

## **More Than a Pick-Up Game**

### **Ready:**

“And that about wraps it up. God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no afternoon athletic contest that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels.”  
-Ephesians 6:10-12 (The Message)

### **Set**

For some reason, every time I play a pick-up game of soccer, I never play as hard as I would in an actual competition. A friend will make a pass around me, and I'll just let him go by. I may attempt a move, but when I'm unsuccessful I usually just slow up and don't get back to defend. Shin guards usually aren't part of my attire, and sometimes I dig up a pair of old, torn up cleats so I don't have to “ruin my best.” After all, it's just pick-up, not a real game.

Sometimes that is how we treat our faith. It's just something else to do to pass the time. We don't need to give it our all or bring out our best equipment because we think that it doesn't count—that it'll matter more later. After writing the passage above, Paul continued on by telling the church in Ephesus about how they need to “put on the full armor of God,” so that when the day of evil came, they would be able to stand their ground (Ephesians 6:13, NIV).

When we don't prepare ourselves spiritually in the day-to-day or bring our best to the table, it can be difficult for us to stand our ground against sin. What we don't realize is that our daily walk with Christ is the championship match that lasts a lifetime. Would you compete without shin guards, knee pads or a helmet in your championship game? Would you go into your major business presentation wearing flip-flops and a t-shirt? Ephesians 6 tells us to arm ourselves with truth, righteousness, peace, faith and salvation. In the spiritual warfare we face daily, it is these things that help protect us from evil. They are more than words; they are our defenses at all times. The top-of-the-line equipment for our championship match.

What does this mean? It could mean that you need to stay away from gossip or deceitful situations and focus on truth. Maybe you need to look inward and see if your life is pleasing to God. You might need to find peace in knowing that He is in control of your finances. It could just be a matter of focusing on what is unseen instead of what is seen (“...for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” – 2 Corinthians 4:18). Perhaps, we need to accept the fact that our salvation is secure in Jesus Christ and that a perfect sacrifice was made on our behalf to pay the debt for our sinfulness.

Bottom line: Our spiritual life is not a pick-up game; it's for keeps. Be sure to wear your best

equipment and bring you're A-game. All the time.

## Go

1. Do you ever find yourself playing life like a game that doesn't matter?
2. How can you daily surround yourself with truth, righteousness, peace, faith and salvation to prepare yourself spiritually?
3. What does it look like to play every day like a spiritual championship game?

## Workout

1 Corinthians 16:13  
2 Corinthians 6:4-10  
Ephesians 6:10-18  
Philippians 4:8



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