

Making Room For God

February 4, 2018

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

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Later today the Super Bowl will be played as hundreds of millions of people around the world watch. Of the top ten programs, in history, to have been watched on TV, nine have been Super Bowls. So the entire world will be tuned in to two teams, playing football. Then later this week the world will direct its attention to the Winter Olympics in South Korea, where athletes from all over the world will gather to compete for a medal. After the Olympics, we move into college basketball's March Madness and there will be basketball games seemingly around the clock for a month. Then after that, baseball season starts.

The world is infatuated by sports, and I might say I enjoy keeping up with the various sporting events, as a spectator. Then we didn't mention yet all of the things our kids are into, soccer, volleyball, basketball, little league baseball, swimming, track, hunting, fishing and the all the ones I can't think of at the moment, including Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H.

It seems as if one season runs into the next and we don't want our kids to miss out on anything, because it all seems important.

Maybe that's what led to the question we looked at a couple of weeks ago when someone asked Jesus what the most important thing in life was. Jesus answered, "To love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind."

Parents- consider this question. When your sons or daughters leave your home someday, which one of these things would you want most for them?

- a. To be successful academically
- b. To be successful athletically
- c. To be successful socially
- d. To be a person of faith and character

Personally, I would like to have another option, e. all of the above. But if you could only have one, which one would you choose?

Most likely we would say that faith and character are the most important. At least that seems like the right answer.

Let me change the question a bit. Which of the following parenting issues get the best of your parenting time, effort, money and planning?

- a. Academics
- b. Athletics
- c. Social life
- d. Faith and character development

The question itself feels a bit convicting, because I too am a parent. They told us in seminary that as pastors we were to comfort the afflicted, but then at times we were to afflict the comfortable.

Let us imagine that all of our children turnout to be smart, athletic, popular, polite and hard working. It would seem that they would be poised for all the success the world has to offer. But what if they do not love God and know His plan for their lives? More importantly, what if they do not get safely home to heaven? There is nothing wrong with being great in sports, getting good grades, being well-liked or financially successful. The danger is that if these things become our focus, we can completely miss the things that truly matter. Jesus said, "Seek God first and everything else will be given to you." Matthew 6:33

How many of you remember the movie "Chariots of Fire"? It was the true story of a man named Eric Liddel, an Olympic sprinter for Great Britain. Liddel, a devoted Christian, was headed for the 1924 Olympic Games in France when he learned that his race, the 100 meter dash was scheduled to be run on a Sunday. He refused to race on the Sabbath despite enormous pressure from the leaders of his country. Liddle made that choice because throughout his childhood his family's schedule always prioritized the value, sanctity, and

biblical teaching about the Sabbath. He was the fastest runner in the world and had achieved the honor of participating in the Olympic Game, yet he chose not to race on the Sabbath because of the values he had learned growing up with a God-filled family life. God rewarded his obedience by allowing him to win the gold medal when he ran in a different race later in the week.

Look how far we have come? We are now at the point that if our 12 year old makes the traveling baseball team, everything else in life takes a back seat, including church. We make it to church when we can, if it fits our schedule. My point here is not that missing church is the worst think in the world. Rather, my concern is that if every time sports and church collide on your calendar and sports always wins, then the schedule you have chosen is teaching your children that you value their bodies over their souls. The message we are conveying is that church is something that we do when there is nothing else to do.

I know that I am preaching to the choir this morning, because you are here in church, while the rest of the world is home getting ready for the Super Bowl that starts seven hours from now.

Here's the thing. God has created the family in such a way, as to be the primary place to incubate and nurture our faith and our love for God. We are to talk about it and impress it upon our children. The family is the place where we have the generational connection to be able to pass a legacy of faith to our children and grandchildren. We impress our faith and our love for God by the way we live.