

## **Consuming Madness**

n/a

### **Ready:**

“Summoning the crowd along with His disciples, He said to them, ‘If anyone wants to be My follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me and the gospel will save it.’”

-Mark 8:34-35

### **Set**

March can be a time of spiritual renewal and testing. Depending on your area of the world, you may be encouraged by the promise of spring and new life as your surroundings begin to change. But there are also distinct temptations that come with the new season. For example, participating in St. Patrick’s Day parties this week probably tempted a few out there. Then there are also various temptations that come with the NCAA Tournament and the thousands of bracket pools.

In my own life, I remember distinctly when God’s voice convicted me of my involvement in March Madness pools where I worked. As a Christian, I participated and even organized the gambling effort, ignoring the still, small voice of God. I was eventually called out by my superiors who asked me to stop my March Madness involvement. I remember feeling so exposed after my disobedience to what God had been trying to show me.

For the past seven years since this happened, I haven’t participated in the bracket gambling, but I can still recall details of the experience. I spent significant time collecting data, calculating the points of each participant and watching games that I had no interest in outside of winning the pool. In March, life laid down for following basketball, not for following Jesus Christ and sharing His gospel.

Our crafty enemy finds his way into the church. If we’re not careful, our participation in seemingly harmless things like bracket pools can become counterfeit gods. We have to continually ask ourselves if we are being good stewards of God’s time. This March, don’t let your participation in March Madness pools take the place of your time with God or your family. It’s not worth it. Jesus said that whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Him and the gospel will save it. If you’re in a bracket pool with unbelievers, find a way to share the gospel with them through it. If you’re in a bracket with brothers and sisters in Christ, use this to encourage them and point them to the cross.

Eventually this tournament will end, and a few years from now we may not even remember who won. If your bracket is consuming you and taking you away from God and others, pull out of it. If not, find a way to point your opponents to the Lord. Whatever you do, let your

basketball pool to be a testimony for Jesus Christ!

## **Go**

1. Do your current priorities bring glory to God?
2. What do you need to deny in order to spend more time in God's Word?
3. Are you truly losing your life for the gospel of Christ?

## **Workout**

Matthew 6:19-24, 33

Mark 8:31-38

Philippians 3:7-8

Revelation 12:11

## **Bible Reference:**

Revelation 12



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8701 Leeds Road | Kansas City, MO 64129 | 800.289.0909

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