

***Six Bible Studies on the
“Audience of One” Principle***



AUDIENCE OF ONE

IF GOD ALONE IS WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP, WHY DO WE SPEND SO MUCH TIME WORSHIPPING OUR SPORT?

Every day, we live our lives in front of an audience—whether it's our neighbors, roommates, family, social media followers, or even thousands of fans in the stands. People are always watching, always evaluating. But what if we shifted our focus to a greater audience? What if we lived for the Audience that truly matters?

These **Audience of One** Bible studies are designed to help athletes experience the freedom that comes from worshipping God instead of their sport. Rooted in Scripture, these studies guide athletes to:

- See sports as an act of worship, not just a stage for performance.
- Turn away from the idol of sport and fully surrender to God.
- Compete with God and for God alone.

Are you ready to step onto the field or court with a new mindset—one that's focused on a higher purpose? Are you ready to compete for an Audience of One?

The Six Studies Include:

1. Created to Worship
2. Bent Towards Idolatry I
3. Bent Towards Idolatry II
4. Making Our Idols Serve Us
5. Freedom Over Fear
6. Understanding Audience of One

Created To Worship



We are created to worship. Worship is not just what we do, it's who we are. God hardwired into our DNA. The phrase and practice of "Audience of One" rests on a foundation of worship. Because our propensity to worship never stops, we must take aim and direct our worship at the proper target. We need to direct it towards an Audience of One.

Read the following verses out loud:

Psalm 29:2

Psalm 66:4

Hebrews 12:28

Romans 12:1

What are some things you notice?

What comes to mind when you hear the phrase "worship God"?

Some people define worship as "singing" or "going to church" - is it hard for you to think of worship differently?

How would you define worship? Come up with a definition for the word "worship" as a group?

Why do you think God creates us with a desire to worship? What does that tell us about God?

List out some things, good or bad, that our culture worships today?

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APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



You defined worship above as a group, but we would define it this way: worship is the act of giving ultimate worth to something or someone in your life. Populate a quick inventory of the top three things that are worth the most to you in your life. Where do you spend most of your time or money? Where do your thoughts usually drift? What gets you most excited? Share one of them with the group.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How do you think your daily life would change if you simply began to think about God more often throughout the day?

Which of the following strategies can you implement to give yourself an opportunity to worship God during your daily grind?

- Set an alarm on your phone to go off at different times reminding you to pray
- Commit to spending time in God's word every day
- Memorize a verse each week and try to reflect on it through each day
- Find a Christian community and commit to getting involved
- Initiate spiritual conversations with your teammates/coaches
- Listen to music that's honoring to God (Share some examples with the group)

Discuss what excites, intimidates, or challenges you from the list above. Pick one and implement it this week.

Bent Towards Idolatry I



Review of previous study:

1. Worship is *the act of giving ultimate worth to something or someone in your life*
2. We are all created to worship and we worship all the time
3. God wants our worship directed at him

So what happens when our worship is not directed at God? What happens when we worship created things rather than the Creator? The Bible has a word for this type of misplaced worship. It's called idolatry—and it stands in direct opposition to an Audience of One lifestyle. Identifying idolatry and exploring why it's hurtful to God (and harmful to us) is the focus of this study.

Key Context of Today's Scripture: There is a drought in the land. Instead of only pursuing the one true God, they direct their worship to a false god too. They probably don't think they are rejecting God, but just adding more gods to their plate to cover their bases. Elijah calls out the king and his prophets and issues a challenge.

Key Characters:

- *Baal* - false god • *Ahab* - bad king. • *Jezebel* - Ahab's wife- bad queen • *Elijah* - prophet of God

Read 1 Kings 18:18-40

What stands out to you as you read this passage?

How would you describe the people's commitment to God (18:21-24)? What was their problem?

Why do you think it was hard for these people to trust in God alone?

Tim Keller said: "*The greatest danger... is not that we become atheists (not worshipping any God), but that we ask God to co-exist with idols in our hearts.*" What is the point Keller makes and how would you respond to it?

How would you define an idol? Or, how have you best understood it up to this point in your life?

What are some ways you see our culture use sport as an idol? How do people "worship" it?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



Tim Keller describes an idol as *“anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. It’s anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living.”* An idol is whatever your heart clings to and relies upon for power, control, prestige, approval, dependence, and achievement—apart from God.

How might your sport be functioning as a substitute for God in your life?

Which of the following do you look for in your sport rather than in God?

- Power
- Control
- Prestige
- Approval
- Dependence
- Achievement
- Anything else?

In the story from 1 Kings, the people begin to see their need to turn from idols and trust 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 (as a group or in the quietness of your own heart) to confess some of the idols that may have surfaced during the study and claim the truth of 1 John 1:9 in your life.

Two Action Steps

Memorize 1 John 1:9 this week

Ask God to help make you aware of when you are worshiping things (like sport) instead of Him and pray 1 John 1:9 to Him in those moments.

Bent Towards Idolatry II



Review of previous study:

1. The opposite of an Audience of One perspective is idolatry
2. God is not satisfied with divided allegiances
3. An idol is whatever your heart clings to and relies upon for power, control, prestige, approval, dependence, and achievement—apart from God.

We need to take seriously anything that takes our mind off of God. The first step to killing our idols is to identify them. But how many of us have taken the time to assess our “relationship” with our sport? *Athlete, is your sport an idol?* The focus of this study involves taking a deeper dive into answering that question.

Read Exodus 20:4-5 and Colossians 3:5-6

From the Exodus passage, what does God say regarding idols? Why does He dislike them?

From the Colossians passage, what imagery does Paul use regarding what we should do with idols? Why might that extreme language be significant to our understanding of idolatry?

Rate every question below on a scale of 1-5

1 = does not describe me at all

5 = absolutely describes me

- ___ I feel most significant when I achieve success in sports
- ___ My greatest fear is my sport being taken away from me
- ___ Even when I am not playing/practicing my sport, I am constantly thinking about it
- ___ I think about my sport more than I think about God
- ___ I spend more time practicing/playing/thinking about my sport than I spend in the spiritual disciplines (reading the Bible, prayer, attending church, fasting)
- ___ When I think about my self-worth, I identify more often with being an athlete than a child of God
- ___ I use God as a good luck charm in my sport (“If I’m good, God will bless me athletically”)
- ___ I feel most loved and appreciated by others when they affirm me for my success in sports
- ___ I feel most depressed when people speak negatively about me because of my failures in sport
- ___ The first thing I think about when I wake up and the last thing I think about before I go to bed at night is my sport

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



What were the top 3 statements that best describe you from the list above?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Share with the group which statement from the list above is most relevant to you right now. Why?

Can you think of any real life examples from your sport that connect with any of these statements?

How do some of these statements keep you from playing your sport before an Audience of One?

Why do you think it's so easy for us to allow sports to become an idol in our lives?

Making Our Idols Serve Us



Review of previous study:

1. God wants to be our primary audience
2. God wants us to put our idols to death
3. The first step in killing our idols is identifying them

So, what does it mean “to put your idol to death”? Does it mean quitting your sport? Take a deep breath. That’s not what we are advocating for in this study. What God wants is for you to repent of the idolatrous role that sport has played in your life and then to view your sport differently moving forward. Sport isn’t the problem. *We are the problem.*

Most idols start as good gifts God gives us that we misuse by turning into gods. Athletes, sport is a good gift from the Lord! What if we began using sport as a vehicle to drive us closer to God, instead of using God to get more out of our sport? We get this backwards! For God to be our Audience of One, we need to use His gifts, like sport, to draw us deeper into a relationship with Him. The focus of this study involves keeping God’s good gifts in their proper place so they do not become idols.

Read 1 Timothy 6:10

What do you learn about money from this verse?

You may have heard a version of this verse before, i.e., “money is the root of all evil” - how is that different?

Is money a bad thing? When does it become a bad thing (an idol)?

List out a few ways that we can honor God by the way we make and spend money. Share a couple of these ideas with the group.

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What’s the point? *Not all idols are created equal.* Some idols need to be put to death completely. Idols like Baal (from 1 Kings 18) can’t be leveraged to serve God. They need to be “put to death.” But most idols are good gifts that end up loving more than God Himself. Good gifts are given to help us worship God! It all comes back to worship. Money fits into this category—and sports do too. When we practice, play, and view our sport before an Audience of One, we best position ourselves to maximize God’s glory and our joy. Athletes, we need to stop worshipping our sport and start using sport to worship God.

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



The challenge is trying to find practical ways to do this on a daily basis. If God gives us sport to enjoy and bring Him glory, we need to creatively find ways to make that happen. That means both our thinking and our actions need to reflect this truth.

What are some ways you can use your sport as an opportunity to worship? Check out the chart below and spend some time circling what resonates the most with you. Share the ones you circled and why you circled them with the group. Pick one and talk about how you plan to live it out this week.

<i>Sport = Idol</i>	<i>Sport = Opportunity for Worship</i>
<i>Use God as 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>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>Want the best 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, and others are watching</i>	<i>Give 100% both publicly and privately because God is your Audience of One</i>
<i>Do whatever it takes to win because the end justifies the means</i>	<i>What matters most is how you approach and play the game</i>
<i>View your opponent as the enemy and competition like war</i>	<i>View your opponent as co- competitor who deserves your 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 you</i>	<i>Thankful for others' success because it pushes you 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 an opportunity</i>
<i>Unteachable spirit and disrespectful toward coach/authority</i>	<i>Teachable spirit and respectful toward coach/authority</i>
<i>Sport is your ticket to escape from your past, your bad circumstances or your family situation</i>	<i>God is the One who redeems your life circumstances and carries your burdens</i>

Freedom Over Fear



Review of previous study:

1. Some idols need to be put to death. They have no redeeming value.
2. Other potential idols, like money or sports, are good gifts that we love more than God.
3. The goal of any good gift is to enjoy it and use it as an opportunity to worship God.

So, idols are bad. Worship is good. When we view our sport (a good gift) against the backdrop of an Audience of One, we use our sport as an opportunity to worship. Great. So, why is it so difficult to do that? For some of us, the answer is fear. How does fear prevent us from fully worshiping God through our sport? That's the goal of this study.

Key Context of Today's Scripture:

David is bringing the ark of the Lord into the city. This is a big deal. The ark of the Lord is where the presence of God resides in the Old Testament. David is basically bringing God's presence into the city of Jerusalem. And he is appropriately excited about it. In fact, he is so excited that he begins dancing, not caring what anyone else thinks besides God.

Key Characters:

David - King • *Michal* - David's wife • *Ark of the Lord* - symbolizes God's presence

Read 2 Samuel 6:14-21

How do David's actions represent an "Audience of One" mentality?

Despite his position as king, why do you think David was willing to "look foolish"?

List a few reasons that could have prevented David from dancing before the Lord

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How did his wife respond?

How did David respond to his wife?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



Whose opinion do you care most about? Rank the following from most important to least (1=most, 10=least). Share with the group your top 2. Why did you choose them?

- ___ Mom
- ___ Dad
- ___ Brother/Sister
- ___ Grandparents
- ___ Teammates
- ___ Current Coach(s)
- ___ Former Coach(s)
- ___ Boyfriend/Girlfriend
- ___ Fans
- ___ Social Media Followers
- ___ Other

Where does God fit on that list?

In what ways are you afraid of looking foolish before others as you focus on worshiping God in your sport?

What do you think it looks like—both internally and externally—to care more about what God thinks than others?

Do you think being free from the opinions of others would help you be a better athlete? Why or why not?

Action Step

Ask God in prayer to bring awareness of when you are operating out of fear (other's opinions) or freedom (God's opinion of you) this week.

Understanding Audience of One



Review of previous study:

1. God wants us to live and play out of freedom instead of fear
2. Fear = other's opinions of us
3. Freedom = God's opinion of us

It's time to narrow our focus on the phrase "Audience of One." Let's recap again. Idols are bad. Worship is good. When we view our sport against the backdrop of an Audience of One, we use our sport as an opportunity to worship. But what does that actually mean? Maybe more importantly, what does it *not* mean? That's the goal of this study: helping you better understand this hashtagable phrase.

Read Romans 12:1,2

What is Paul trying to communicate to his audience? How can this apply to you today?

Check out the chart on the following page, reading through the left side of the chart below first. Which categories on the left side of the chart resonate with you most?

Did anything in this chart challenge your perspective on Audience of One? If so, what?

What ideas does this chart give you on how to worship God through your sport?

Does anything on the right side of the chart excite or motivate you? If so, what specifically?

How might the truths expressed on the chart expand your perspective of Audience of One?

What Ao1 Does NOT Mean	What Ao1 Does Mean
Playing "for God," as though we are performing for Him, trying to earn His applause or favor by being successful in our competition.	Playing "with God" constantly aware of His presence in the midst of the game, competing completely focused on the job at hand while also completely aware that His is everywhere with you.
Receiving some sort of additional competitive blessing that others on the field cannot access. God as your primary audience does not mean He is predisposed to make sure you win or always come out on top of the competition.	No matter what happens on the scoreboard in a particular game, God's kingdom values keep the game in perspective, allowing you to be disappointed in a loss and excited for a win without losing sight of other priorities.
You don't care what anyone else thinks about you or that you suddenly become immune to criticism of parents, coaches, fans, or others.	The criticism of others stays in its place and can be absorbed into the fuller identity categories declared true about you by God. Your inevitable failures as a competitor have no bearing whatsoever on your true identity as a child of God, and this truth alone allows you to exhale in the midst of competitive stress.
You never struggle with in-game anxiety or that you become immune to the effects of adrenaline and circumstantial stress, nor does it mean you cannot feed off the crowd or ride the momentum created by game situations.	Since you have access to a motivation that transcends the immediate circumstances of the game, you can also experience a peace that transcends understanding in the midst of whatever the game brings. You can learn to let God's presence override the immediate presence of everyone and everything else, winning or losing, playing or sitting, and choose to give maximum effort no matter what is happening.
You are perfect in your performance, words, or lifestyle, nor that you have to acquire the victory of some standard of living before you can claim playing for an Audience of One. It certainly doesn't mean that claiming it before competition makes you immune to sinful behavior during the game itself.	Before you declare it to the world through a body tattoo or writing it on your clothes, you should attempt to understand what it means theologically. It requires that AO1 moves from being a cliché—a mantra you heard someone else say that you repurpose on game day—to you actually working through what it means to walk humbly with God moment-by-moment, day-by-day, trusting Him in spite of your imperfections and failures along the way.
You no longer care what your coaches, teammates, school or organization think about you or your performance or that you're not fully committed to your team.	You can play with complete freedom because only God's opinion of you really matters.
If you write "AO1" somewhere on your body or uniform during the game, that you will receive special in-game powers, success or blessing..	You might write a focal point on your body or uniform somewhere to help you remember who you are playing "with" all game long.
You never feel lousy about yourself when you perform poorly and make critical mistakes in games.	You have the opportunity to play with a genuine freedom that comes from finding your identity not primarily in being an athlete, but in being a child of God, adopted into the family of the One you know is always watching. His love toward you depends on who He is, not on your performance; therefore, this identity never changes for you, no matter how you're portrayed in other's imaginations.

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

What are one or two things you learned from the Audience of One study?

Are there any changes you feel compelled to make in your life as an athlete? If so, what?

Take the remainder of the time and pray for one another. The leader can pray for everyone or you can take turns if people feel comfortable praying out loud.