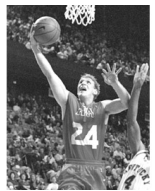
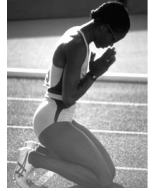


ATHLETES IN ACTION PRINCIPLES

WHERE GOD, LIFE AND SPORT UNITE



ATHLETES
IN ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Christians involved in athletics often have difficulty knowing how their relationship with Christ relates to their athletics. If a collegiate student-athlete wants to take her faith seriously, she faces several tough questions: What should be my motivation in competition? Should I pray before a game? Should I pray for victory? Should I put a cross or verse on my sweatband? How should I relate to my coaches, teammates, and opponents? How do I know that God wants me to devote hours each day to my sport when I could be on the mission field? What differentiates competition that pleases God from that which doesn't please God?

All of these are complex questions; there are no easy answers. As one person put it, "For every difficult question there's a simple answer ... and it's usually wrong." The same is true in learning to approach athletic competition from a Christian perspective. There are a variety of "simple solutions" most of which only superficially address the issue of faith and sports. For instance, some people view God as a lucky rabbit's foot that will help us win the game ("pregame chapels"). Some people relegate God to the sideline by making their faith a private thing ("this is competition, my faith is for Sunday or my small group bible study"). Some Christians can so syncretize their faith with their sport that their desires, interests, and feelings are projected upon God. In fact, in some cases, Christians approach athletics no differently than non-Christians.

Simply putting a cross on one's sweatband or praying before or after a competition or thanking God for a victory on national television pales in comparison to how God wants to transform our athletic competition into an instrument for worship. The God of the Bible is not a Santa Claus we can use to get what we want; nor is He a chump that we can keep safely at arm's length. Neither is He just an "addendum" that we can tack onto our lives. Instead, God wants to transform all areas of our lives by revolutionizing the way we understand ourselves and our role in the His Kingdom.

During the next few days, we want to challenge you to rethink your involvement in sports. We want to ask you to have the courage to reflect deeply about your own motivation for competing as an athlete. We want to ask you to hold your life, including your sport, with an open hand.

AIA PRINCIPLES

WHERE GOD, LIFE AND SPORT UNITE

Purpose: To transform sport as an opportunity to worship God and to create a learning experience (through discussion, labs, and “the Special”) so that we can participate in sport in a way that honors Him.

PRINCIPLE 1: AUDIENCE OF ONE 5 GOD Owns You and Your Sport

Passage: 1 Kings 18:20-40 “The Story of Elijah & the Prophets of Baal”
Theme: God exposes our idols changing our allegiance from ‘substitutes’ to him
Practical: Learning to compete for the ultimate audience transforms sport into worship.

PRINCIPLE 2: INSIDE GAME 9 GOD’s Love is the Maximum Motivation

Passage: Luke 15:11-32 “The Story of the Prodigal Son”
Theme: Our identity in Christ frees us to compete with a ‘grace motivation’
Practical: Exchanging the world’s motivation for a grace motivation means giving a “thank-you performance” to the Lord in our sport.

PRINCIPLE 3: HOLY SWEAT 15 GOD Provides Resources for Spiritual Training to Cultivate Christ-like Character

Passage: Luke 4:1-13: “The Temptation of Jesus”
Theme: Maturity is a process of growing in grace requiring the spiritual disciplines
Practical: Focal points remind us of spiritual disciplines within competition.

PRINCIPLE 4: HURTIN’ FOR CERTAIN 19 GOD Allows Pain and Trials to Deepen Your Character for Him

Passage: Genesis “The Story of Joseph”
Theme: Trials and Suffering are part of God’s game plan
Practical: Sports can be God’s ‘laboratory’ for molding and shaping us if we see and respond appropriately.

PRINCIPLE 5: VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION 23 GOD’s Playing Field Extends Beyond Your Competition

Passage: Matthew 25:14-30 “The Parable of the Talents”
Theme: The Return of the King calls us to be faithful stewards of our time, talents, & treasures
Practical: Make wise investments with your life.

AUDIENCE OF ONE

PRINCIPLE 1

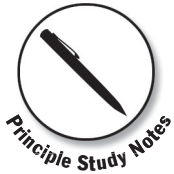
PRE-GAME WARM-UP

Context: In many ways the whole story of the Bible can be seen as a struggle (conflict or even competition) between true faith (trusting in God alone) and idolatry (trusting in something or someone other than God to bring deep satisfaction, significance, and success).

Read 1 Kings 18.1-40

1. How would you characterize or describe the people's commitment to God (18:21-24)? What was their problem?
2. Today, there are so many different things (good and bad) that compete for our attention, allegiance, time, love, and significance. THINK: Who or what competes most strongly for your love?
3. If this story were made into a movie, how would you as the movie producer portray or depict this idol or thing called Baal from verses 26-29? What might the response of Baal tell us about the true nature of an idol?
4. How do we overcome something that has become idol-like in our lives? Answer: Stay tune as we follow the story together and apply this to our lives, sports, and relationships.





AUDIENCE OF ONE

GOD owns you and your sport.

Passage: 1 Kings 18:20-40 "The Story of Elijah & the Prophets of Baal"

Theme 1: God exposes our idols changing our allegiance from 'substitutes' to him

Practical: Learning to compete for the ultimate audience transforms sport into worship.

"To celebrate sport is ... to celebrate sheer abandon, to savor moments when athletes surrender themselves to effort and are genuinely transformed. This is when sport takes loneliness, fear, hate and ego and transmutes them into achievement, records, art, and powerful example" (Kenny Moore, SI Nov. 15, 1989)

I. _____ your side (v.18:21-24)

A. Divided _____ (v.21-24)

B. Devoted _____ (v.21)

II. _____ all rivals _____ (1 Kings 18:25-29)

A. Idols are _____ (v.26, 29)

B. Idols are _____ (v.27)

C. Idols result in extreme, _____ (v.28)

III. Champion God as Number 1 (18:30-40)

A. _____ Time: _____ Idols back to _____ (v.36-37)

B. _____ Time: _____ God alone (v.38-39)

Idolatry recipe (key ingredients)

- Extreme pressure
- Powerful influence
- Passion to win at all costs

APPLICATION



Sport = Idol	Sport = an opportunity for worship
Use God as a "rabbit's foot"/good-luck charm for your personal gain, win, or power.	God chooses you to image or window His excellent character through your effort, attitude, intensity, and sportsmanship.
Compete to prove and justify your value and worth.	God has determined your value and worth before you even compete.
Disrespect for the rules (often ignoring or breaking them) and only abide by the rules when it is to your advantage or you might get caught if you publicly violated the rules.	Compete by the rules all the time because they express what is fair, just and orderly (God's character) in order for the game to flourish.
Winning is everything and the only thing.	Competing to win consists of a serious challenge while enjoying the pursuit.
Happy when my opponent competes poorly or is hurt because your only concern is your welfare (win).	Believe and want the best both for your team and opponent because everyone is striving together toward excellence.
Unrealistic expectations and fail to acknowledge physical limitations	Accept God-given abilities and physical limitations
Give 100% only when those important people are watching (coach, scout, family, friends)	Give 100% both publicly and privately because God is your audience
Do whatever it takes to win (cheat, drugs, trash-talk, etc.)= Ends justify the means	What matters the most is how you played the game
View the opponent as the enemy and competition like war	View the opponent as co-competitor who deserves respect
Celebrating victory is expressed as taunting, strutting, and entertaining because it is all about you.	Celebrating victory is expressed respectfully, appreciatively, and joyfully because it is about more than you.
Jealous of other's success because it means they are out performing me	Thankful for others' success
See sport as a right and something you have to have in order to make it in life	See competition/sport as a privilege and gift
Unteachable spirit and disrespectful toward coach/authority	Teachable spirit and respectful toward coach/authority
Sport is your deliverer from past, poor circumstances or your family situation	God delivers and redeems you

THE INSIDE GAME

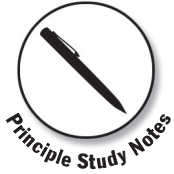
PRINCIPLE 2

PRE-GAME WARM-UP

Read Luke 15:11-32

1. The younger son left his home to experience "life." What do you think he was looking for? Did he find it?
2. How did the father respond when the younger son came home?
3. Why was the older son angry?
4. Who can you identify most with in the story? Why?





INSIDE GAME

GOD's Love is the Maximum Motivation.

Passage: Luke 15:11-32 "The Story of the Prodigal Son"

Theme 2: Our identity in Christ frees us to compete with a 'grace motivation'

Practical: Exchanging the world's motivation for a grace motivation means giving a "thank-you performance" to the Lord in our sport.

What motivates you?

recognition	money	coach
friendships	pride	winning
revenge	parents	fear of losing
success	anger	accomplishment

Luke 15:11-32

I. Motivated by _____. Looking for life _____ of God

A. The pursuit of a life independent of God (vs.11-13)

B. The result of a life independent of God (vs.14-16)

C. The response to a life independent of God (vs.17-21)

II. Motivated by _____. Looking for life by _____ for God

A. The pursuit of a life of performance (v.29)

B. The result of a life of performance (v.28)

C. The response to a life of performance

III. Motivated by _____ . Finding life in _____

A. His pursuit of you

1. The pleasure-seeker (vs.20,22)

2. The performance-oriented (vs.28,31)

B. His result for you

World's lie	God's truth
If you fail, you are unworthy of love and deserve punishment.	God's anger is satisfied; you are deeply loved by God and will never be punished. (Propitiation) 1 Jn. 4:9-10
I must meet certain standards to feel good about myself. If I don't ...	You are completely forgiven and fully pleasing to God. (Justification) 2 Cor. 5:21
I must be approved and accepted by others to feel good about myself.	You are totally accepted by God and He calls you His friend forever. (Reconciliation) Col. 1:19-22
I am what I am; I cannot change; it is hopeless so why try?	You are absolutely complete in Christ and have the power to walk in His truth by faith. (Regeneration) 2 Cor. 5:17

C. Your response to His love and grace

A poor formula for self-worth:
Our performance + Other's Opinions = Self-Worth

God's formula for self-worth:
Self-worth is what God declares is TRUE about you!

WHAT GOD DECLARES TRUE ABOUT YOU ON ACCOUNT OF CHRIST:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. I am accepted and worthy | Romans 15:7; Psalm 139 |
| 2. I am never alone | Hebrews 13:5b; Romans 8:38, 39 |
| 3. I am adequate | II Corinthians 3:5,6; Philippians 4:13 |
| 4. I have boldness and confidence | Proverbs 3:26; 14:26; Hebrews 10:19 |
| 5. God will be faithful to me | Philippians 1:6; 2:13; Thessalonians 3:3 |
| 6. I have the mind of Christ | I Corinthians 2:16; II Timothy 1:7 |
| 7. I have hope | Romans 15:13; Psalm 16:11; 27:13 |
| 8. I am seen as perfect | Hebrews 10:14; Colossians 2:13 |
| 9. I have been chosen and set apart | I Corinthians 1:30; 6:11; Ephesians 1:4 |
| 10. I lack nothing | Philippians 4:19 |
| 11. I am free from fear | Psalm 34:4; II Timothy 1:7 |
| 12. I have all the faith I need | Romans 12:3 |
| 13. I have strength | Daniel 11:32; Psalm 37:39 |
| 14. I am victorious | Romans 8:37; II Corinthians 2:14 |
| 15. I have wisdom | Proverbs 2:6,7; I Corinthians 1:30 |
| 16. I am free | Psalm 32:7, II Corinthians 3:17 |
| 17. I have comfort | John 15:6; 16:7; II Corinthians 1:3,4 |
| 18. I am protected | Psalm 32:7 |
| 19. I am perfectly loved | John 15:9; Romans 8:38, 39; Ephesians 2:4,5; 5:1 |
| 20. I am an adopted child of God | Romans 8:16; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5 |
| 21. I am totally forgiven | Psalm 103:12; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 10:7 |
| 22. I have been declared righteous | Romans 3:24; I Corinthians 1:30; 6:11 |
| 23. I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit | Acts 1:8; Ephesians 1:19; 3:16; I Corinthians 12:13 |
| 24. I have direct access to God | Ephesians 2:6; I Peter 2:5,9 |
| 25. I am blameless | John 3:18; Romans 8:1 |
| 26. I have been created for good works | Ephesians 2:10; Psalm 37:23 |
| 27. I am a new creation | II Corinthians 5:17 |
| 28. I have authority over Satan | Colossians 1:13; I John 4:4 |
| 29. I am dead to sin | Romans 6:11 |
| 30. I am dead to the law | Romans 6:14; 7:4,5,6 |
| 31. I am an eternal inheritance | Romans 8:16,17; Ephesians 1:11,14,18 |
| 32. I have been raised with Christ | Romans 6:4,5,6,7,8; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:12 |
| 33. I will be with Christ in heaven | Ephesians 2:5, Colossians 2:15 |
| 34. I have eternal security | I John 5:11,12,13; John 10:27,28,29,30 |
| 35. I have spiritual gifts for HIS service | I Corinthians 12 |



The “**good news**” is this list is not exhaustive! Have a **great** time discovering the things that are now true of **you** in Christ!

HOLY SWEAT

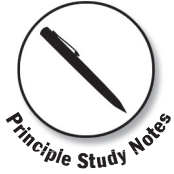
PRINCIPLE 3

PRE-GAME WARM-UP

Read Lk. 4:1-13

1. When you are faced with challenges in your sport, big decisions, and temptations, how do you normally manage or deal with those struggles? (Give an example and be specific on what you did).
2. In the case of Jesus (the above passage), what was his situation and how did he deal with or manage in each case? What was the nature of his responses?
3. How was your response in #1 different or the same to Jesus' response or approach to his situation?
4. In any sport, there are the basic fundamentals (skills, practices, etc.) that need to be learned before you can ever expect to do well in the game itself. What are those fundamental disciplines for a Christian that need to be practiced in order for us to experience God's best in the "here and now"?





Quote: Holy is our calling and sweat is what it takes to get there.

Mark 1:35 "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went away to a secluded place and was praying there."

HOLY SWEAT

GOD provides resources for spiritual training to cultivate Christ-like character.

Passage: Luke 4:1-13 "The Temptation of Jesus"

Theme 3: Maturity is a process of growing in grace requiring the spiritual disciplines

Practical: Focal points remind us of spiritual disciplines within competition.

Our goal in life is not happiness but holiness. Jesus has called us to be like Him: to think like Him, to feel like Him, to act like Him ... all of the time. If we are to become like Him, we must enter into the same type of training program He did. Just as there are no shortcuts to greatness in sport, there are no shortcuts to godliness in life.

I. Commit to the _____ of God.

- A. His mission in the world.
- B. His mission in your life.

Spiritual disciplines are exercises or practices used to strengthen your walk with God. They prepare your heart so He can teach you and change you from the inside-out. The disciplines do not change you; it is the Holy Spirit doing His transforming work as you depend on Him.

II. Listen to the _____ of God.

- A. The role of **solitude**:
- B. The role of **prayer**:
- C. The role of **fasting**:
- D. The role of the **Holy Spirit**:

III. Trust in the _____ of God:

A. The role of **meditating on Scripture**:

B. The role of **memorizing Scripture**:

Temptation	Response
1. Meet your own needs	
2. Go for your own glory	
3. Prove your own power	

APPLICATION:

Prepare for your spiritual training program:

Know your **weaknesses**: In the heat of competition or the privacy of your room, what temptations do you give in to?

Know what **exercises** will help you succeed: What spiritual disciplines do you need to incorporate into your training program?

LAB REFLECTION TIME:

1. Did you find "practicing the presence of God" (bridging the gap between your private disciplines and sport via focal points) difficult during the competition? Why or Why not?

2 Tim. 3:16 "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be equipped for every good work."

Eph. 6:11; 1 Pet. 5:8 "Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil ... for he prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."



Jesus won the private battles in His soul so that He was prepared for His public mission.



HURTIN' FOR CERTAIN

PRINCIPLE 4

PRE-GAME WARM-UP

Read Genesis 37, 39:1-15, 41:39-43; 45:1-7

1. How would you feel if you were in Joseph's shoes?
2. What do you learn about Joseph's character?
3. What circumstances in your own life have been challenging? Big or small.
4. How do you tend to respond when something doesn't go your way?





Joseph's "pit" experience is an example of a tough circumstance or 'bad call.'

We can't always KNOW the answer to WHY God is allowing a trial in our lives.

Joseph could have been bitter after what had happened to him, but he chose to respond with a heart towards God.

HURTIN' FOR CERTAIN

GOD allows pain and trials to deepen your character for Him

Passage: Genesis "The Story of Joseph"

Theme 4: Trials and Suffering are part of God's game plan

Practical: Sports can be God's 'laboratory' for molding and shaping us if we see and respond appropriately.

Narrative on Joseph in Genesis 37-50

I. Reality: The game of life will inevitably deal some bad calls

A. Bad calls take _____ shapes and forms

B. _____ is immune from trials:

James 1:2 Says to "consider it all joy my brethren _____ you encounter various trials"
(hint: it's not **if**)

C. Trials are usually a mystery:

II. Response: Trusting God's _____ is the only response to bad calls

Sovereignty means: to _____ over all.

A. Your call: Bitter or _____?

B. Bad calls are circumstances that can derail our faithfulness.

Tough circumstances can really _____ our faithfulness.

C. Revenge or _____ will not reverse the bad call:

Joseph does not take revenge on his brothers even when he had the chance too.

Cross Reference: 1 Peter 2:21-23

III. Result: Bad calls can result in our _____ and God's _____

A. Trials are a test or _____ that brings about our good. Cross reference 1 Peter 1:6-7

1. They reveal and produce character. According to Gen. 41:52, God made Joseph fruitful in the land of his suffering.
2. They bring about Christ likeness and maturity. Romans 8: 28-29

B. God _____ glory

1. Saved family physically and remnant spiritually. Genesis 45:7,8
2. God turns evil into good as only He can. Genesis 50:20
3. Brothers repent as a result of Joseph's kindness

LAB REFLECTION TIME

1. What about seeing "tough times" through God's perspective is most difficult for you?
2. Is there a "tough time" in your recent past that you can identify? In retrospect, can you see God's hand and His purpose for that "tough time"?

Joseph remained faithful in:

- Prison
- Out of Prison
- With Potiphar's wife

Key: God is at work in us in His way and His time.

What does it mean to glorify God?

"Anything that enhances God's reputation, honor, splendor, purpose, or character."

-John Frame



VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION

PRINCIPLE 5

PRE-GAME WARM-UP

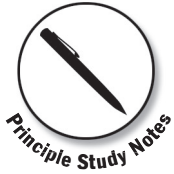
Read Matthew 25:14-30

Note: A talent in the story referred to a sum of money, however for these questions we will look at a talent as the gifts and abilities in our lives.

1. What gifts and abilities do you feel you've been entrusted with? List some of your gifts outside of being an athlete?

2. Are you faithfully investing your talents to bring joy to the Master? If not, what are some of the possible consequences in your life for hiding your talents?





"God sees the potential of his children and appoints the experiences necessary for them to fulfill their destinies." -unknown

"God wants all of you. God doesn't want a part of your life. He asks for ALL your heart, ALL your soul, ALL your mind, and ALL your strength. God is not interested in halfhearted commitment, partial obedience, and the leftovers of your time and money. He desires your full devotion, not little bits of your life." (Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren)

VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION

GOD's playing field extends beyond your competition

Passage: Matthew 25:14-30 "The Parable of the Talents"

Theme 5: The Return of the King calls us to be faithful stewards of our time, talents, & treasures

Practical: Make wise investments with your life.

Two specific questions:

1. What difference does it make how I live my life?
2. How do I go about making a difference?

Context: The stage is set (Matthew 25:14-15)

- I. God has _____ to His servants
God has **uniquely** entrusted to you

S _____ (1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30)

H _____

A _____

P _____

E _____

- II. His servants respond: Matthew 25:16-18

Like the servants in the story, **you** have the choice to **invest** or **hide** what God has entrusted to you.

A. Invest _____

1. The master sees something _____ in you.

2. You were _____ for a _____.

3. You have _____ for your shape.

4. Investing immediately gives the greatest opportunity for the greatest _____.

5. You don't know _____ we have.

B. Invest _____

III. God evaluates His investments (Matthew 25:19-30)

A. Invest _____: (Don't act fearfully)

1. There will be a _____. (v. 19)

2. There are _____ to be _____.

- Greater responsibility
- Joy of the master

3. There are _____ to be _____.

4 What we have is really not ours to begin with. Everything we have is a gift from God to be used not hidden.

"The use that one makes of his opportunities is the measure of his capacity for more."

Our choices and action taken now to invest or hide lead to eventual and eternal consequences.

APPLICATION:

Are you willing to invest what God entrusted to you?

Are you willing to invest immediately, completely and faithfully?

If you can answer, "YES" to the above to those questions, then "HOW?" What plans are you going to take to get started? If you answer "NO" to the above questions then "WHY NOT?"



RESOURCES FOR STUDY

PRINCIPLE 1: AUDIENCE OF ONE

Our Covenant God, Kay Arthur

Idols of the Heart: Learning to Long for God Alone, Elyse Fitzpatrick

Worship in Spirit and Truth, John Frame

No God But God, Os Guinness and John Seel

The World according to God, Greg Johnson

Desiring God, John Piper

The Heart of Worship, Matt Redman

The Transforming Vision, Walsh and Middleton

Creation Regained, Al Wolters

PRINCIPLE 2: INSIDE GAME

The Bondage Breaker, Neil T. Anderson

Victory over the Darkness, Neil T. Anderson

Walking in Victory, Dennis McCallum

His Image My Image, Josh McDowell

The Search for Significance, Robert McGee

The Return of the Prodigal Son, Henri Nouwen

Green Letters, Miles Stanford

What's so Amazing about Grace, Phillip Yancey

PRINCIPLE 3: HOLY SWEAT

Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Spiritual Formation, Ken Boa

The Practice of Holiness, Jerry Bridges

The Pursuit of Holiness, Jerry Bridges

Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster

The Disciplines of a Godly Man, Kent Hughes

The Life You've Always Wanted, John Ortberg

The Strengths of a Christian, Robert C. Roberts

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, Donald Whitney

Spirit of the Disciplines, Dallas Willard

The Jesus Creed, Scot McKnight

PRINCIPLE 4: HURTIN' FOR CERTAIN

As Silver Refined, Kay Arthur

Three Philosophies of Life, Peter Kreeft

The Problem of Pain, C.S. Lewis

PRINCIPLE 5: VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION

An Incomplete Guide to the Rest of Your Life, Stan D. Gaede

The Rest of Your Life, Patrick M. Morley

The Divine Conspiracy, Dallas Willard