

The Blessing of Trophies

n/a

Ready:

"I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago."
-Psalm 77:11 (NIV)

Set

This week, Reggie Bush became the first Heisman Trophy winner to forfeit his trophy. Amid a world of controversy surrounding reports that he had taken money from sports marketers while at USC, Bush made a move that no one had ever done before by giving his trophy—which he won in 2005—back to the Heisman Trust.

This devotion isn't going to side one way or the other with Reggie Bush's actions. Instead, we're going to use the situation as an opportunity to evaluate the awards we've been given as athletes and coaches, and to, perhaps, think about them in ways we've never considered.

Sports are full of them. Every time we achieve something of significance in athletics, we are given a new medal, trophy or certificate to remind us of the achievement. Take a second and think about your own favorite award and what it means to you. For me, it would have to be the Boston Marathon jacket hanging in my closet. Every time I look at it, I am reminded of the incredible journey that God took me on through the training and the race itself.

The topic of earthly awards can be a tough one for us as Christians, but I want to challenge our thinking for a moment.

As Christians we have a tendency to think that we can't enjoy awards because they generate pride in our hearts. But what if they could serve a different purpose—one that takes us closer to the Lord instead?

Personally, I think earthly trophies can be tremendous blessings from the Lord...when they mean the right things to us. If our hearts are in line with His, these items can be beautiful reminders of how He worked in and through us in a season and brought us to a point of great spiritual victory. In my situation, God had done such a work in my heart and life through the marathon training that the jacket became a huge reminder of His faithfulness and strength.

On the flipside, of course, these possessions often become sources of pride, and that's why they have such a bad rap. We often look at them and believe that we are big shots because we were strong enough or fast enough on a certain day to win a medal. The awards can fuel false beliefs in our minds that our worth is based in what we achieve on earth when the truth is that we are loved by God regardless and that He doesn't care about the award itself. In fact,

we wouldn't have been able to move a single step on that day if His grace on our bodies and His strength inside us wouldn't have allowed us to. What God was truly after that day was our hearts. Win or lose, He would have loved us the same and wanted only to connect with us in the process.

As athletes and coaches, though, there's no way to avoid getting these prizes. So, what I've come to believe is that God gives them to us as a way of both blessing and challenging us. Each time we look at these items, we are faced with a choice to either thank Him for what He did or to thank ourselves for being awesome. One of those mindsets will take us deeper in our relationship with our Creator; the other will take us deeper into the lies of the enemy, who wants nothing more than to rob us of God's love and fill us with false identity.

Today, take a moment to look at your most prized sports possession. Maybe it's a ribbon you won in second grade. Maybe it's a medal you won at a track meet. Maybe it's a Heisman Trophy. Whatever it is, take a good long look at it, but do it through the filter of God's grace and faithfulness. Remember His work and what He did to get you to the point of being given an award. Confess any pride that you have over the achievement and, instead, offer thanks to the One who gave you the ability to compete at all. It's His award. Let it communicate His work in and through you by giving it back to Him in your heart and proclaiming His victory to others.

Go

1. What is your most prized sports award? What does it mean to you?
2. Is your heart full of pride when you look at it, or does it remind you of God's faithfulness?
3. Name three spiritual lessons you learned through the training or competition that led to the award.
4. What prize are you pursuing right now? Is that pursuit rooted in a desire for earthly fame, or an opportunity to connect with God and show His love to others?

Workout

Psalm 77:11-14
Isaiah 46:9
Matthew 6:19-21

Bible Reference:
Matthew 6



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