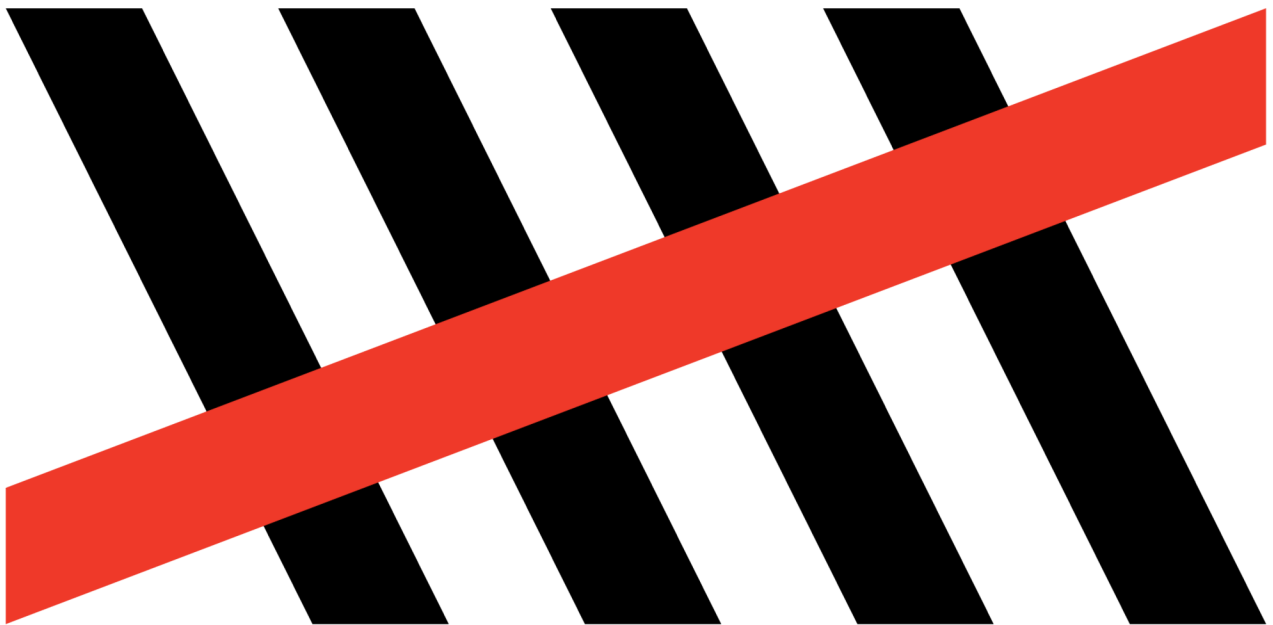


***Five Bible Studies on the
“Victory Beyond Competition” Principle***



VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION

LIFE IS SHORT. YOUR TIME AS AN ATHLETE IS EVEN SHORTER.

But that doesn't mean sports don't matter. In fact, it's just the opposite. Because your time in athletics is limited, it's even more important to be intentional with how you invest it—you never know when it could come to an end.

So, what does it look like to live and compete for God's kingdom instead of your own?

In **Victory Beyond Competition (VBC)**, you'll discover that God calls us to invest fully in the present for an eternal return in the future. Through these five studies, you'll explore what it means to be a good steward—making choices today that reflect eternal priorities, even when the timeline is uncertain.

When you invest your sport and your life in God's kingdom, you're not just aligning with His mission—you're opening yourself up to the greatest joy possible as an athlete.

You were made for more than just your sport. Are you ready to find out what that is—and how to live it out?

The Five Studies Include:

1. Be Ready
2. Invest Well
3. Final Judgement
4. Every
5. Commissioning

VBC: Be Ready



Kobe Bryant just died. Maybe you're going through this study one year later. Maybe five. But at the time of us writing this study, one of the greatest players in NBA history just died in a tragic helicopter crash at 41 years old. Kobe was a legend. Five championships, 15 All-Star Game appearances, 4 All-Star Game MVP Awards, 10 All-NBA First Teams, 9 All-Defensive First Teams, 2 NBA Finals MVP Awards and a single regular-season MVP Award. Those are great stats! But his death confronts us with a hard question: At the time of his death, was he ready to meet God? Are we? That's the focus of this study.

Read Matthew 25:1-13

Context: Jesus is preparing to die. It's within a few days of him being crucified, and his disciples are quizzing him about what will happen. While preparing himself for death, he is actually preparing his disciples for how to LIVE—extending to life after death. He explains that the coming days will be full of wars, tribulation, and all sorts of evil but at the proper time, he will come back as the ruler of the universe (Matthew 24:29-31). So be alert, wake up and live as one expecting the return of the King. *Parables teach one main point. Try not to get caught up in figuring out why the bridegroom has 10 virgins waiting for him and why 5 of them chose not to share their oil.

What is Jesus trying to communicate by teaching this parable? Why is he teaching this right before he dies?

What was the bridegroom's response to the foolish five? Does that seem fair to you? Why or why not?

On a scale of 1-10 (1=never, 10=always), how often do you think about life after death?

What does it practically look like for us to “keep watch” today?

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

How can we be confident that we are known by God when we die or when Jesus comes back?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



This is challenging stuff. Especially for athletes. For most of your life you have been in control of your fate. You put in the time, effort, and energy, you get rewarded with playing time or success. On top of that, you are one of the fittest people at your school/university. Yes, death will happen at some point, but it is a long way away. The hard truth is that we never know when our time on earth is done. We don't even control the beating of the heart that keeps us alive. This is not meant to scare us. But it is meant to prepare us. In the end, one thing matters most: do we have a relationship with the God of the Universe?

How can we be ready for the return of Jesus (or our death) without living in constant fear or anxiety about it? What does that tension look like?

Read Philippians 1:21-23

How do you feel about the statement “to live is Christ and to die is gain”?

How does death realign us to what really matters in life? Do you have any personal experiences with this from previous (or current) teams you have been on?

How can you help each other to “be ready” on a daily basis?

VBC: Invest Well



Review of previous study:

1. The Parable of the Ten Virgins challenges us to be ready at all times for Christ's return
2. Death often realigns us to what truly matters in life
3. Our confidence comes from the Gospel, not our own works

You can spend hours watching film and preparing for the game. You can have the best plan in place to attack their weaknesses and leverage your strengths. But at some point, you have to play the game. In the last study we talked about the need to be ready for Jesus' return by looking at the parable of the ten virgins. Does that mean we shouldn't focus on this earthly life at all? By no means. God wants us to invest well with what he has gifted us with. That's the focus of this study.

Read Matthew 25:14-30

Context: See context for previous study. 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.

What is Jesus teaching in this parable?

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?

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

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? (Use a 1-10 scale to make it easier)

What would stop you from investing your talents immediately, completely, and selflessly?

If you knew you only had one year left, who would you invest your life in and what would you do to leave a legacy?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



So, should we focus on Jesus coming back or focus on investing our gifts for his glory? **Both**. The last two studies show us that Jesus wants us to invest deeply, but to do so with our eyes on eternity.

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

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

If you have time, **work through the acrostic (SHAPE) below** and talk about how God has specifically made you. The sum of this SHAPE is your “talent” God has given you to steward. If you do not have time to get through all of them, do what you can and finish the rest on your own this week.

Spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Romans 12:6-8)

When you come to Christ, His Spirit indwells you and equips you with special gifts to serve His people. Things like teaching, serving, evangelism, mercy, discerning, healing, administration, etc. They are more than just skills, they are divinely empowered gifts for service. What are your spiritual gifts?

Heart

What are you passionate about besides sports? What does your heart beat for? What makes you angry? What bugs you? What fills up your mental time when not competing? What makes you laugh/cry?

Abilities

What skills do you have?: athletic, intellectual, artistic, musical, fixing things, administrative, thinking through processes, good with people, good with numbers, communication

Personality

The way you think, act, feel about things. Are you the life of the party or more laid back/introspective? Cup half empty/half full? Extroverted/introverted? Impulsive/plodder? How would you explain your personality?

Experiences

God gives you a story, a narrative context...nothing happens by accident, nothing has to be wasted, nothing is wasted by God; where you were born, family, race, your story, things that have marked you, access to resources, money, etc. even your sin. All of these combined not only to make you uniquely YOU, but become a resource for you to potentially bless others. What experiences do you have?

VBC: Final Judgment



Review of previous study:

1. The Parable of the Talents challenges us to invest well the gifts that God gave us
2. The acrostic SHAPE helps us understand the unique way we are created

“Don’t judge me!” “You shouldn’t be judging them!” Judging or judgment is such a taboo idea these days. We live in a day and age when you do what’s best for you, stay in your lane, and don’t worry about what others are doing with their lives. Nobody wants to be judged. But the reality is all of us will be eventually—by God. This can be a scary reality and one that’s hard to talk about. However, if the Bible addresses it, we need to move towards it as well. The final judgment is the focus of this study.

Read Matthew 25:31-46

Context: Jesus is preparing to die. It’s within a few days of him being crucified, and his disciples are quizzing him about what will happen. While preparing himself for death, he is actually preparing his disciples for how to LIVE—extending to life after death. Jesus teaches three parables: The Parable of the Ten Virgins, The Parable of the Talents, and The Final Judgment. This passage is the last parable within this set of three.

What is Jesus teaching in this parable?

What does Jesus mean when he says “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me”?

How could having this kind of perspective on the people around you change your thoughts and actions towards them?

This is the last parable Jesus tells within this set of three. How does understanding the previous two parables help us see what Jesus is trying to communicate?

How do we balance the tension of understanding we are saved “by grace, through faith” alone with the reality that we will also be judged on our actions?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



We need to understand this parable against the backdrop of everything else we know about God and salvation. When we do, we rightly understand that:

1. If we have surrendered our lives to Christ, we are adopted into the family of God. Our salvation is secure.
2. At the final judgment, we will still be judged on how we acted towards other people (all made in the image of God) during our time on earth.
3. How we act towards others can be a litmus test of whether we have truly surrendered our lives to Christ in the first place.

Read Ephesians 2:8-10

What are some truths you see within the verses you just read?

How would you define “good works”?

Why do you think it is tempting (especially for athletes) to think that our “good works” earn us God’s favor?

From the passage in Matthew, who are “the least of these” within your athletic context?

From the passage in Ephesians, what are some practical “good works” you can do towards these people?

VBC: Every



Review of previous study:

1. There will be a final judgment
2. Even though our salvation is a free gift (grace), what we do still matters
3. What we do can reveal whether or not we have received the free gift of salvation from God

The overbearing coach. The annoying teammate. The arrogant opponent. The fan who comes across as...creepy. You get the point. We all have those people in our lives as athletes that just get under our skin. Athlete, how you respond to these people—both inwardly and outwardly, matters to God. It matters because he put them in your life for a reason. Even more than that, it matters because God loves them just as much as he loves you. And he desires for them to love him back. So what do you do with that? The focus of this study is on the heart of God to see everyone come to know him.

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Context: The Apostle Paul is writing a letter to his protege, Timothy. He is instructing him how to live a Godly life and how to respond to the false teachers at the time in the church at Ephesus.

What are the first things you notice after reading these verses?

Who does Paul tell Timothy to focus his attention towards? Why do you think he chooses these people?

What does he instruct Timothy to do?

What do we learn about God from these passages?

In what ways could our perspective towards the frustrating people in our lives change if we embraced these verses?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



God desires for everyone to come into relationship with him. God loves men and women from every tribe, tongue and nation. In fact, the Bible even tells us that Jesus won't return until every people group on earth is reached with the message of the Gospel (Matthew 24:14). Sports represents some of the most diverse groups of people coming together for a common purpose. You have an opportunity on your team, in your athletic department, and in your city to be a change agent for Christ by mirroring God's heart for "every."

Make a list below of the people God has placed in your life according to how difficult you think it would be for them to come to know the Lord.

<u>Easy (their almost there)</u>	<u>Middle ground (I'm not really sure)</u>	<u>No way (they'll never love Jesus)</u>
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•

What category was the easiest for you to populate? Why do you think that is?

What are some ways you can show the love of Jesus to the people in each category?

Take a few minutes in silence as a group and commit to praying in your own hearts for the people in each category.

How hard was it for you to pray for people in the "no way" category?

Challenge:

Commit to praying for the people you wrote down every day for the next week. Ask God to bless them. Ask God to make himself known to them. Ask God to give you an opportunity this week to tell them about him. Hold each other accountable!

VBC: Commissioning



Review of previous study:

1. God cares about every tribe, tongue and nation
2. We need to see others the way he sees them

Imagine you are never going to see your parents, siblings, teammates, or friends again (I know, that's an intense way to start the last study). What would you say? How would you want them to live in the days, weeks, months and years after you're gone? Our last words matter. They help those around us answer the questions "what's next"? Jesus knew this better than most. Put yourselves in the disciple's shoes: The Messiah is here. Yes! He dies. No! He comes back to life. Yes! Actually, now he is going back to Heaven. No! Surely, they were wondering what they were supposed to do after Jesus left them. And Jesus' answer to that question applies to us today too. Answering the "what's next for us" question is the focus of this study.

Read Matthew 28:18-20

Context: Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead three days later. He spent a few weeks on earth with his disciples before ascending back to Heaven. Before his ascension, he gave a final commission (The Great Commission) to his disciples.

What are the various aspects of the Great Commission?

How would you define the word "disciple"?

Why is Jesus concerned with all nations?

Jerry White (former President of the Navigators) once said: *"God, the Word of God and the souls of men; according to the Bible these are the only things which will last eternally. To the extent that you are involved in these three things, you are involved in eternity."* Discuss this quote with each other.

What has your involvement in these three looked like in your life so far? How would you like them to look moving forward?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE



We need to love people enough to respect their current spiritual status while being open to show them what God might have for them. Good communication, composed of both timely words and silences, forms the bridge between these separate positions. People are not projects—they are fellow travelers on a journey we all share in common! Becoming a Christian should make us more human, not less!

How much you care for people is often reflected in how you work at communication with others. Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1=poor, 5=excellent).

- _____ Taking a genuine interest in others by asking good questions
- _____ Seeking to understand before being understood
- _____ Responding with clarity and confidence yet without judgment
- _____ Pointing out destructive habits with compassion and humility
- _____ Willingness to understand a different point of view
- _____ Listening more than talking
- _____ Celebrating and affirming other people as they are

What practical steps can you take to improve in your weakest areas?

When you interact with non-Christ followers, are you more afraid of what others might think if you take a stand for Christ or of falling back into your old lifestyle because of negative influences?

Read Colossians 4:2-6.

The apostle Paul encourages believers toward three foundational but ongoing actions among others who have a different worldview: 1) devoted prayer v2, 2) wise conduct v5, and 3) gracious speech v6. How would you define each of these phrases?

Consider: “We should always talk to God about men before talking to men about God.” Why is prayer so critical before we hang out with others? What might we pray about? What is Paul’s specific prayer request in v3,4?

After considering each of the three, how are devoted prayer, wise conduct, and gracious speech interrelated with one another?