

## *Pk's Perspectives...* Rules

Did you know that if you plan to attend a college football game – especially at a large venue like Sanford Stadium – there are certain rules you need to observe if you hope to be allowed into the stadium? Don't believe me? Google "Sanford Stadium Policies" and check out the list of dos and don'ts. There are 55 sections in the Sanford Stadium Policies that detail what a person can and cannot do; what a person may or may not bring to game day; where a person may or may not go related to the stadium environs.

Let's look at just one of those 55 sections in the Sanford Stadium policy manual – the section titled "Prohibited Items". First is a statement that "Stadium security has the right to inspect any item at any time..." which means the fan will be held accountable for following the rules. Then follows a list of seventeen items that are prohibited from being brought into the stadium. Some of the prohibited items include strollers, artificial noisemakers, umbrellas, cameras w/detachable lenses, infant seats – items that seem quite harmless or insignificant. But there is a reason for these regulations and the expectation for anyone attending the game is that they follow the policies. I'm sure a fan caught trying to enter the stadium with a prohibited item could try to debate with Stadium Security – "*Here, Sir, check my Thermos bottle and you'll see it contains only coffee...decaffeinated because I'm already hyped up about the game*" – but you're probably going to have to sacrifice the Thermos bottle if you want to get into the stadium. The fan doesn't get to set the terms for what is or is not allowed into the stadium...the stadium authority sets the rules. The fan has to decide how deeply he or she desires to be a part of the stadium experience.

The powers that be at UGA are not trying to keep people out of the stadium or prevent fans from cheering loudly for the Dawgs. Trust me – UGA officials want every single one of the 92,746 seats in Sanford Stadium filled with warm bodies and booming voices on game day! But the fact remains that anyone desiring to be a part of the game day stadium crowd will have to follow the rules of stadium life.

It's interesting to me how we can accept/understand the need for rules and guidelines that have been handed down (*even if we don't fully agree with the policies!*) when it comes to attending a football game (*because we really want to be in that stadium!*) but we defy the notion that following Jesus means there are dos and don'ts about how we conduct our lives – decrees that have been handed down to us by our Creator. There seems to be a growing, and dangerous, attitude in church culture that speaking out against unrighteous behavior is tantamount to denying the unconditional love of God. The church needs to reconcile this foundational truth: the unconditional love of God does not equate to God's unconditional approval of our behavior. When speaking to the woman caught in adultery, Jesus did NOT say, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and keep on doing what you're doing."

But here's the critical difference between entering Sanford Stadium and entering the Kingdom of heaven: a person must be a rule keeper BEFORE entering Sanford Stadium; the Kingdom of God is open to all who receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. God isn't looking for rule keepers because there aren't any (Rm. 3:23). Yet to those who willingly confess belief in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, God says there are right ways and wrong ways to live life in His Kingdom: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light..." (Eph. 5:8) Cya in Sunday School & Worship, PK.