

## **Prayer and Competition**

When a Christian athlete prays before competition he is making a powerful expression of Biblical Theology. Often the media will sensationalize the act of prayer, especially when high profile athletes like Tim Tebow are involved, but their hunt for ratings do little to interfere with the individual connection to God that is offered by prayer. Prayer, whether individual or group, is communication with the Almighty. Communication is both contributing and listening to each other. If we keep our focus on this dialogue, and remember to whom we are speaking, no amount of chatter or noise will interfere.

Along with remembering that we are in the presence of the Lord of Creation when we pray, we must also be aware of what we are saying or asking. We are not to be asking for the humiliation and defeat of our opponents, thus asking God to take sides and root for one competitor over another. We are to ask to perform at our best in the arena or on the field of play. To perform, or live, at our best is the essence of avoiding what the Bible views as "sin".

There are two main words for "sin", *het* in Hebrew, and *hamartia* in Greek, and they both mean exactly the same thing; to miss a mark or not attain a goal. Sin means inaction, not living up to one's potential. Setting aside the theological connotations which are entailed in these words, for a competitive athlete "sin" means not trying one's best on a given day. Sin does not equate to losing. Sin equates to not using your gifts and talents to their fullest capacity. Jesus said, "to those much has been given, much will be expected" (Luke 12:48). Competitive athletes have been given very special gifts and sin occurs when these gifts are not used properly.

Therefore, when a Christian athlete prays before a competition he/she is praying to act up to their fullest potential. In this way we perform an act of worship, showcasing the gifts which God has given us. It is not immodest to perform in the arena and display the talents which derive from God's grace. Jesus also instructed to not put our light under a bushel, but let men see the goodness of the Father (Matthew 5:14-16). Competitors can be embodiments of God's grace, let us pray that we display this grace in the best possible way.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What key terms or images can you use to address God and put yourself in the right mindset before a competition? Powerful images and terms? Peaceful images and terms?
2. How can we include our opponents in prayer before a competition? Pray for their health? No Injuries? A challenging but fair competition?
3. How can we prepare ourselves before a competition to live to the expectations God has for us and display his gifts properly? Review our gifts? Look to our coaching? Let the Holy Spirit guide us?



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