

## **For the Love of the Game**

### **Ready:**

“And Nehemiah continued, ‘Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don’t be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!’” – Nehemiah 8:10

### **Set**

Have we taken the joy from the game? Every athlete started playing sports because it was something they enjoyed doing! It was Fun! But at some point, winning, personal performance and perfection have taken away the joy we once played with. But why? Have our parents or coaches done this to us? Is it the world? As I was at my last tournament recruiting, it became very real to me that out of the dozens of teams I watched, maybe 4-to-5 players were smiling and having fun.

I even noticed that many of the coaches weren’t smiling or encouraging their athletes. To me, it seemed like only the ones who were winning were smiling. So, what happened to the love of the game? Have we made an idol out of it? Made it too much of a job or responsibility? Have we mistaken the purpose of sports, or why we compete?

Pondering these questions broke my heart. Seeing so many talented athletes and coaches rarely having fun, or only having fun when they’re winning, wasn’t what I remembered about the love of the game growing up. When I think about what Jesus represented and even preached about, the central idea of joy comes to mind. Whether He had a successful day or not, Jesus constantly shined His light on others. Everyone who followed Him and listened to Him saw the importance of this, including Nehemiah.

So whether it’s up or down, a win or a loss or in the good or the bad times, it’s how we respond to those situations that can ultimately determine our joy and the joy of others. If the joy of the Lord is our strength as described in verse 8:10, how do we play for Him and not ourselves? The answer is simple: we must take Jesus onto the playing field with us. We have to want others see the goodness in Him through us. As a vessel for Christ, we have the ability to shine our light and our joy to our teammates, peers and even our competitors.

So, competitor, how much joy can you embody for the love of the game?

### **Go**

- How can you shine Jesus’ light on your team today?
- How can you ask God to help you be more of a light to others?

### **Workout**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

## Overtime

“Father God, thank You for sports and the community we get from being apart of a team. Use me today to shine the light and joy of Christ to my teammates, coaches and the teams I compete against. Allow me the opportunity to share the Gospel with others through my actions and demeanor. I pray this in Jesus name, amen.”



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