

Dedication ... To Follow Him - Get Focused: Part III

Philippians 3:15-17 – It’s game time and that means it’s time to give it all you’ve got no matter how difficult (or easy) the circumstances.

After your desire is focused on the right goal and you’ve put in all of the hard work and disciplined training, the time finally comes to follow through with the things you’ve learned. Dedication helps us live out what we know is true.

Ready

1. Describe a game time situation where things weren’t going your way. How did adversity affect your ability to stick with the game plan?
2. Who’s the most dedicated or committed athlete or coach you know? Why do you see him or her as more dedicated than others? What do you think drives this dedication?

Set Crunch Time

Competition is crunch time — time to be unified with your coach and team. It’s time to pick up your equipment, rely on what you’ve learned, and go with your God-given instincts. Everything you put into training is of no use unless you’re dedicated — committed — to the team and focused on effectively executing your role. Paul encouraged dedication in his letter to the Christ-followers in the Greek city of Philippi.

15 Therefore, all who are mature should think this way. And if you think differently about anything, God will reveal this to you also. 16 In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained. 17 Join in imitating me, brothers, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us.

-Philippians 3:15-17

Read aloud Paul’s words from Philippians 3:16: “we should live up to whatever truth
_____.”

- How can this strong piece of advice apply to athletics? How does this challenge apply to your life as a follower of Jesus Christ?

WOULD YOU RATHER ... be considered the hardest working player on the team or the most talented on the team?

- Using the chart below, write down and discuss some basic principles or truths you’ve learned throughout your athletic training. In the corresponding column, list how those

principles give you a competitive edge.

- For the second chart, brainstorm some basic principles or truths you've learned as a follower of Jesus. In the corresponding column, list how those Christ-centered principles give you an advantage in overcoming life's challenges.

Follow Hard After Jesus

23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it. 25 What is a man benefited if he gains the whole world, yet loses or forfeits himself?"

-Luke 9:23-25

- When Jesus speaks about taking up the cross (verse 23), we know for Him that meant a real death on a real cross. What does taking up the cross daily look like for you?
- Jesus gives a strong warning in verses 24-25. Can you think of an athlete or celebrity who has given his or her life to earthly things? Can you think of anyone who has given his or her life for the cause of Christ? Discuss who got the better deal.

WOULD YOU RATHER ... play your best and lose by a couple of points or play below average and win the competition?

Go

It's Worth the Struggle!

It's one thing to work hard to hone our skills and decision-making abilities. The dedication to put that knowledge and training into action is a very different step toward success. Paul's entire life was driven by a call to take up the cross and follow Jesus. His dedication to that mission helped him to press on despite humiliating and life-threatening situations.

- Why is it so easy to pursue the things of this world? Why is it so hard to pursue Jesus (to take up our cross daily)?
- What specific situations have challenged your ability to stay committed to your journey with Jesus? How can trusting God help you get through those challenges?

Take-Away

It can be tough to pick up your cross every day and follow Jesus. Lots of things and people get in the way. On the tear-out card in the corner, write one thing that's holding you back from pressing on into more significant things with Jesus. Pray and work to overcome this.

Before the Next Meeting

Most young people don't have heroes or positive role models. The Bible is full of real-life heroes, so find at least one biblical hero or heroine you could follow. Paul's life story (Acts 16:16-24; 23:12-35; 27) is one of many great examples. Others include:

- Joseph (Genesis 37; 39–41)
- Esther (Esther 2–8)
- Ruth (Ruth 1–4)
- Daniel (Daniel 1 and 6)

Let their examples inspire you to stand firm, to live out what you believe no matter what — whatever it takes!

Bible Reference:

Philippians 3



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