

Priorities

Ready:

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. - 1 Timothy 4:8 (NIV)

Set

As dedicated athletes, we've all had to make sacrifices to play our sports. The main ones tend to be less hangout time with friends, having to miss out on events like birthdays or weddings, and even having to miss church. From what I've experienced, these sacrifices dance on a very fine line when it comes to our faith. Yes, we see the professional athletes and want to be like them, and maybe we will be someday. But in our efforts to gain our goals, we can't leave behind things of great worth that God has blessed us with now.

First of all, we need to look inside ourselves and check our motives. Let's say a good friend or someone in our life wants to meet up and chat or hangout, but we've already planned to go shoot extra free throws or practice our swing. Before we say, "I have [insert sport]," we should stop and pray. What's more important? Is this an opportunity for God to work through us to love on this person?

Another example: Say your team is in a tournament, and you notice that you have to skip church. Again, we must stop and pray. It's true, we don't have to go to church to find God because He is always with us, but that doesn't mean we should bypass Him on that tournament day. We need to pray and ask Him how we should move forward. Do we miss the tournament? Do we go and commit to getting up extra early to spend time with Him? Whatever we do, we need to involve Him in the decision and make obeying Him our top priority.

Sports need to be an outlet that we can use for God's glory, not an excuse to get away from those who love us or to run away from the love and conviction of our Father. I know I've hurt many people in my life because I made my sport into a selfish excuse. But we have to remember that God's purpose for us in life is far beyond a sport itself. It's to know Him and be like Him—and how that translates into life on the field may look different for everyone.

Now, to examine the full verse of 1 Timothy 4:8 above, we need to look at it from the other angle and emphasize that physical training is still important. God can and will work through you in your sport, and we need to remain connected to Him as we give it our all! But the message of the verse remains clear: Don't put your sport training above your personal and communal time with God. In the end, this life is short; focus on what is eternal.

Go

1. Can you think of a time when you put the importance of your sport above people and/or God? What was the reasoning behind this decision?
2. How can you make God the center of your workouts and practices? What does this look like?

Workout

- Matthew 22:36-40
- Philippians 2:4
- James 4:14

Bible Reference:

1 Timothy 4:8

Matthew 22:36-40

Philippians 2:4

James 4:14



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