

## Process

### **Ready:**

“The end of a matter is better than its beginning; a patient spirit is better than a proud spirit.” - Ecclesiastes 7:8

**Set** Back when I was a track athlete, I was blessed to have great coaches who taught me about the need for perseverance and patience throughout the track season. My high school coach used to tell me in meets early in the season, “Right now, you are racing against the clock. Try to be a step faster, and you’re winning. Remember, the race that matters most is the final in League Championships.” My coach understood the big picture and our goals for the season. He sought to build that same sense into me as well so that I could continue progressing, improving each day to reach the ultimate goal. Now that I’m a coach myself (women’s volleyball), I have reflected on this lesson often. Many times, athletes get lost in the moment and can’t see the big picture. Yes, every match matters; every time we step onto the field/floor/track, we should give our best. But we also need to recognize that we don’t want to “peak” too soon. As coaches, we are better equipped to understand the big picture, and we seek to help our athletes progress so that they can peak in the postseason. In fact, in the best season I’ve ever had as a coach my team lost 14 times in the regular season. We lost our conference championship and the regional semifinals, but we were invited to the national tournament as an at-large bid. My players saved their best play for last, pushing through the national tournament and finishing their campaign in the National Championships Final Four. And anyone who followed that team won’t remember those losses as much as the postseason success. That team will be remembered for a strong finish to a great season. The writer of Ecclesiastes (most likely Solomon) understood the concept of process and perseverance. As he neared the end of his life, he reflected on the vanity of life and the wisdom he attained through trial and error. In Ecclesiastes 7:8, he wrote, “The end of a matter is better than its beginning; a patient spirit is better than a proud spirit.” And if we look at the New Testament, we find that Paul addressed the issue as well. He gave many calls to persevere, even challenging his protégé Timothy to finish strong in his ministry (1 Tim. 4). Scripture challenges us daily to continue progressing forward, seeking each day to become more Christ-like in our living and our attitude. The challenge, much like the ones we face in our athletic season, is to keep the big picture in mind and to live our daily lives with an eternal perspective. As Hebrews 12:1-3 challenges us, “Therefore since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God’s throne. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, so that you won’t grow weary and lose heart.”

**Go** 1. Have there been times in your athletic career in which you lost heart because of a loss or a bad performance? How long did it take you to regain a positive attitude? 2. What steps do you take with your team in order to keep the big picture in mind? 3. When it comes to your daily life, do you keep an eternal perspective, or do you get stuck in the daily challenges? 4. How can you begin to keep an eternal perspective, focusing on the bigger picture that Christ

offers?

**Workout** Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 Philippians 3:7-16 2 Timothy 4:7-8

**Bible Reference:**

2 Timothy 4



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