



CALVARY MONUMENT BIBLE CHURCH

LOVING, LIVING, LEADING FOR GOD'S GLORY

## KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE RIGHT BALL

Pastor Bob Reid | August 5, 2020

Now that sports are slowly starting up in a rather helter-skelter way, it may be good to review a key piece of advice that coaches will be shouting out to their players. It seems the same phrase applies equally well in baseball, tennis, basketball, football, soccer, lacrosse, and any other sport where a ball is involved. The advice coming from coaches, as well as parents and fans, “Keep your eye on the ball!”

The phrase is also applied to other aspects of life. It stresses the issue of focus, concentration, and commitment to a direction. I have even heard the phrase used in relationship with how to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. People argue that people are not focusing upon the right thing and they need to “keep their eye on the ball” and not become sidetracked by politics, economics, posts on websites, opinions and advice from people, and comments from media outlet prognosticators.

When it comes to dealing with the pandemic, it is good advice to keep one's eye on the ball. The question is, “Which ball?” Sometimes I feel like a person who is standing in front of a pitching machine that has gone berserk. Our culture rapidly and randomly is spewing out information that is both contradictory, confusing, and clouded with questionable agendas. To mask or not to mask. To open schools or keep them closed. To attend church or worship online. To visit older family members and friends or sequester them in isolation for another 100 days. To eat inside a restaurant or use takeout or sit outside. At some point so many different balls are flying at us that we duck behind a pat response like, “I just follow the science.” The response, sometimes tinged with some level of smugness, unleashes even more balls like, “Which authority? What study? How trustworthy?” The bottom line we are left asking is, “Which is the right ball?” Any wonder focus is lost, and poor decisions are made?

The same problem arises in the spiritual realm. We need to be careful that we are keeping our eye on the right ball. Too often numerous issues that people obsess about are not even an issue in Scripture, either in statement or principle. Christians too often focus upon gnats and overlook lions. Christians are great at writing systematic theologies and theological articles, but often overlook or fail to practice clear statements made in Scripture that are not in the least bit obscure.

Focus makes all the difference in our Christian life. It is the ultimate emphasis in the future when God establishes his kingdom. Isaiah records the song of the redeemed in the kingdom and writes, “You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock. (Isaiah 26:3-4 NLT). The redeemed are to keep their eye on the ball in the kingdom and they need to do the same now. Keeping the right focus now not just in some future day is imperative.

What we fix focus upon determines how we respond to the circumstances of life. Too often we take our “eye off the ball” – trust in the Lord – and focus upon circumstances of life. We focus upon the unsettled, uncertain, and unpleasant circumstances in this world. The result is lost peace which produces pain, perplexity, and even a persecution complex – “the whole world is against me.” When my “eye is on the ball” and I see the Lord as my unshakable, eternal rock, then nothing in my circumstances can steal my peace.

This principle is lived out in flesh and blood in the life of Stephen. He is accused of blasphemy by false witnesses in Acts 6:13-14. However, he does not become defensive and belligerent but manifested an angelic spirit (15). This provided Stephen a platform to proclaim Jesus as Messiah. He had kept his “eye on the ball” and was not distracted by the circumstances, emotions, or accusations of others. His thoughts were fixed on the Lord as he stood in a hostile environment in perfect peace. At the end of his message, the listeners were enraged but he “gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand” (7:55). Even as they stoned him to death, he kept his “eye on the ball” and displayed a Christ-like character as “He fell to his knees, shouting, ‘Lord, don't charge them with this sin!’ And with that, he died” (7:60). Because he kept his “eye on the ball” he was a powerful witness even in his death. One man, Saul, who held the coats of the murderers and approved of the killing (7:58; 8:1), was impacted. Later he would become the Apostle Paul!

Keep your eye on the right ball – the Lord – and not your circumstances. Focus upon the Lord, trust Him, and maintain a witness in the world that needs the peace God has given you.