

Game Plan

1 Cor 9:24

1

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

Depending on how you feel about sports, this is either one of the best times of the year or one of the worst. Football is moving into the playoffs, the high school season is already there and once again Oakdale high was right in the middle of it. College football is heading into the bowl season and the pros will be starting their playoffs soon. Add to that the basketball and wrestling seasons that are now underway and the preparations for the winter Olympics in Feb. of 2018 and the sports junkie can be on overload for the next several months.

Sports competitions have been around for probably as long as man has been able to throw a rock or run after a deer and wanted to see who could throw the farthest or run the fastest.

In this passage Paul uses the analogy of what was probably the ancient precursor to the Olympic Games to illustrate how we should run the Christian race so as to be successful.

Whether or not you are into sports, take the opportunity to talk to someone who has had some success coaching about the preparations that go into it, need to go into it. It's not like the old PE coach that used to roll a ball out and say go play, or even the kids in the huddle and the quarterback telling the receiver to run down to the trashcan, go behind the car, and I'll hit you in front of Tommy's house.

There is an anonymous quote that goes...

2

"Make a plan, Work a plan"

The idea of this is that it becomes a fruitless endeavor to plan for something and to then abandon or ignore the plan. On top of that, the results are more often than not chaotic. Coaches, good coaches, at any rate, always have a plan entering the game, their game plan if you will. The challenge in whatever sport, including those that are individual in nature, track and field or gymnastics as an example, just like it is in life is to work that plan to success. But, nothing ever goes exactly the way they are supposed to, there are always oopses that happen, and let's not forget...

1 Peter 5:8

3

8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Just like in a football or basketball game where one team tries to disrupt the game plan of the other team, Satan wants nothing more than to disrupt the plans that we might have for our lives.

So, what is the answer? There is as formidable a foe as any sports team will ever face that is challenging each of us in every way that he can. He doesn't just want to win, he wants to humiliate us in our failure. That is Satan.

Peter writes of the answer in the verses preceding this passage...

1 Peter 5:6-7

4

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, **7** casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

Peter says that coming to God and allowing Him to lift you up is the countermeasure to Satan's attacks. One of the major frustrations that any coach has is that they can't take to the floor or the field to try and help the team to win, that is always up to the players that are in the game and they can't be forced to do what the coach has tried to teach them, they have to make the choice. So, what

coaches try to do for their teams can be broken down into three basic things, what they call their game plan **5** ...

- 6** 1) Give them a philosophy that would help them to utilize their skills
- 7** 2) Give them the basic fundamental skills needed to accomplish the goal
- 8** 3) Give them a game plan that will put them into a position to achieve victory

Confucius says...

9 ***“If your plan is for one year plant rice. If your plan is for ten years plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years educate children.”***

What Confucius says here is to establish what your goals are and then to work to accomplish that goal. If your goal is to have food this year plant rice, which needs to be replanted every year. If your goal is to have food for an extended time frame, plant trees that will continue to bear fruit. But if you want to plan for not only your future, but also your children's and their children, educate them. That's the same point that Peter made in the passage we looked in 1 Peter 5, learn about God and give yourself to Him.

Well, obviously we are not going to talk about being successful in basketball or any other sport in this lesson, but we do want to try and apply these principles to us as we strive to accomplish the goal that Christ has given us.

Matt 10:5-15

READ

5 These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; **6** but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. **7** "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' **8** "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give. **9** "Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, **10** or a bag for your journey, or even two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. **11** "And into whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it; and abide there until you go away. **12** "And as you enter the house, give it your greeting. **13** "And if the house is worthy, let your greeting of peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your greeting of peace return to you. **14** "And whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet. **15** "Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Christ, here in what we call the limited commission, tells His disciples to go and teach, in this instance, the Jews. And then in the great commission in...

Mark 16:15-16

10

15 "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. **16** "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

His instructions are the same except without the limitation of going to the Jews only, here Christ commands His disciples to go into *all the* world.

2 Tim 4:1-2

11

1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: **2** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

In the context of **1 Tim 4**, Paul is talking to Timothy and charging him with spreading the gospel, but the principle is the same for us as Christians today. In...

1 Peter 3:13-15

12

13 And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? **14** But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, **15** but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

We have the responsibility to preach and to teach all that we come into contact with. Now, beyond our responsibility, I am curious why we wouldn't want to? If we truly believe in what we are doing, what God says, His scriptures, and the salvation He offers, why would we not be excited and zealous enough to want to share it with others?

This being said, we need to understand that the life we are living is most assuredly NOT a game. But make no mistake, we are in a contest. We are in the fight of and for our lives, our eternal lives, and the battlefield is right here, our hearts. Who wins that contest, either Satan or us, depends on whether or not we invite God to be on our team. We need to believe that the prize of this contest is a matter life and death, ETERNAL life and death, ours.

One of the saddest statements we read in the scriptures is that of...

Acts 26:28

13

28 And Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."

I wonder if Agrippa ever came to God. We have no record of it if he did. How sad to think that he will stand before our Lord on that day and think "***I was this close***". I don't want to be standing in the group waiting for the Lord to talk to me and hear a friend of mine say that no one ever bothered to tell them about God or Christ or the Holy Spirit or what the God Head had done for them. What a sad indictment that would be.

This brings us to our first point...

14

1) Philosophy

A good coach always tries to get his players to play hard at all times, to stay within the limits of the rules, to represent the school, or team, with honor and pride.

15 16 17 This philosophy translates well to what we as Christians should be trying to do in our lives as well as what we try to teach others. We should be diligent in our efforts to live and to spread the word, **play hard**. We need to adamantly stay within the parameters, **the rules**, that God has laid down, neither adding to nor taking away. We don't need to stage choreographed shows, or choirs, or donuts and coffee to try and attract people to God. If people's hearts are truly seeking their creator, those things won't make a difference. If not, maybe they should be called Agrippa. As children of God, our behavior and demeanor is vital to the message that we are trying to carry.

Col 4:5-6

18

5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. **6** Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.

When counseling with people as to why they decided to quit attending, one of the main reasons mentioned was how they were treated by people, or things that were said to them. Seriously, what would possess a Christian to want to make a statement or ask a question that ends up being offensive to someone and causes them to leave the Church. Now let's understand the dynamic. Just

because an unthinking, or callous, or busybody brother or sister in Christ decides to cross the line with a comment, in no way, shape, or form is this a justification to disobeying God. The excuse that someone else said something to me will not alleviate my accountability for my actions. It most assuredly puts those who have made the statements into jeopardy of losing their souls because of a few unthinking, unthoughtful, and hurtful words. I use to ask my children who they knew among their friends that they considered to be smart enough to allow them to make the decisions for how they would their lives. They always said none of them. Besides God, who do you know that you consider to be wise enough or that you trust enough to give them the ability to dictate how you will live your life? Yet we will allow some unkind thing that someone else says or does to determine whether or not I will obey God. SERIOUSLY. I didn't have to look very far to find an excuse, did I?

I don't want to be the excuse that someone uses to leave the Church. I might question the sincerity of their faith and commitment, but that is not for me to judge, that is up to God and they will be accountable for their own deeds as will I.

God's philosophy for His followers is that of Love. The next point...

19 2) Basic fundamental skills **20 21 22**

2 Tim 3:16-17 **23**

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; **17** that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

God has given us everything we need to be complete in our endeavor to be a Christian. Everything we need to accomplish every good work God has asked from us. When we stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment, is our excuse going to be that of the one talent servant who buried his talent and never used it because we were afraid, or is the better term lazy? Do we study the word to learn what the milk of the word is, the basic fundamentals? Are we striving to get to the point that we want the meat?

1 Peter 2:1-3 **24**

1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, **2** like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, **3** if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Are we a consistent Christian? Have we taken what God has given us and applied it in our lives and efforts to spread the word, or have we chosen to ignore His teaching and do our own thing? Do we work hard at knowing what He wants us to do and then doing it? Do we stay focused on God and His commandments or do we stray? Unfortunately God doesn't pull us out of the game and bench us when we deviate from the basics, maybe if He did, more of us would realize the error of our ways and come back to Him and His word.

25 3) Game Plan

Before the game, coaches look at the opposition, the plays they run, the personnel they have, the coaching tendencies and come up with a game plan that they think will give their team the opportunity to succeed.

26 27 28 Do we prepare ourselves to live the life God wants from us, do we prepare to teach, to be the proper kind of example to those that we know and come into contact with? I guarantee you, the competition is prepared. Satan is roaming around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. God has given us what we need, to be prepared to face the temptations we encounter, as well as the questions that the gain-sayers pose...

1 Cor 1:21 **29**

21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

God's game plan is that each and every Christian be prepared to give an answer for the hope that they have and that it is through the foolishness of preaching, at least that is how the world perceives it, that His word is to be spread.

- 30** 1) Philosophy - Do we follow God's rules, are we diligent in our efforts to spread the word of God, and in the words of today, do we represent. This means when people look at us do they see a child of God or a child of the world who is just trying to pass themselves off as God's? Will we stand before God and be held accountable for the harsh and cruel way that we have chosen to live our lives as.
- 31** 2) Fundamentals - Do we study to show ourselves approved? Have we moved past a need for the milk of the word and now desire to partake of the meat? Do we want to be able to share with others God? To be a child of God means to accept the responsibility to teach others.
- 32** 3) Game Plan - Do we accept and follow God's plan, or do we feel this need to change or ignore God's way and implement our own. The quickest way to the bench is to think you know better than the coach. God doesn't bench us when we ignore His plan. When we incorporate things into the worship service that just are not authorized, or alter the Word because we think there is a better way than what God has told us, we lose our souls to disobedience and will stand accountable before the Lord.

What a wonderful feeling to know that God has put us into a position to be successful in our efforts to help spread His word. Whether or not we actually are, depends on our choice to do Godly things His way. When you couple that with the things we don't control; What kind of heart does the person we are talking to have? How much are they under the influence of the world and Satan? We can see that our game plan won't be sufficient to the goal, but God's always will be.

1 Cor 3:6

33

6 I planted, Apollos watered , but God was causing the growth.

Never forget, we don't decide who will come to God, they do, and no one else can decide if we will do what God requires, we do. We have to decide if we are going to be laborers in His fields.

34

What is your game plan?

Are we ready to execute God's plan, or maybe we think there is a better way?