His vision was to point people toward Christ through athletics.

6. Winning with Character Matters More Than Winning the Game

God cares about humility, integrity, sportsmanship, and servant leadership more than trophies or recognition. Winning graciously and losing graciously both reflect Christ.

7. Every Christian Can Help Redeem Sports

Whether you're an athlete, parent, coach, official, volunteer, or fan, God can use you to bring His kingdom into the world of sports and help others flourish.

LIFE APPLICATION

Ask yourself this week:

Am I using sports to glorify God—or am I asking sports to give me what only God can provide?

God calls us to keep Christ at the center of every part of life. When our identity is rooted in Him, sports become a tool for worship, discipleship, service, and mission instead of an idol.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

MONDAY — A Heart Check

Read: Proverbs 4:23

Reflect: Our hearts shape everything we do—including sports.

Pray: "Lord, guard my heart and keep You at the center."

TUESDAY — Playing for God's Glory

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:31

Reflect: Every game, practice, and competition can become an act of worship.

Pray: "Help me honor You in everything I do."

WEDNESDAY — Building Character

Read: Romans 5:3–5

Reflect: Challenges develop perseverance and godly character.

Pray: "Use every victory and defeat to shape me."

THURSDAY — Winning People, Not Just Games

Read: Matthew 5:16

Reflect: Our greatest influence comes from reflecting Christ.

Pray: "Use my life to point others to You."

FRIDAY — Redeeming Sports

Read: Colossians 3:17

Reflect: Everything we do can become an opportunity to glorify God.

Pray: "Help me live on mission wherever You place me."

FACILITATOR TIPS

- Ask: *"How have you seen sports bring out both the best and the worst in people?"*
 - Discuss why identity often becomes attached to performance.
 - Highlight James Naismith's vision of developing people over simply producing winners.
 - Encourage practical ways to redeem sports in everyday life.
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THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Choose one way to redeem sports this week:

- Encourage an athlete or teammate
- Thank a coach, referee, or volunteer
- Prioritize character over winning
- Pray before participating in sports
- Use a sports conversation to encourage someone spiritually

Then follow through.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the sermon says the issue isn't sports but the heart?
2. How can sports contribute to human flourishing?
3. What are some unhealthy ways people find identity in sports?
4. What can we learn from James Naismith's vision for basketball?
5. How can Christians redeem sports in today's culture?
6. Why is character more important than trophies?
7. How can sports become a platform for sharing the gospel?
8. What practical step will you take this week to glorify God through sports?

PRAYER POINTS

CONNECT

Thank God for the gift of sports and the opportunities they create.

CARE

Pray for athletes, coaches, parents, officials, and sports ministries.

CULTIVATE

Ask God to grow humility, integrity, and Christ-centered identity.

COMMISSION

Pray that God would use sports to bring people to Christ and help them flourish.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank You for the gift of sports and the opportunities they provide to grow, connect, and influence others. Guard our hearts from making sports our identity or our idol. Help us pursue excellence with humility, compete with integrity, and love people more than winning. May every practice, game, conversation, and relationship become an opportunity to glorify You and advance Your kingdom. Use our lives to help redeem sports for Your glory and for the good of others. Amen.