

Change Your Do - Inside Out: Part III

Every sport has them—those pesky but necessary “do’s and don’ts” otherwise known as rules of the game and rules of the team. No matter how much you sacrifice and how focused you are in aiming at the goal, your competitive dreams are put at risk the moment you do something that contradicts the rules. There are no shortcuts to success as an athlete or in life. Sooner or later, it will catch up with you.

⁹ Love must be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not lack diligence; be fervent in spirit; serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. ¹³ Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be in agreement with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Try to do what is honorable in everyone’s eyes. ¹⁸ If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay, says the Lord. ²⁰ But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.

—Romans 12:9-20

Ready

- In your sport, what are some of the rules that you are required to follow? What about some training “do’s and don’ts” that you need to abide by in order to be successful as an athlete?*
- Imagine that your sport did away with all of its rules creating a free-for-all, anything-goes approach. Describe what that might look like. Does the idea of having no rules appeal to you? Would it be fun? Why or why not? What do you think are the primary reasons behind most rules?

Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

—2 Timothy 2:5

- Can you think of a prominent athlete who was caught cheating or caught taking

shortcuts in order to win a competition? What was the outcome of that situation? Have you had to deal personally with other athletes cheating in order to gain a competitive edge? Have you ever been tempted to cheat or break the rules? Where did that pressure come from?

Set

The Playbook For Life

Ultimately, the purpose behind rules—whether in sports or in life—is threefold: to promote fairness, to protect the competitors, and to enjoy the game. The same can also be said about the principles presented in the Bible. Whether it's the Ten Commandments or the ideals listed in Romans 12:9-20, God's Word is full of useful advice similar to the Xs and Os found in an athletic playbook.

- Imagine that there were no city, state or federal laws. What kind of environment do you think that would create? How might the rules found in Romans 12:9-20 promote fairness? How might they protect us from physical and emotional dangers?

This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to recite it day and night, so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do.

—Joshua 1:8

- In addition to fairness and protection, what other benefit of following the rules is revealed in Joshua 1:8? Can you think of some examples of how following the rules in your sport will bring success? How might that concept translate into the rest of your life? On the flip side, how can ignoring biblical guidelines bring failure as an athlete? as a person?
- Go back and look over Romans 12:9-20. Find all of the “do’s” and circle them. (*Example: Detest evil.*) Find all of the “don’ts” and mark next to them with an X (*Example: Do not lack diligence.*) Hint: There are 21 “do’s” and 6 “don’ts.”

Which of the “do’s” tend to be the most challenging? Which of the “don’ts” seems to be the most difficult? Are there any of the “do’s and don’ts” found in this passage that especially speak to your heart? Explain.*

A thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance.

—John 10:10

The purpose behind rules in a sport is to allow the athletes and coaches to enjoy the game and give them the freedom to exercise their abilities to the fullest. The same is true for the rules of life (or so-called “do’s and don’ts”) that we find throughout God’s Word.

- Read John 10:10. How would you compare the thief mentioned in this passage to someone who chooses not to follow the rules or looks for ways to gain an unfair advantage? Who do you think the thief represents in the spiritual realm? How does he attempt to steal, kill, and destroy us? On the other hand, what does Jesus promise is the result of following God’s rules? For you personally, what would abundant life look like?

³⁵ And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question to test Him: ³⁶ “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷ He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the greatest and most important commandment. ³⁹ The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus' answer in Matthew 22 injects great revelation into the "do's and don'ts" debate. It turns out that our reactions to certain situations boil down to the condition of our hearts. If we love God more than anything in the world, the dreaded "do's and don'ts" will take care of themselves. A true desire to please God will result in a changed attitude toward those around us.

Change Your Do

Adhering to the "do's" and resisting the "don'ts" is almost counter to our culture. There's no question that following the rules is counter to our own human nature. Athletes, politicians, lawyers, stockbrokers, businessmen, religious leaders, entertainers, and everyone else on the planet deal with the pressure to conform to the world. We are constantly bombarded with the temptation to go against God's laws.

For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate.

–Romans 7:15

- What cultural pressures do you face each day that might keep you from adhering to God's laws? In what ways does your own human nature fight you in this battle between right and wrong like Paul describes in Romans 7:15? What tugs at your heart?

The truth of the matter is that there's no way any of us can do what's right within our own power. While that might seem like bad news to those wanting to please God and live with integrity, there is good news to be found in His Word. Paraphrasing Romans 12:2, it's a transformation of the mind that empowers us to do as Christ did.

I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.

–Philippians 4:13

- How does this oft-quoted Scripture speak to you in light of the human struggle to do the right thing? What are some ways that you can rely on His strength when it comes to the "do's and don'ts" kind of choices that you face each day?

Take-Away

So often we get caught up in the "do's and don'ts" found in the Bible. We then find ourselves consumed with trying to live up to God's expectations or we get frustrated with our own humanity and give up trying altogether. In both cases, the problem is that we are attempting to rely on our own strength instead of leaning on the transformational power of Christ.

You have access to His mind and His ways through the reading of the Word, consistent prayer, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. It's only by His grace and strength that you can ever change your "do."

Write down one "do" from the 21 found in Romans 12:9-20 that you can put into practice this week.

Write a prayer asking God to help you change your "do."

Before the Next Meeting

Go back and reread Romans 12:9-20. Be honest with yourself and make a list of all the "do's

and don'ts" with which you struggle on a daily basis. Ask God to change your "do" by planting in your heart a greater love for Him and a deeper desire to love others—even your enemies.

Bible Reference:

2 Timothy 2



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