

Chapter Two Made for More

In a world where honor and fame are given for accomplishments and talent, individuals often find their value in high achievement or conversely their lack of value in failure. More than ever, we need to understand how our true value is found in being children of God. How can athletes, in a culture of wins and losses, develop this proper understanding of reality?

Verse of the week: *“In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9).*

We have all agreed that achieving excellence in athletics and other areas of our lives is a yearning in us and can serve as a powerful motivator for us.

How do you feel after a big win or a successful endeavor in athletics?

Sometimes you feel like you are on top of the world, like nothing else matters, you are the champion.

Would you say you are satisfied? If so in which ways?

Do you ever feel like you have a higher worth or value when you achieve success, either on the field or in the classroom? Why or why not?

What happens when you are not succeeding?

"It was a black and white world in which you lived. At the end of the game or the race, you always knew where you stood. One NFL player, when asked what he missed the most, replied, 'The scoreboard. I miss the scoreboard.' What he missed was the clarity of it all. He could look up at the scoreboard and it would tell him all that he needed to know."

- Scott Tinley, Racing the Sunset (Scott Tinley is a former professional triathlete. He won the Hawaii Ironman competition twice, and of the over 400 competitions he has competed in, has won close to 100 of them)

In what ways might this type of "clarity" influence us in forming how we view ourselves?

"Detachment is a key – being able to see your own football career from the outside, rather than being totally caught up in it. Football can be a seductive siren whispering in players' ears the words that can drag them to their doom. 'You're special,' it breathes. 'You're a hero; the world admires you and wants to take care of you. Don't worry about anything; sign autographs and let people buy you drinks. You can play forever.'"

- From The End of Autumn, by former NFL player Michael Oriard

Do you think athletes get consumed in their sport to the point that apart from it, they feel lost? What happens to those athletes?

Have you ever thought about what will happen when competitive sports are over for you? How will you still get that same feeling of satisfaction or value?

Let's read a story about a modern day athlete and her struggle with identifying herself with her sport.

Story of Kathy Ormsby

Kathy was a pre-med honor student and a track star at North Carolina State University. She also happened to be the collegiate record holder in the women's ten-thousand meter run. People who knew her describe her as nice, shy, overly serious about running, and dedicated almost to a fault. They say she is a stoic who demands perfection from herself and puts pressure on herself. Her high school history teacher and volleyball coach said "I know that she's always driven herself very, very hard. She's not the type of person who can accept second best for herself. If there's any pressure, Kathy was putting it on herself. She's always been very much of a perfectionist."

In 1986 in Indianapolis, Indiana at the site of the NCAA track and field Championships something very startling happened. Kathy was one of the favorites in Wednesday night's 10,000-meter run for women in the National Collegiate Athletic Association's outdoor track and field championships. Two-thirds of the way through the race, she was fourth, and not able to catch the leader. Instead of continuing the race, she ran off the track, climbed a low fence out of the building, and ran to a nearby bridge where she apparently

tried to commit suicide and jumped off the bridge. She fell 30 or 40 feet to a dirt area covered with weeds. The forty-foot fall permanently paralyzed her from the waist down.

When asked later about what happened that day, Kathy only responded stating that “something snapped.” All the pressure and expectation of succeeding finally had taken its toll on Kathy. As one of her teammates said, “No one has come up to me and asked why. They’ve just come up and said we’re sorry and we’re praying for her. Athletes don’t need to know why. They know why. We’re all in the same boat. We all have the same pressures.”

What are your thoughts about the story? Do you think Kathy identified her value/worth with success in her sport?

What do you do when the pressure surmounts in your sport? Do you have an appropriate outlet?

Sports are a great parable for life. People connect with sports because it makes sense to our everyday lives. Sports have goals, foster hard work, discipline and sacrifice, and help athletes learn about success and failure. Sadly, Kathy let her sport define her to the point that apart from success in it, she did not know who she was. Kathy's story demonstrates that in the end sports aren't everything. In the Bible, God tells a story of our creation that points out what He made us for.

Let's look at Genesis 1:26.

Story of Creation

Read Genesis 1:26-27

"Then God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.' God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them."

1. What do you think it means to be created in the image and likeness of God?

Adam and Eve walked in the garden with God and had an intimate personal relationship with Him. They were a son and a daughter of God.

However, because of Adam and Eve's disobedience, sin entered the world and we humans lost the likeness to God, lost our status as sons and daughters of God.

Read Romans 3:23; 6:23

“All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God.» (3:23) «For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (6:23)

Sin separates us from God, but God loved us so much that He didn't want us to be separated from Him so He paid the ultimate price for our sin by sending His Son to die for us so that we could have a relationship of love with Him.

Read Romans 5:8

“But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”

God has saved us from the punishment of sin which is eternal death and separation from Him and gave us a new status as sons and daughters of God.

Read Galatians 4:4-7

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.”

This is where our ultimate value/worth should come from, that we are made for relationship with God as our Father and we are His beloved, precious children. This is our measure of greatness.

How might being a son/daughter of God change the way you look at your sport?

2. What makes it hard to find life in Christ alone? (temptations of glory, fame, etc.)

Read John 15:15-17.

"I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."

Jesus is speaking to His apostles and calls them friends. Just as He chose them, so too does He choose each of us. He stands at the door of our heart and knocks, seeking us out as friends. Jesus brings us into an intimate relationship with God; this is a great message of hope.

How can we improve our friendship with Jesus?

What are some practical ways you can remind yourself that you are a son/daughter of God, especially at practice or while competing?

Revisit verse of the week: **“In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9)**

ACTION POINT:

Challenge yourself in one of the ways mentioned and remind yourself that you are a son/daughter of God throughout the week.

Closing Prayer