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Fun in Sports

Abstract

"Enjoyment, joy, satisfaction, pleasure, delight and other similar words are used throughout Scripture in the contexts of serving God and serving others."

Posting about the rewards of athletic participation from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/fun-in-sports/>

Keywords

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Disciplines

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Fun in Sports

 [inallthings.org/fun-in-sports/](http://allthings.org/fun-in-sports/)

August 5,
2016

Chad Hanson

Did you have fun?"

A common question that I often ask my children following a completed activity or experience: "Did you have fun?"

I have yet to find the word "fun" in the Bible. (I also have yet to find the word "Facebook" or "volleyball" in the Bible, either.) There is much we are exposed to today where we need to adhere Biblical principles to the daily decisions we make and surrounding environment in which we place ourselves. Through the past several years of coaching college volleyball, I have found my own heart in a tug of war between "working hard" and "having fun." My players and staff go through this same tug each season as their school responsibilities ebb and flow during the course of our volleyball match and practice schedule. My athletes want to have fun. They want the sport to be fun. They play volleyball competitively because it is fun. They want me to make their experiences fun.

Enjoyment, joy, satisfaction, pleasure, delight and other similar words are used throughout Scripture in the contexts of serving God and serving others. I do not read my Bible to be a strict set of rules with the intent of mundane religiosity or somber Pharisaical compliance. Our God delights in us from the day of creation to the end of days.¹ God wants us to have life...and not just life, but life abundant.² Throughout Ecclesiastes we read of the importance of enjoying this life for all of its fullness as well as all of the work involved in it. We are also being warned that pursuing the enjoyment itself is a futile and fleeting pursuit.³ God wants us to be filled with joy and hope not only in this earthly life but in the heavenly life we are promised through believing in his Son, Jesus Christ.⁴ Finally, in the example of Nehemiah, we are reminded that obedience to God involves celebration and joy which leads to further strength in our lives.⁵

Quite often in coaching, I attempt to use phrases and focus points that go beyond the sport to a broader application of life. Indulge me for a moment with some examples to share where I will leave you hanging and not provide an answer to my questions.

Example #1: A player is struggling to accomplish proper footwork which will ultimately help her jump higher and protect her body from injury. While using various training cues to enable her different learning senses to be triggered, she understands some of the concepts. We both realize it will take time for her to have these changes become automatic habits in her volleyball execution. Should I use "fun" as a motivator to help her succeed in this footwork development?

Example #2: Our team is playing an exciting volleyball match and needs to win this match in order to keep advancing toward its goals on the season. Whether in simple moments of great play where we have a comfortable lead on the scoreboard or in tense moments of precarious skill execution where one play can determine a winner and a loser, should I use "fun" as a focal point for their attention to get the job done?

Example #3: Two players are working through some on-court relationships where they struggle to communicate well in problem solving ways. They tolerate each other as teammates but continue to harbor unresolved feelings toward each other which only widens the gap of effective team contribution they each could give. Should I use "fun" as a motivator for them to reconcile their teammate relationship?

Example #4: An athlete is working through personal sickness or injury and is cleared to participate by the medical staff. She is not feeling 100% yet in our practice and seems to be going through the motions of our drills and team interactions. Should I remind her and her teammates that they need to be having "fun" in our practice and helping

others to have “fun?”

Example #5: One player was a starter in the rotation and has found her court time slipping toward more of a supportive role from the bench. She is wrestling through this change in scenery as her involvement and team contribution has shifted to more practice repetitions and pre-match warm-ups. Should I use “fun” as any sort of encouragement or reminder about why she is playing the sport?

Many more examples continue but I will refrain from sharing them with you. In all of the examples given, the concept of sport/volleyball, the interactions of teammate, the role of playing, the outcome of a match can **all** be likened to the work environment, church involvement, community interactions, etc. How much does “fun” drive any of us to pursue life experiences daily?

I have come to believe that “fun” should be a result of our proper pursuits and it should be less of a pursuit in and of itself. We are called to love God and love our neighbor.⁶ Also, we are told to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.⁷ What do these things look like within the context of sport and play? I ask the athletes at different times in the above situations to consider the other person first before their own needs or desires. I also ask them to be patient with the work that is involved in the immediate learning lesson they are working through. The rewards of their patience and interactions are far greater than any immediate comfort they might be seeking in having fun at the moment.

To my own children, I will still ask the question, “Did you have fun?” or maybe “Did you enjoy your experience?” I might follow that question up with “What ways did you have fun?” Their answer alone tells me that the laughter they experienced is a result of something that someone did. I want them to pursue the *doing* things and trust that the results of fun will follow.