

***Five Bible Studies on the
“Inside Game” Principle***



INSIDE GAME

MOTIVATION MATTERS.

When your motivation fluctuates—high one day, low the next—your performance will follow the same pattern. As athletes, if we want to compete consistently at a high level, our motivation needs to be steady and unshaken by circumstances.

Simply put, athletic performance thrives on steadfast motivation.

But this isn't just about sports—it matters to God. Scripture shows us that what drives us at our core is deeply important to Him. God cares about our hearts above all else, and our motivations reveal where our hearts truly are.

Inside Game helps athletes understand that God desires more than just our effort—He wants us to experience His love and find our ultimate satisfaction in Him. When we root our identity in Christ, we begin to live in true freedom and experience joy both in sports and in life.

The Five Studies Include:

1. From Fear to Freedom: Parable of the Prodigal Son
2. Godly Motivation: David and Goliath (Part I)
3. Godly Motivation: David and Goliath (Part II)
4. Identity: God's View vs. The World's View
5. From Fear to Freedom: I Am Accepted

From Fear to Freedom



Mo-ti-va-tion: the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way.

What motivates you matters to God. For that reason, it should matter to you too. Motivation can be external or internal. We see time and time again in God's Word that He is after our internal motivation. He places a premium on our inside game in sports and life—the game that happens in our hearts and in our soul. What we believe on the inside is what will motivate our actions and efforts in life and sports. God's desire is that we would fully know who we are in Him—and that this new identity would move us from fear to freedom. This study looks at the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

Key Context: Jesus is trying to communicate the extravagant mercy of God towards sinners. Mercy is compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm. He tells three parables. The first parable describes a shepherd leaving 99 sheep to go after the one that is lost. The second parable describes a woman who has 10 coins but loses one. She rejoices when she finds the lost coin. The third parable describes a father rejoicing when his wayward son returns home. The progression is key because Hebrew is a language without punctuation marks so the communicator often used word repetition or concept progression to make a point. Jesus starts with animals (sheep), moves to inanimate objects (coins), and concludes with human beings, the pinnacle of God's creation.

Read Luke 15:11-32

The younger son left his home and took his inheritance to experience "life." What do you think he was looking for? Why did he decide to return home?

What do you notice about the father before he says anything to his son upon his return? What about after he reached him, what did he say?

How did his love move the younger son from fear to freedom?

What do we learn about the father's view of the son as a result of his response?

Why was the older son angry?

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

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



It's so easy to think that what God cares about the most in our sport is the end result. Have you ever noticed when athletes "give glory to God"? It's usually after a win or a highlight real performance. But God's after more than that. God says in 1 Samuel 16:7 "the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." He's after the inside game going on within us.

The first step towards gaining a Godly motivation in sports is identifying where we are at. This means being honest with yourself. God loves you exactly where you are at, poor motivations and all—but He does not want you to stay there. He knows that no championship or personal best performance will fill the void in your heart for true joy and peace. He desires more for you.

What motivates you in your sport? Circle any that apply.

Recognition	Fear of failure	Revenge	Success
Money	Pride	Parents	Anger
Coach	Winning	Fear of losing	Accomplishment
Goals	Teammates	Friendships	Fame

Share one or two that you circled with the group. Why did you choose these?

Are there any other motivational factors that did not make the list above?

Where do you think these motivations come from?

How does your coach try to motivate you?

How does seeing God as a loving and merciful Father free you from some of the external motivations listed above?

Godly Motivation: David and Goliath (Part I)



Review of previous study:

1. Motivation is the reason(s) one has for acting or behaving in a particular way.
2. God cares about what motivates us. We should care too.
3. Understanding God's love and mercy should move us from fear to freedom.

Let's keep talking about motivations. It's good to identify what motivates us. But it's better to identify *why* that particular thing or person is the driving force behind why we compete. The reason behind the reason often holds us hostage from moving forward. We don't have to become captives of those motivations. True freedom comes when we starve those lesser desires of their power over us and stay focused on what God says is true. This lesson will look at the life of David leading up to his showdown against Goliath.

Key Context of Today's Scripture: Samuel is a prophet. He is looking for the next King of Israel. He shows up at Jesse's house and has Jesse bring out his seven sons. The only problem is Jesse has 8 sons. Jesse chose not to include David.

Read 1 Samuel 16:8-13

How would you feel if you were David? If this were you, would you use this situation as future motivation?

Key Context of Today's Scripture: Goliath, a giant, is challenging one man from Israel to face him. David's brothers are part of Israel's army on the front lines. David is charged by his father with bringing food to his brothers. When he does, he witnesses the giant's challenge.

Read 1 Samuel 17:24-30

Again, how would you feel if you were David?

Key Context of Today's Scripture: David then goes to King Saul and tells him he wants to challenge Goliath.

Read 1 Samuel 17:33

What was King Saul's response? Do you see a trend in David's life with how people treat him? Should he use this as future motivation? Why or why not?

Key Context of Today's Scripture: David is finally allowed to fight Goliath. He chooses not to put on armor and grabs a few stones for his slingshot instead.

Read 1 Samuel 17:42-44

How does Goliath respond when he sees David? Would you use his words as motivation?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



David's father forgot him and his brothers laughed at him (family). The King disregarded him at first because of his age and size (authority). Finally, Goliath taunted and mocked him (opponent). The next study will look at whether or not David used any of these key life moments as his ultimate motivation. We need to sit in this reality for a little bit though. Key moments in life—especially those that involve our family—can plant seeds of motivation for future events.

Does any part of your story resonate with David's? If so, which part(s)?

While playing sports, what family member(s) do you most often look toward to gain approval?

Can you recall a time in your life when someone close to you told you that you were not good enough? Have you used that as motivation in your sport at any time in your life?

Can you recall a time when a coach (authority) said you were not good enough? How did it make you feel? Were you motivated to prove them wrong?

What's one thing you learned from this study that you can begin applying within the context of sports?

Godly Motivation: David and Goliath (Part II)



Review of previous study:

1. There are reasons behind our motivations
2. Many times our motivations originate out from family relationships
3. Other times our motivations stem from coaches or opponents

Let's recap what we know of David's past. His father ignored him. His brothers belittled him and seemed annoyed by his presence. Saul (King of Israel) dismissed him because of his size and age. Goliath, his opponent, mocked him. Against that backdrop, we roll the scene on one of the most famous stories in history: the battle of David and Goliath. This study focuses on choosing a God honoring motivation over a worldly one.

If you were in David's shoes (or sandals), which of these interactions (family, coach/authority, or opponent) would hurt you the most? Why?

Read 1 Samuel 17:33-51

What was David's motivation for competing against Goliath? (verses 45-47)

Why do you think David chose this type of motivation (Godly) over being motivated to prove others wrong (wordly)?

This is purely speculative, but how do you think David would have "performed" if he was motivated by proving others wrong? Do you still think he would have defeated Goliath? Why or why not?

What do you think are some practical ways you can begin to cultivate a Godly motivation in your life as an athlete?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



Remember, motivation is the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way. It's the narrator inside of your head and heart telling you why you are about to do something. As athletes, you need to pay close attention to this inner monologue. We can say the right things on the outside, but rehearsing the right lines does us little good if the voice in our head/heart is louder than the one coming out of our mouths.

Search "[Gatorade Rival](#)" on YouTube and watch the clip as a group. JJ Watt narrates it. It's about one minute long.

What are your immediate reactions to what you just watched?

Would David agree with Watt's encouragement? Why or why not?

Now search "[Hey Rival](#)" on YouTube and watch the clip as a group. Athletes in Action produced this one.

What are your immediate reactions to what you just watched?

Did any of the statements resonate with you? Which ones? Why?

Compare and contrast the two videos as a group.

Identity: God's View vs. The World's View



Review of previous study:

1. Despite plenty of reasons to prove others wrong, David chose to be motivated by serving God.
2. Sports culture encourages us to be motivated by our rivals.
3. God desires for us to be primarily motivated by him.

We've talked a lot about motivation in the last couple of bible studies. We shed light on what a Godly motivation looks like and many of the lesser motivations that we often default to in our sport. But *how* do we arrive at a place where honoring God becomes the default motivational factor? For starters, we never "arrive." Finding proper motivation will forever be a battle. But it's one worth fighting for. This study focuses on identity (how we view ourselves) and how a Godly motivation flows from a right view of ourselves.

To start, we need to understand the two basic formulas we can access to find our 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

Take a few minutes in the space below and list out some of your athletic accomplishments, some of your athletic failures, and what you have heard others say about you—positive and negative.

Accomplishments:

Failures:

Others Opinions:

The world would take the sum of everything you just wrote and claim: this is who you are. Discuss how that makes you feel with the group.

Now write out what God says about you in the space below and discuss it with the group. Was this list harder to write out than the list above? Why or why not?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



If you are like most people, creating this second list was more difficult because many of us just don't know what God says about us. How are we supposed to leverage this "second" list as our identity if we struggle to even write out who God says we are? It's time to open up the vault of how God views us. It starts with understanding that God primarily relates to us as our Father—not as a friend, or fan, or coach.

- Spend the remaining time together looking through the list below.
- Look up the verses associated with each identity and read them out loud together.
- Contrast what God says is true about you (right side) with what the world says is true about you (left side).
- Before you leave, choose one "identity" from the list and try to remember it throughout the week. Share with the group which one you chose to help hold one another accountable.

THE WORLD'S VIEW OF YOU AS AN ATHLETE...	GOD'S VIEW OF YOU AS HIS SON OR DAUGHTER ...
<i>I must gain my acceptance by proving that I deserve it since my value is always earned, never given.</i>	<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>
<i>I am constantly weighed down by the expectation to perform perfectly, a bondage made worse by the fact that my coach — whose responsibility is to push me toward perfection— determines whether I play or not.</i>	<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>
<i>I must compete and live by my own power and strength at all times.</i>	<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>
<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>	<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>
<i>I may never be free from my past and may always be marked by my sports mistakes (dropping the ball, missing the play, false start, losing the game, etc.) throughout my career and beyond.</i>	<i>In Christ, I am completely forgiven for every moral mistake (sins committed against our 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>
<i>I am significant if I am a starter and praised for producing positive results.</i>	<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>
<i>I exist in a world where you only live once and what's happening at this moment - in sports or life - is the most important thing. I must compete with everyone around me in order to get what's mine right now.</i>	<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>
<i>I am relentlessly pursuing 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—even though I know that no amount of worldly achievement will ever be enough.</i>	<i>In Christ, I am satisfied in Him, content to find my identity in what He says is true about me, being freed to passionately pursue goals without expecting those goals to ultimately complete me. (Psalm 34:8-10, Philippians 4:11,12)</i>

From Fear to Freedom: I Am Accepted



Review of previous study:

1. The World's Formula for Identity = Your Performance + Other's Opinions about You
2. God's Formula for Your Identity = What God Says about You
3. God sees us primarily as a good father sees his son or daughter

Share with the group what identity statement (e.g., accepted, loved, satisfied, etc.) you chose to focus on for the last week. How did it go? Were you able to remind yourself or did you forget?

Maybe you reminded yourself of that identity every hour of every day. Maybe you completely forgot about it until now. Remember, we never fully arrive at maturity in our relationship with God. It takes time. It takes habits. It takes community. And it takes God's grace to move us forward. We need to continue to press into who we are in God's eyes—not the world's eyes. This study will take the first identity from the previous study and unpack why it's necessary to embrace our acceptance in Him.

**The questions are written in a way that allows you to take any of the identities from the list and build a completely different study around that particular truth.*

Start with the verse(s): Read Ephesians 2:8,9

What stands out to you as you read those verses? What do you think God is trying to communicate through this passage?

Why do you think Paul used the word “gift” to describe our salvation?

Identify the truth: I am accepted

Describe what this truth means to your life? Is this easy for you to embrace? Why or why not?

Contrast it with the world's view: I must gain acceptance by continually proving it.

Describe a time in your career when you experienced this world's view.

On a scale of 1-10 (1 = never, 10 = always), how often do you default to the world's view regarding this particular identity? Discuss your answer with the group.

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



The Bible teaches us that only God can meet our core needs (identity, worth, relational intimacy). When these deep needs are being consistently fulfilled by God, our motivation to perform can become more intrinsic and consistent. Our new motivation shifts toward “I am HIS” instead of “I am IT.” We can then pursue sport for the pleasure it was intended to bring instead of clinging to it as a life-source. It’s time to release sport from trying to meet those needs and enjoy it as a gift from the Father. It’s time to use the passion, desire, and talent he gave you and learn to worship him through your sport.

What is the greatest challenge in believing God’s voice towards you versus believing the “other” voices?

How could your Christian teammates—or other Christian athletes—help you in this journey of believing God’s voice in your life?

God’s voice moves us from fear to freedom: I am accepted > I need to prove it

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

Challenge: Scripture is filled with what God says is true about us. Make time the rest of the week to read through this list and the Bible verses associated with each truth.

An expanded list of what God declares TRUE of 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; 2:3; 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

LIVE IT - Understanding your identity in Christ fuels an entirely new motivation for competition

