

Change Your Win - Inside Out: Part IV

From the little leagues to the professional ranks, success in sports is almost exclusively defined by wins and losses. Perhaps legendary Green Bay Packers coach Vince Lombardi summed it up best when he said, “Winning isn’t everything. It’s the only thing.” In some respects, you could make a strong case for that belief. Winning often opens the doors to life-changing opportunity. On the other hand, the all-or-nothing attitude that is prevalent in today’s sports community has the potential to bring undeserved disappointment to those on the outside looking in.

Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.—Romans 12:21

Ready

- What is your definition of “winning”? How important is it for you to win?
- Describe a time when you had a big win. How long were you able to enjoy it? How much of a letdown was it the next time you failed to win or didn’t live up to your previous success?*
- How do you feel about Vince Lombardi’s quote about winning? Do you think our society has a healthy attitude about what defines success and what defines failure? Explain.

Set

Facing Your Giants

This week, you have experienced significant change in your life. You have grown as an athlete and more importantly you have come to a deeper understanding of who you are in Christ. But back home, all of your challenges are waiting for you to return. You might equate these difficult situations to Goliath, the Philistine giant made famous in 1 Samuel 17. In this story, a young shepherd and future king named David fought and killed the intimidating enemy when all of the Israelite soldiers were too afraid to do it themselves.

When David made preparations to fight Goliath, he gathered five stones to use with his single piece of weaponry—a slingshot. On a piece of paper, draw five stones then mark each to identify five “giants” that are waiting for you back home. (*Examples: difficult situations you are facing, temptations you have struggled to overcome, or distractions that keep you from fulfilling your God-given potential.*)

- Share some of your “giants” with the rest of the group. What makes these giants so formidable and difficult to face? How would killing these giants change your life? What inspiration can you take from the story of David and Goliath in relation to your personal challenges?

The story of David is about a real-life physical wartime battle. But most of our struggles are

not physical but rather emotional, mental, and spiritual; and the walls we must break down and the giants we must stare down are not even visible to the human eye.

For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.
—Ephesians 6:12

- How difficult is it to prepare for an athletic contest when you don't know anything about your opponent? Explain. How would you define "the world powers of this darkness" and "spiritual forces of evil in the heavens"? What are some examples of some battles that you or someone you know has faced involving an enemy that can't be seen?*

As we understand the nature of our enemy and the spiritual aspects of our daily challenges, we can then begin to redefine what it really means to be victorious. We can then comprehend what "the big win" actually looks like.

- Go back and read Romans 12:21. How does this Scripture portray the winning life? Go back and look over your answers to the very first question. How do they compare to the win described in Romans 12:21? What are some ways that you can "conquer evil with good"? What rewards do you think might follow when you accomplish that goal?

Go

Change Your Win

In Romans 12:21, we're reminded that it's not just about winning the all-important battle against evil. The first part of that Scripture tells us, "Do not be conquered by evil." In other words, it's a proactive fight. Avoiding the battle or playing for a tie will result in failure. Just like the seemingly impossible task of adhering to God's "do's and don'ts" found in Romans 12:9-20, overcoming evil is an equally difficult challenge.

Be sober! Be on the alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.—1 Peter 5:8

Just like a good coach gives his players equipment and a game plan conducive to winning, God never asks us to do something without providing us the resources and tools we need to succeed.

- What piece of advice does the passage in 1 Peter 5:8 give us as part of God's playbook for victory? How important is it to understand the Devil's tactics in this spiritual war?

⁷ Therefore, submit to God. But resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, doubleminded people!—James 4:7-8

- How key to winning is a good relationship with your coach? Explain. In the spiritual realm, how does submitting to God and drawing closer to Him help in this battle against the enemy of your soul?

You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.—1 John 4:4

In order to be a successful follower of Christ—someone who conquers evil with good—it takes

something much more powerful than the human will.

- In light of that recognition of our weakness, read 1 John 4:4 aloud and discuss what the passage means to you.

²⁴ Do you not know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵ Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one.

—1 Corinthians 9:24-25

- What is the biggest competition or award you have ever won? How often do you think about your accomplishment? How important do you think it will be 10 years from now?*
- Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-25. What does a “perishable crown” look like to you? What about an “imperishable” crown?
- How does the win promised to those who follow Christ compare to the wins that we earn through athletic competition and other successes in life?

Take-Away

This week, you’ve been taught the importance of changing your game; changing your approach to this thing called life. The first step was altering the purpose behind your sacrifice, which then places a fresh aim into clear focus. As you grow closer to God, you will inherently begin changing your “do’s” and it becomes more natural to adhere to those “don’ts” that He has given for your protection and personal fulfillment. All of these transformational “inside-out” changes ultimately help all of us have a better understanding of what the ultimate win looks like. It’s that “imperishable” crown we will receive and enjoy in heaven and an abundant life in Christ that we can enjoy right here on Earth.

Write a prayer asking God to help you change your win in the battle against evil.

Bible Reference:

1 John 4



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8701 Leeds Road | Kansas City, MO 64129 | 800.289.0909
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