

THE AIA PRINCIPLES

*The Gospel applied to sport,
experienced through sport,
in the language of sport*



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INTRODUCTION

Christians involved in sport often have difficulty knowing how their relationship with Christ relates to their sport. The Christian athlete faces several tough questions:

- What should be my motivation in competition?
- How do my faith and my sport mix?
- Will God keep me from getting injured in competition?
- Am I spending too much time on my sport?
- What differentiates competition that pleases God from that which doesn't please God?

The Principles you are about to look at will hopefully guide you in answering these questions, and many more you may have. Each of the 5 Principles takes a different story from the Bible and applies the Biblical principle from that story to sport and competition. They cover topics like: idolatry, motivation, identity, growth, pain and perspective.

As you study these Principles and begin to live them out, they can literally transform your life. Romans 12:1, 2 tells us that we should not try to conform to the pattern of the world, but instead be transformed by God's renewing truth.

The beautiful thing about these Principles is that they are God's principles from His word and they don't just apply to sport. They can be applied to any area of life. So don't limit them to your sports career. Apply them to your studies, business career, relationships, finances —every area of life.

Audience of One AO1

Are you ready to live and compete with a new perspective and a new audience?

We all live out our life in front of an audience. Whether it's neighbors, roommates, family, Facebook or thousands of fans. People watch us and evaluate us everyday. It's easy for us to get caught up in trying to please these audiences. But you need to realize an amazing truth...that there has been Someone else watching you for a long time. The Almighty God, over all creation, made you and has seen everything you have ever done (Psalm 139). **He really is your Audience of One as He watches everything you do.**

God as your Audience of One doesn't mean that you are playing for God, in the sense that you must impress Him, as if His acceptance of you is based on your athletic performance. You may think that the harder you play, the more God is pleased with you, like He is the heavenly scout watching your every play and when you fail athletically, He drops his head and shakes it in disappointment.

You don't need to perform or compete in order to try and receive love. Check this out...if you are surrendering your life to Jesus Christ, then God is fully satisfied with you. God's love for you is complete. He loves you unconditionally and lives in you eternally, because of what Jesus has done on your behalf through His life, death and resurrection. (Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 8:1-4; 1 Corinthians 6:19) Your sin is forgiven and you are a new person, who is being renewed every single day (2 Corinthians 5:17; 4:16). You also have a new identity as a child of God. **When you choose to listen to God's voice above all others, and live in the identity that He gives you, now you become an audience of one to Him.**

Every day and every play, you have the opportunity to respond to God with thankfulness for His love, through your attitude, effort and interactions, on the field of competition...as well as off the field (Psalm 100:4; Colossians 3:23; Luke 10:27). You don't need to be motivated by fear...fear of what your coaches will think, your teammates will think, the scouts will think, or your family will think (1 John 4:18). You are now free to be motivated by God's love for you...because no matter what happens in your sport, you are fully loved by Him (Psalm 103:17; 1 John 4:19). **This should free you to compete to your full potential.** (Galatians 5:1)

Jesus' power and love can overflow through your life in all that you do (2 Timothy 1:7; Galatians 5:22). This love doesn't make you play softer, it is a love that *roars deep inside* you, waiting to be unleashed...it drives you intrinsically to live and compete with passion, power and purpose (Colossians 1:29; Ephesians 2:4-7).

God is our ever-present Audience of One, who lives in us and shines through us for His glory.



THE AIA PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE 1: AUDIENCE OF ONE.7

God Alone Is Worthy of Your Worship

Ask: Who or what do I worship?

Read: 1 Kings 18:20-40 "Elijah & the Prophets of Baal"

Theme: God alone is worthy of your worship

Live It: Learning to turn away from false idols and towards the true God transforms sport into worship

PRINCIPLE 2: INSIDE GAME.12

God's Love Moves You from Fear to Freedom

Ask: What motivates me?

Read: Luke 15:11-32 "The Story of the Defiant Sons"

Theme: God's love moves you from fear to freedom

Live It: Understanding your identity in Christ fuels an entirely new motivation for competition

PRINCIPLE 3: HOLY SWEAT/WHOLLY SURRENDER. 18

God Provides Resources for Soul Training to Help You Grow

Ask: How do I grow?

Read: 1 Timothy 4:8 "Body and Soul Training"

Theme: God provides resources for soul training to help you grow

Live It: Train yourself spiritually by allowing the Spirit of God and the Word of God to transform your life and sport

PRINCIPLE 4: HURTIN' FOR CERTAIN.23

God Redeems Suffering for Our Good and His Glory

Ask: How do I deal with suffering?

Read: Genesis 37-50 "The Life of Joseph"

Theme: God redeems suffering for our good and his glory

Live It: God uses suffering in the context of sport to make us more like Christ

PRINCIPLE 5: VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION.28

God Requires Total Investment Today for Eternal Return Tomorrow

Ask: How do I live for God's kingdom instead of my kingdom?

Read: Matthew 25:14-30 "The Parable of the Talents"

Theme: God requires total investment today for eternal return tomorrow

Live It: Investing your sport and life in God's kingdom aligns you with God's mission in the world

PRINCIPLE #1

AUDIENCE OF ONE

God Alone Is Worthy of Your Worship

PRE-GAME WARM UP

Context: In many ways the whole story of the Bible can be seen as a struggle, conflict or even competition, between faith in God (trusting in the God revealed in the Bible) and idolatry (trusting in someone or something other than God to bring deep satisfaction, significance, and success).

Read **1 Kings 18:1-40**

1. Reread v21-24. How would you characterize or describe the people's commitment to God (18:21-24)?

What was their problem?

2. Many different things (good and bad) compete for our attention, our allegiance, our time, etc.

Who or what competes most strongly for your attention?

3. What do you stand to lose most by letting go of your idols?

PRINCIPLE #1

AUDIENCE OF ONE

God Alone Is Worthy of Your Worship

Ask: Who or what do I worship?

Read: 1 Kings 18:20-40 "Elijah and the prophets of Baal"

Theme: God alone is worthy of your worship

Live It: Learning to turn away from false idols and toward the true God transforms sport into worship

What is an "idol"?

How do we define "worship"?

I. PROBLEM! _____ Worship: Choosing between the living God or counterfeit gods (18:21-24)

"The greatest danger...is not that we become atheist, but that we ask God to co-exist with idols in our hearts." Tim Keller

II. WARNING! _____ Idols: Counterfeits don't ultimately deliver what they promise (18:25-29)

Idols are _____, but still speak (v26,29)

Idols are _____, but still strong (v27)

Idols are _____, but still promise life (v28)

How does sport become an idol?

Extreme pressure + Powerful influence + Passion to win + Intoxicating emotions

III. RESPONSE! _____ Surrender: Believe that God is supreme and worthy of my continual submission (18:30-39)

Heart _____: Value what God values (v36,37)

New prayer: From "It's *all* about *me*" to "It's *all* about *You*"

Life _____: Live out what God values (v39)

New response: Let God rule my every thought and action

IV. REVELATION! _____ Savior: Following Jesus changes everything

John 14:6

John 10:10

PRINCIPLE #1

AUDIENCE OF ONE

God Alone Is Worthy of Your Worship

LIVE IT

SPORT = IDOL	SPORT = OPPORTUNITY FOR WORSHIP
<i>Use God as a rabbit's foot/good-luck charm for your personal gain, win, or power</i>	<i>God chooses you to reflect His excellent character through your effort, attitude, intensity and sportsmanship</i>
<i>Compete to prove and justify your value and worth</i>	<i>God has determined your value and worth before you even compete</i>
<i>Disrespect for the rules (often ignoring or breaking them) and only abide by the rules when it is to your advantage or you might get caught if you publicly violated the rules</i>	<i>Compete by the rules all the time because they express what is fair, just and orderly (God's character) in order for the game to flourish</i>
<i>Winning is everything and the only thing</i>	<i>Competing to win consists of a serious challenge while enjoying the pursuit</i>
<i>Happy when your opponent competes poorly or is hurt because your only concern is your welfare (winning)</i>	<i>Believe and want the best both for your team and Your opponent because everyone is striving together toward excellence</i>
<i>Unrealistic expectations for yourself/team and fail to acknowledge your physical limitations</i>	<i>Accept your God-given abilities and your physical limitations</i>
<i>Give 100% only when coach, scout, family, friends, media, others are watching</i>	<i>Give 100% both publicly and privately because God is your audience</i>
<i>Do whatever it takes to win because the end justifies the means</i>	<i>What matters most is how you approached and played the game</i>
<i>View your opponent as the enemy and competition like war</i>	<i>View your opponent as co-competitor who deserves respect</i>
<i>Celebrating victory gets expressed through taunting, strutting and forms of showboating because it is all about you</i>	<i>Celebrating victory is expressed respectfully, appreciatively, and joyfully because it is about more than you</i>
<i>Jealous of other's success because it means they are out-performing me</i>	<i>Thankful for others' success because it pushes me to perform better</i>
<i>See sport as a right and something you must have in order to make it in life</i>	<i>See competition/sport as a privilege and gift</i>
<i>Unteachable spirit and disrespectful toward coach/authority</i>	<i>Teachable spirit and respectful toward coach/authority</i>
<i>Sport is your deliverer from your past, your poor circumstances or your family situation</i>	<i>God delivers and redeems you</i>

PRINCIPLE #1

AUDIENCE OF ONE

God Alone Is Worthy of Your Worship

LAB REFLECTION TIME

1. The first move in dealing with idols of the heart is to recognize and acknowledge how we might be manufacturing idols in our minds/hearts/imagination.

How might your sport, or other areas of your life, be functioning as a substitute for God?

How might you be elevating sport to an ultimate, god-like level? Your god is whatever your heart clings to and relies upon for power, control, prestige, approval, dependence, and achievement.

Jot down some ways this is occurring in your life. Be specific and honest with God:

2. God desires to be your "Audience of One" (read the AO1 article on page 2 of these notes) in sport, life, work and relationships. In our story in 1 Kings, the people begin to see their need to turn from their idols and start trusting fully in God alone. This "turning from idols" involves a change of your mind, your heart and your will with respect to what is most important. The Bible says:

"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Take a moment to confess what was true from #1 above and experience God coming down like fire to remove the idols from your heart.

3. Read through the "LIVE IT" page from your notes. Which areas continue to compete against God being your primary Audience?

PRINCIPLE #2

INSIDE GAME

God's Love Moves You from Fear to Freedom

PRE-GAME WARM UP

Read **Luke 15:11-32**

1. The younger son left his home to experience "life". What do you think he was looking for?
Did he find it? Why or why not?

2. How did the father respond when the younger son came home?
What do we learn about the father's view of the son as a result of his response?

3. Why was the older son angry?

4. Who can you identify most with in the story? Why?

PRINCIPLE #2

INSIDE GAME

God's Love Moves You from Fear to Freedom

Ask: What motivates me?

Read: Luke 15:11-32 "The Story of the Defiant Sons"

Theme: God's love moves you from fear to freedom

Live It: Understanding your identity in Christ fuels an entirely new motivation for competition

What motivates you?

recognition	money	coach	goals
fear of failure	pride	winning	teammates
revenge	parents	fear of losing	friendships
success	anger	accomplishment	fame

Luke 15:11-32

The Younger Son...

I. Motivated by _____. Looking for life _____ of his father.

A. The **pursuit** of a life independent of his father (v11-13)

B. The **result** of a life independent of his father (v14-16)

C. The **response** to a life independent of his father (v17-21)

The Older Son...

II. Motivated by _____. Looking for life by _____ for his father.

A. The **pursuit** of a life of performance (v29)

B. The **result** of a life of performance (v30)

C. The **response** to a life of performance (v28)

The Father...

III. Motivated by _____ with his sons. Looking for _____ with his sons.

A. The father **restores** his Pleasure-Seeking son (v20,22)

B. The father **reminds** his Performance-Driven son (v28,31)

C. Why does the father **do this** for his children?

John 1:12

Romans 8:14-17

Two Formulas for Your Identity

1) World's Formula for Your Identity = Your Performance + Other's Opinions about You

2) God's Formula for Your Identity = What God Says about You

PRINCIPLE #2

INSIDE GAME

God's Love Moves You from Fear to Freedom

LIVE IT

THE WORLD'S VIEW OF YOU AS AN ATHLETE...	GOD'S VIEW OF YOU AS HIS SON OR DAUGHTER...
<p><i>I must gain my acceptance by proving that I deserve it since my value is always earned, never given.</i></p>	<p><i>In Christ, I am accepted by God as a result of His grace toward me--never a result of works--so I do not need to work harder or prove my worth to anyone else. (Ephesians 2:8,9)</i></p>
<p><i>I am constantly weighed down by the expectation to perform perfectly, a bondage made worse by the fact that my coach—who's responsibility is to push me toward perfection--determines whether I play or not.</i></p>	<p><i>In Christ, I am secure because God is in control of the circumstances of my life even when things feel out of control, even when I'm not getting the results I had hoped for in my sport. (Isaiah 40:28-31, 1 Peter 2:18-23)</i></p>
<p><i>I must compete and live by my own power and strength at all times.</i></p>	<p><i>In Christ, I have the power of God within me, and can turn to Him for courage, peace, patience, confidence, self-control and other strengths in any situation, whether in competition or in life. (Colossians 1:29)</i></p>
<p><i>I am aware of a sense of competitive loneliness sparked by various internal fears and insecurities - even though I may have teammates and coaches. Deep inside I'm afraid that the only one who truly cares about the real me is the one looking back at me in the mirror.</i></p>	<p><i>In Christ, I am never alone because His Spirit lives within me and is a constant presence with me no matter what I deserve or how I perform. (1 Corinthians 6:19; Hebrews 13:5)</i></p>
<p><i>I may never be free from and may always be marked by my sports mistakes (dropping the ball, missing the play, losing the game, etc.) throughout my career and beyond.</i></p>	<p><i>In Christ, I am completely forgiven for every moral mistake (sins committed against a holy God that have eternal consequences--self-centeredness, dishonesty, doing harm, stealing, judging, hating, pride, etc.) whether in the past, present or future, and I can live free from the burden of my own brokenness and imperfection, in both life and sports. (1 John 1:9, Matthew 5:21-28)</i></p>
<p><i>I am significant if I am a starter and praised for producing positive results.</i></p>	<p><i>In Christ, I am significant because God gives me purpose that transcends my performance, a purpose that flows out of playing a role in His unfolding story. (Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 1:11)</i></p>
<p><i>I exist in a world where you only live once and what's happening at this moment - whether in sport or life - is the most important thing. I must compete with everyone around me in order to get what's mine today.</i></p>	<p><i>In Christ, I have eternal life, a life that begins now and extends forever into the future long after my earthly body dies, so I should invest in the spiritual lives of people instead of just the material pursuit of trophies. (1 John 5:13)</i></p>
<p><i>I am relentlessly pursuing my personal goals with the hope that they will provide lasting satisfaction. I chase a contentment that depends on gaining enough accolades to validate my success—though I know intuitively that no amount of worldly achievement will ever be enough.</i></p>	<p><i>In Christ, I am satisfied in Him, content to construct my identity from what He says is true about me, being freed to passionately pursue goals without expecting those goals to complete me. (Psalm 34:8-10, Philipians 4:11,12)</i></p>

PRINCIPLE #2

LIVE IT Part 2

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS IS TRUE OF YOU IN CHRIST

IN CHRIST, I AM ACCEPTED

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Ephesians 2:8,9

IN CHRIST, I AM SECURE

"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." Isaiah 40:28-31

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly." 1 Peter 2:18-23

IN CHRIST, I HAVE THE POWER OF GOD

"For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." Colossians 1:29

IN CHRIST, I AM NEVER ALONE

"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own." 1 Corinthians 6:19

"Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" Hebrews 13:5

IN CHRIST, I AM COMPLETELY FORGIVEN

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

IN CHRIST, I AM SIGNIFICANT

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

"In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will..." Ephesians 1:11

IN CHRIST, I HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life." 1 John 5:13

IN CHRIST, I AM SATISFIED IN HIM

"Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing." Psalm 34:8-10

"Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need." Philippians 4:11,12

PRINCIPLE #2

INSIDE GAME

God's Love Moves You from Fear to Freedom

LAB REFLECTION TIME

1. As you heard the talk today, what did you identify as the main motivational lie that typically fuels you in competition? Other's acceptance of you? Building self-worth? Something else?

How might what God says is true about you combat that lie?

2. What is the greatest challenge in believing God's voice towards you versus believing the "other" voices?

If you did believe God's truth about you, how might that produce a new freedom in you as you compete?

3. Other thoughts or questions God has surfaced for you to consider:

PRINCIPLE #3

HOLY SWEAT/WHOLLY SURRENDER

God Provides Resources for Soul Training to Help You Grow

PRE-GAME WARM UP

Read **1 Timothy 4:8**

1. List 3-5 training activities you engage in to grow as an athlete in your sport?

How have you seen growth in areas of your sport as you have been disciplined to train well?

2. What types of training activities do you engage in to grow in your faith?

Why might it be important to discipline yourself in these activities?

Read **John 14:15-26**

3. What are some of the words that Jesus uses to describe the Holy Spirit?

Read **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

4. According to these verses, why does God give us the Bible (Scriptures)?

PRINCIPLE #3

Holy Sweat/Wholly Surrender

God Provides Resources for Soul Training to Help You Grow

Ask: How do I grow?

Read: 1 Timothy 4:8 “Body and Soul Training”

Theme: God provides resources for soul training to help you grow

Live It: Train yourself spiritually by allowing the Spirit of God and the Word of God to transform your life and sport

1 Timothy 4:8

How do we train spiritually and grow our soul?

Who is the Spirit of God?

He is God

He is the third member of the trinity (Father, Son, Spirit)

He is fully God and co-equal with the Father and the Son

His primary role now is to be the active presence of God in the world

I. Surrender to the _____ (His Power)

A. What He does (John 14:15-26)

He lives in us (v17)

He counsels/helps us (v16)

He teaches us (v26)

He reminds us (v26)

B. How we workout (Galatians 5:16-25)

Walking in the “flesh” (v19-21)

Walking by the Spirit (v22-23)

C. How we live it out

Sweat and surrender at the same time! (Colossians 1:29)

What is the Word of God (Bible)?

It is God's Word to us
It shows us who God is
It shows us who we are
It shows us how to live

II) **Surrender to the _____ (His Plan)**

A. What it does (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Bible shows us:

What's right (teaching)

What's wrong (rebuking)

How to get right (correcting)

How to stay right (training)

B. How we workout

Study it:

Store it:

C. How we live it out

Pray

Community

Serve

Evangelism

Solitude

PRINCIPLE #3

Holy Sweat/Wholly Surrender

LIVE IT

COMPETITION IN THE FLESH...	COMPETITION IN THE SPIRIT...
<i>In the flesh, I believe it's true that if you're not cheating, you're not trying.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, I believe doing the right thing and honoring God is more important than acquiring victory, status, or attention by any means necessary.</i>
<i>In the flesh, I need to subtly demean or undermine my teammates in order to position myself better.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, I am secure enough in myself and in God's sovereignty over my situation that I can minister to my teammates and help them succeed while still trying to be number one on the depth chart.</i>
<i>In the flesh, I use conjured hatred toward my opponent as a motivation to compete, especially against my rivals.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, I compete to the fullest of my abilities in God's strength and am motivated to bring my best. I see this as a means of valuing my opponent, especially my rivals - as we push each other towards excellence.</i>
<i>In the flesh, I talk too much to try justifying my actions or to prove myself to others.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, I am careful with what I say and try to use words to build others up. If praise comes to me, I will let it be from the mouths of others and not from my own.</i>
<i>In the flesh, I am incredibly impatient with both myself and others, frustrated that things aren't perfect.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, I understand that I am in process - just like everyone else - and change takes time.</i>
<i>In the flesh, no matter the circumstances, I am unable to maintain peace because I cannot control what happens.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, no matter the circumstances, I experience peace because I can rest knowing God is in control of what happens.</i>
<i>In the flesh, I lose the battle with self-control: of my mind, of my mouth, of my body.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, I have access to victory - moment by moment - over my mind, my mouth, my body.</i>
<i>In the flesh, competition is all about me and getting mine, whether on the field or off.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, competition ultimately provides an opportunity to influence others and serve God, whether on the field or off.</i>
<i>In the flesh, I find myself inwardly pouting when I don't play, when we lose, when others get what I want.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, I can rejoice even in moments when things don't go my way.</i>
<i>In the flesh, I cut corners when no one is looking, whether in the weight room, the classroom, or the dorm room.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, I believe my character is developed when no one is looking—I am who I am when no one else is around.</i>
<i>In the flesh, I think more highly of myself than I ought, and tend to look down on others who aren't on the team.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, I thank God for the opportunity that I've been given, realizing that it could easily be taken away, and feel a genuine sense of humility when I'm with others who don't have that same opportunity.</i>
<i>In the flesh, I pretend to be something that I am not when I'm with others, highlighting my strengths and hiding my weaknesses.</i>	<i>In the Spirit, I never act like anything other than what I am--a combination of both good things and bad, saved by God's grace toward me.</i>

PRINCIPLE #3

HOLY SWEAT/WHOLLY SURRENDER

God Provides Resources for Soul Training to Help You Grow

LAB REFLECTION TIME

1. As you look at the chart from the talk today, do an honest inventory of your sport and answer this question: How do I tend to operate within my own power (the flesh) versus God's power (the Spirit)?

In what other areas of my life do I tend to rely upon my own power?

What seems to be the biggest hurdle to living in God's power instead of your own power?

2. What are the natural "down times" in your sport?

How can you begin to get into a consistent rhythm of "resetting and pressing on" so that it becomes a habit in your competition?

3. Other thoughts or questions God has surfaced?

PRINCIPLE #4

HURTIN' FOR CERTAIN

God Redeems Suffering for Our Good and His Glory

Ask: How do I deal with suffering?

Read: Genesis 37-50 "The Life of Joseph"

Theme: God redeems suffering for our good and His glory

Live It: God uses suffering in the context of sport to make us more like Christ

Narrative on Joseph's life in **Genesis 37-50**

I. Reality: Life outside the garden is broken and inevitably involves _____

Suffering: the pain that you experience as a result of a trial

Pain: something you feel that hurts

Trial: something circumstantially difficult that happens to you

A. Satan is our adversary (enemy) and loves to see us suffer

He has limited power, but his influence is great

His mission is to steal, kill, and destroy

He shouldn't be used as an excuse for your own poor choices

B. Suffering is complex and comes at us from many different directions

Personal choices

Others' choices

Different circumstances

The challenge is not to avoid or manage suffering, but to lean into God when we encounter it.

II. Response: Trusting God's _____ is the best response to suffering

Sovereignty: to reign or rule over all.

A. God's love and power anchor His followers even in the face of suffering

God promises to bring about "good" in every circumstance for those who love Him

God doesn't always allow us to understand why we suffer or how it will work out

God knows what He is doing even when we don't

B. How we respond to suffering reveals our trust in God's promises

Bitter or better?

Revenge or release?

Medicate or meditate?

Trusting God in the midst of suffering is a continual process that begins today and continues the rest of our earthly lives.

III. Redemption: God will _____ our suffering for our good and His glory

Redeem: To take something broken and through payment make it whole again

A. Suffering is a refining process that can produce growth in our lives

It will reveal character

It can bring about Christ-likeness and maturity

It can strengthen our faith for the next challenge

B. God's greatness is reflected

God uses the suffering and details of our individual lives to bring about His ultimate aims in history

God transforms the sin and suffering of our individual lives into something beautiful in His perfect timing

God uses the greatest suffering (the cross) to bring about the greatest good for all of humanity (the redemption of all things)

PRINCIPLE #4

HURTIN' FOR CERTAIN

God Redeems Suffering for Our Good and His Glory

LIVE IT

What is your default response to personal suffering?

BITTERNESS	REVENGE	MEDICATE
<i>Self-centered</i>	<i>Hurting others</i>	<i>Abusing alcohol</i>
<i>Entitled</i>	<i>Hurting self</i>	<i>Abusing sex</i>
<i>Complain</i>	<i>Trash talk</i>	<i>Social media addiction</i>
<i>Make excuses</i>	<i>Hate speech</i>	<i>Over training</i>
<i>Pouting</i>	<i>Gossip</i>	<i>Overly competitive</i>
<i>Constantly judging</i>	<i>Passive revenge</i>	<i>Binge eating</i>
<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>

What could it look like to respond differently the next time you experience suffering whether in sport or life?

What did you learn about God's perspective on suffering?

What about embracing suffering through God's perspective is most difficult for you?

Ask God's Spirit to enable you to deal with suffering in a way that would honor and glorify him.

PRINCIPLE #4

HURTIN' FOR CERTAIN

God Redeems Suffering for Our Good and His Glory

LAB REFLECTION TIME

1. After experiencing some challenges during lab today, what adjustments do you need to make in your perspective and response to suffering?

2. What are some specific challenges or struggles that typically happen to athletes in your sport? List them and start preparing yourself to respond to these according to God's perspective.

3. Other thoughts God has surfaced and/or questions:

PRINCIPLE #5

VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION

God Requires Total Investment Today for Eternal Return Tomorrow

PRE-GAME WARM UP

Read **Matthew 25:14-30**

Note: While a “talent” in this story literally refers to a sum of money, in our modern context the application refers to the sum of our lives—gifts, abilities, resources, etc.

1. How do you feel about letting other people borrow things that are valuable to you?

How do you feel when someone lets you borrow *their* important stuff?

2. Does it seem like what happened to the guy with one talent was fair? Why or why not?

3. Just like the occasional random drug test that may occur in your sport, what would be the result of a random examination of your life and how you are using it?

PRINCIPLE #5

VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION

God Requires Total Investment Today for Eternal Return Tomorrow

Ask: How do I live for God's kingdom instead of my kingdom?

Read: Matthew 25:14-30 "The Parable of the Talents"

Theme: God requires total investment today for eternal return tomorrow

Live It: Investing your sport and life in God's kingdom aligns you with God's mission in the world

Matthew 25:14-30

"Talent" then: A sum of money equal to 20 years wages--millions in today's currency

"Talent" now: Refers to a broader group of things including your money, abilities, opportunities, personality, passions, etc.

S _____ (1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Romans 12:6-8)

H _____

A _____

P _____

E _____

I. God gives his servants a choice: Invest His talents or bury His talents (Matthew 25:16-18)

Stewardship: To be entrusted with the possessions of another person to watch over or use for a time

A. Invest His talents _____

B. Invest His talents _____

God wants all of you. God doesn't want a part of your life. He asks for ALL your heart, ALL your soul, ALL your mind, and ALL your strength. God is not interested in halfhearted commitment, partial obedience, and the leftovers of your time and money. He desires your full devotion, not little bits of your life.

Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren

C. Invest His talents _____

II. God evaluates your investments: Gain rewards or suffer consequences (Matthew 25:19-30)

A. There are _____ to be gained (v19-23)

B. There are _____ to be suffered (v24-30)

C. You have _____ for what He entrusts to you.

III. God gives us perspective on His kingdom priorities: Invest in His kingdom or Invest in my kingdom

A. Understand the SHAPE of your life

B. Invest your SHAPE in God's priorities

His Word/Himself

People

Issues of Justice and Mercy

PRINCIPLE #5

VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION

God Requires Total Investment Today for Eternal Return Tomorrow

LAB REFLECTION TIME

1. How can your involvement in sports be an opportunity to impact others for eternity?

2. What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind after your career is over?

3. What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind after your life is over?

Additional Resources

PRINCIPLE #2

INSIDE GAME

Expanded list of what God declares is true about you as you live in Christ

1. I am accepted and worthy
Romans 15:7; Psalm 139
2. I am never alone
Hebrews 13:5b; Romans 8:38,39
3. I am adequate
2 Corinthians 3:5-6; Philippians 4:13
4. I have boldness and confidence
Proverbs 3:26; Hebrews 10:19
5. God is faithful to me
Philippians 1:6; 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:3
6. I have the mind of Christ
1 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Timothy 1:7
7. I have hope
Psalm 62:5; Romans 15:13; Colossians 1:27
8. I am seen as perfect
Hebrews 10:14; Colossians 2:13
9. I have been chosen and set apart
Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 2:9
10. I lack nothing
Philippians 4:19
11. I am free from fear
Psalm 34:4; 2 Timothy 1:7
12. I live by faith
Romans 1:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7
13. I have strength
2 Samuel 22:33; Psalm 28:7
14. I have victory
Proverbs 2:7-8; Romans 8:37
15. I have wisdom
Proverbs 2:6-7; 1 Corinthians 1:30
16. I am free
2 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 6:18
17. I have comfort
2 Corinthians 1:3,4
18. I am protected
Psalm 18:2; 32:7
19. I am perfectly loved
Romans 8:38,39; Ephesians 2:4-5; 5:1-2
20. I am an adopted child of God
Romans 8:16; Galatians 4:6-7; Ephesians 1:5
21. I am totally forgiven
Psalm 103:12; Ephesians 1:7
22. I have been declared righteous
Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30
23. The Holy Spirit lives inside of me
Acts 1:8; Galatians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 3:16
24. I have direct access to God
Ephesians 2:6; Hebrews 4:16
25. I am blameless
Jude 1:24; Romans 8:1
26. I have been created for good works
Ephesians 2:10
27. I am a new creation
2 Corinthians 5:17
28. I have authority over Satan
1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 4:4
29. I have peace with God
Romans 5:1-2
30. I am a light in the world
Matthew 5:14
31. I have an eternal inheritance
Romans 8:16-17; Ephesians 1:14,18
32. I have been raised with Christ
Romans 6:4-8; Galatians 2:20
33. I will be with Christ in heaven
2 Corinthians 5:1; Philippians 3:20
34. I have eternal security
1 John 5:11-13
35. I have spiritual gifts for His service
1 Corinthians 12

FOCAL POINTS

FOCAL POINT: A visual reminder to keep a Godly perspective

Ask: How can I keep my focus on Christ during competition?

Read: Hebrews 12:1-2 “Fix your eyes on Jesus”

Theme: A focal point can help reframe your perspective

Live It: Pick a focal point and look at it as often as needed

Throughout the Bible, God exhorts us to remember His presence with us and remember all that He has done. Hebrews 12:1,2 tells us to “fix our eyes on Jesus”.

A Focal Point can help with this. A Focal Point is a visual reminder of a Biblical truth. Using a focal point can help remind you that God is present with you, wherever you are. It can also remind you of your identity in Christ.

A visual focal point could be a cross on your shoe, a scar on your arm, tattoo on your body, a piece of sporting equipment, or a tree by your practice field, etc. You want to make sure that whatever you pick for a focal point is something that can quickly bring your mind back to God with just a quick look. A focal point isn't supposed to take your focus off of the game you are in. Rather it should help you focus your intensity more in the right direction, with added motivation that comes from remembering who you are and why God has put you in your sport. It also needs to be located in a spot that is easy for you to see it, so that when you need to refocus, you can simply glance at it and keep going.

In preparation before your practice or competition starts, you'll want to take a couple of minutes to locate a good focal point and think through what it will remind you of and how that will motivate you. Some people use a different one each day. Some use the same one for awhile. Soon you will have several favorite ones to choose from that work best for you.

Down Time is Reset Time: depending on your sport, the best time to look at your focal point is when there is “down time” or a break in the action (time out, out of bounds, penalty shots, etc.). Just like anything it will take practice, practice, practice. As you get more comfortable using a focal point, it will get easier for you to know how it works best for you.

PRINCIPLE #3

HOLY SWEAT/WHOLLY SURRENDER

Reference Verses:

1 Timothy 4:8 (NIV)

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”

John 14:15-26 (ESV)

15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. **16** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, **17** even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be [b] in you. **18** “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. **19** Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **20** In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. **21** Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” **22** Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” **23** Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. **24** Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me. **25** “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. **26** But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Galatians 5:16-24 (ESV)

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **19** Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21** envy,[a] drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24** And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Colossians 1:29 (NASB)

29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which [b] mightily works within me.

2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

Psalms 119:11 (ESV)

11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Resources for Further Study

PRINCIPLE 1: AUDIENCE OF ONE

Our God is Awesome (Tony Evans)
Counterfeit Gods (Timothy Keller)
Desiring God (John Piper)
The Unquenchable Worshipper (Matt Redman)
Our Covenant God (Kay Arthur)
Idols of the Heart: Learning to Long for God Alone (Elyse Fitzpatrick)
No God But God (Os Guinness and John Seel)
The World according to God (Greg Johnson)
The Transforming Vision (Walsh and Middleton)
Creation Regained (Al Wolters)

PRINCIPLE 2: INSIDE GAME

The Return of the Prodigal Son (Henri Nouwen)
The Bondage Breaker (Neil T. Anderson)
Walking in Victory (Dennis McCallum)
His Image My Image (Josh McDowell)
The Search for Significance (Robert McGee)
Green Letters (Miles Stanford)
What's So Amazing About Grace (Phillip Yancey)

PRINCIPLE 3: HOLY SWEAT/WHOLLY SURRENDER

Kingdom Man (Tony Evans)
Kingdom Woman (Tony Evans & Chrystal Evans Hurst)
With (Skye Jethani)
Spirit of the Disciplines (Dallas Willard)
The Pursuit of Holiness (Jerry Bridges)
Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Spiritual Formation (Ken Boa)
The Life You've Always Wanted (John Ortberg)
Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life (Donald Whitney)
The Jesus Creed (Scot McKnight)

PRINCIPLE 4: HURTIN' FOR CERTAIN

Unshaken (Crawford Loritts)
Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering (Timothy Keller)
The Problem of Pain (C.S. Lewis)
Three Philosophies of Life (Peter Kreeft)
As Silver Refined (Kay Arthur)
The Hidden Smile of God (John Piper)
Disappointment with God (Philip Yancey)

PRINCIPLE 5: VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION

The Divine Conspiracy (Dallas Willard)
For a Time We Cannot See (Crawford Loritts)
Futureville (Skye Jethani)
An Incomplete Guide to the Rest of Your Life (Stan D. Gaede)
The Rest of Your Life (Patrick M. Morley)