

## Dearly Loved

n/a

### **Ready:**

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”

-1 John 3:1a (NIV)

### **Set**

It broke my heart a little that it wasn't a bigger deal in the media. It was almost unnoticed as the third bullet point listed on the side of ESPN's homepage on Monday. Barely a blip on the radar screen when compared to the Manning Bowl. But there it was in bright blue hyperlink text: “Denver Broncos WR Kenny McKinley found dead at his home.”

Reports stated that McKinley, who was on the team's injured reserve after having knee surgery in August, made comments after his surgery about killing himself. The investigation details later stated that, “McKinley didn't know what to do other than football” (ESPN.com).

First, our most sincere and heart-felt sympathy goes out to the family of Kenny McKinley. I don't know anything about him other than he was a precious creation of God who is no longer on this earth and that someone must be hurting as a result. We are praying that God's peace, comfort and truth surrounds them right now.

But this is a great wake-up call to us all in the world of sports. First, to take seriously any indication that our teammates are wrestling with deep hurts. If we see any flags in their conversation or actions that something painful is going on inside, we must take action and not leave anything to chance. We never know how far they are willing to go to get relief, and all the while, we have access to the one thing that can heal them: the love of Jesus Christ. If only we would step out and offer it to them. We might just be used by God to save a life for eternity.

Second, we have to resist the temptation to allow our sports to dominate our entire lives. When we allow ourselves to get caught up in the idea that our sport is where we get our value, we are toeing a dangerous line. Our bodies and our stats will fail us, and when they do, if we have been looking to them for identity, we will be absolutely crushed. Devastated. Our worlds will be turned upside down and we will be faced with a deep identity crisis.

Sports are not life. They are merely an avenue in which to connect with God and to share His love with others. Our identity is first and foremost as His beloved children. No stat or sport can or should trump that. Athletics are gifts that He has given us to steward for His glory, just like

every other vocation or passion, and we must hold them with an open hand knowing that they are only temporary things, and that God loves us no matter how fast we can run, how high we can jump, or how well we can throw a ball.

Today, if you are fighting the sports identity crisis, feeling like your only hope is to succeed on the field, turn to God's Word. There you will find the key to peace and the firm foundation of unconditional love. And, if you already know that Christ loves you and are living in that reality, please take time to share it with others. They are counting on us to bring it to them. Who knows? Their lives may depend on it.

## **Go**

1. How important is your success on the field?
2. If you were injured tomorrow and couldn't compete, how would it affect you?
3. Do you know of any teammates who are in need of God's love? How can you share that with them?

## **Workout**

Romans 5:8

Romans 10:8-15

## **Bible Reference:**

Romans 10



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