

Change Your Aim - Inside Out: Part II

If the world's elite athletes can be pegged with one common trait, it would likely be that each of them is driven by a heightened sense of purpose. It is purpose that establishes a secure target at which they can aim and focus all of their energy: The golfer takes aim at the hole. The sprinter takes aim at the finish line. The free throw shooter takes aim at the basket. The archer takes aim at the bulls-eye. The pitcher takes aim at the strike zone. These competitors must employ a steady hand that comes from confidence in their abilities and a keen understanding of their identity. Any variation of that confidence—leading to arrogance on one extreme or insecurity on the other extreme—can quickly blur their vision and greatly hinder their aim. But when we understand the truth found in Romans 12:4-5—that our gifts bring purpose and help us establish our aim—we can achieve more as athletes, students, and followers of Christ.

³ For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. ⁴ Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, ⁵ in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. ⁶ According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the standard of faith; ⁷ if service, in service; if teaching, in teaching; ⁸ if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness. —Romans 12:3-8

Ready

- What are some names commonly used to describe athletes who have an inflated ego? List some people who might fit those descriptions. Have you ever played with someone like that? How did it impact the team unity?*
- Has overconfidence ever hindered your ability to keep a steady aim on your goals? Explain. Have you ever suffered from a lack of confidence in your ability? How did that affect your performance?

Set

The Original Highlight Reel

In Judges 13-16, we read about one of the greatest athletic specimens in world history. Samson is believed to be the strongest man recorded in the Bible. God blessed him with seemingly superhuman strength for the purpose of destroying Israel's enemies which he routinely did as if it were a sport. The only catch was that Samson could never cut his hair or his strength would be taken away. Eventually, Samson's success got to his head. His weakness toward women led to an encounter with Delilah (a spy for the opposing Philistine army) who tricked Samson into giving up the source of his strength, which led to the mighty warrior's downfall.

- Go back and read Romans 12:3. How could the advice in this passage have helped Samson avoid the pitfalls of notoriety and success? What do you think might be some dangers of having an over-inflated ego? In what ways can you apply the wisdom of Romans 12:3 to your athletic career? to your life in general?

If Samson had lived in the modern era of mass media, no doubt he would have been a huge hit on TV, in print, and throughout the Internet. Getting a chance to perform or compete in front of a massive national audience is one of the most exciting aspects of being an elite athlete.

- Pretend for a moment that, rather than playing your sport, your life and who you are is being portrayed on TV. Draw four TV screens labeled "My View," "My Family's View," "My friend's View," and "God's View", Then write down some words that describe how various people would view you.

On the flip side of arrogance is insecurity. When people fail to reach their goals or, even worse, fail to strive for their goals, the lack of self-confidence is often the culprit. However, the Word of God is full of encouraging promises for those who struggle with this internal conflict.

*I will praise You,
because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made.
Your works are wonderful,
and I know this very well.—Psalm 139:14*

- Have you ever dealt with a lack of confidence in your athletic ability? What about in other areas of your life? Go back to what you wrote in the TV illustration labeled "God's View." Does the passage in Psalm 139 change or confirm your beliefs about how God sees you? How does it change the way you see yourself?

Living on Purpose

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."—Jeremiah 29:11

- Earlier we discussed how purpose brings focus to an athlete, which in turn creates a target or goal at which that athlete can aim. What is your purpose as a competitor in sports? What are some of your goals? How does knowing your purpose help you stay focused on those goals?*

- Beyond sports, what do you think is your purpose as an individual? What personal goals come along with that purpose or calling? Read Jeremiah 29:11 aloud. How does this Scripture encourage you? What do you think “a future and a hope” might look like in your life?

¹⁰ Based on the gift they have received, everyone should use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, his speech should be like the oracles of God; if anyone serves, his service should be from the strength God provides, so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.—1 Peter 4:10-11

- This passage is very straightforward in explaining the universal purpose behind every one of God’s gifts to man—to serve others. What are some ways you can use your gifts to fulfill that calling? According to 1 Peter 4:11, what other divine purpose does serving others accomplish? Can you think of any other spiritual by-products that adhering to this principle might yield?

Another aspect of God’s purpose for your life is to be a part of His team—oftentimes referred to as the church or the body of Christ.

- Go back and read Romans 12:4-5. In what ways would you compare the human body to your team? What are some specific challenges that come about when parts of this “body” aren’t functioning properly? What are some great things you’ve seen accomplished when your team worked together as one unit with a common purpose?

Change Your Aim

No athlete will ever be successful without setting clear and attainable goals. The runner who doesn’t know where the finish line is will never reach it. The archer who can’t tell the difference between the bulls-eye and the outer edges of the target will never hit it. The same concept is true for those who believe in Jesus. That’s why it’s so important for us as Christians to have a solid understanding of our God-given gifts.

- Go back and read Romans 12:6-8. List the gifts identified in these verses. Identify the spiritual calling that matches up with your talents and gifts. Keep in mind, there might be more than one. Now, write some specific ways you can fulfill those callings by using your natural abilities. (*Examples: creative arts, public speaking, encouragement, organization, leadership, and so on*)
- How easy or difficult was it to identify your spiritual calling(s)? Once you identified that purpose, was it easy or difficult to come up with specific ways you could use your gifts?*

Take-Away

God has a specific plan and purpose for your life. He wants to help you refocus your energy and aim toward targets that will fulfill the great promise He has instilled inside of you. Once you change your aim—setting goals that please God and fit within the confines of Kingdom-building teamwork—your identity (or who you are) as an athlete and as a follower of Christ will become clearer every day.

Write out a prayer to God asking Him to change your aim and give you a better understanding of the purpose He has for your life.

Before the Next Meeting

Review your responses to activity 10. Take a closer look at those actions that might get you closer to the bulls-eye of God's plan for your life. Make an honest assessment about what things are hindering you from fulfilling that destiny and ask God to remove anything that is obstructing or distorting your view.

Bible Reference:

1 Peter 4



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