

Becoming A Superbowl Church

Text : I Cor. 9: 23-27 , Phil. 3: 7-16

INTRODUCTION :

A. The Passover in ancient Jerusalem was an amazing occasion.

1. People from all over the world made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
2. More than 50K lambs were sacrificed within a few hours.
 - a. The logistics of the sacrifices were amazing.
 - b. A special drainage system was in place to take away the blood.
3. Feasts were held all over the city and in far places.

B. On the 12th day of the 12th month of the Muslim calendar they go to Mecca.

1. One of the 5 pillars of Islam. (All able-bodied men must make pilgrimage to Mecca.)
2. More than 3 million made the pilgrimage in 2008.
3. During the “Hajj” the devil is stoned and they feast for three days.

C. No other great gathering can equal the American Superbowl.

1. It's the world's most watched television event.
2. The world's most expensive television commercials are shown during the game.
3. There are more parties during the Superbowl than any other time of the year.
 - a. There is twice the amount of pizza eaten as any other day.
 - b. There are more than a billion chicken wings eaten.
 - c. During Superbowl week last year 52 million cases of beer were purchased just from convenience stores.

D. Participating in a Superbowl game is a life-long dream of many men.

1. Rich men spend hundreds of millions of dollars hiring the very best player.
2. Coaches carriers depend upon their ability to get their team in the Superbowl.
3. Young boys begin dreaming of playing in the Superbowl while in grade school.

E. God instructs Christians they must have that very same desire for greatness.

1. You have never seen a pro athlete with a “just do enough to get by” attitude.
2. God won't accept Christians on His team who just want to “get by”, **to be average.**

Rev. 3:15-16 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. **16** So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

TRANSITION :

THEREFORE, we must all strive to be the very best Christians we have the ability to be. To accomplish this, we must apply some of the same principles that go into making a great athlete for these are also required to make Christians great. Five of these are : Desire, Discipline, Commitment (focus), Sacrifice, Character.

I. Success is almost invariably a product of a strong desire to succeed.**A. Desire is not a sometimes thing.**

1. The number one reason people drop out of anything is loss of desire.
2. **The smartest person I've ever known, flunked out of college his first year.**
 - a. He had a fantastic scholarship which even gave him pocket money.
 - b. His family was behind him all the way.
 - c. The problem was, he had no real desire to be there.
3. Our desire to be the very best we can for God must be the driving force of our life.

B. The Apostle Paul taught us that we should

"Run in such a way that you may win." Vs. 24

1. Today, no one will go out on that field just to be there.
2. LIKEWISE, the Christian must never be contented to just be there.
3. Winning is a habit.
 - a. **Winners expect to win.**
 - b. The Pittsburg Steelers have won 4 out of the last 5 times in the Superbowl.
 - c. Christians have to learn how to be winners and expect success. **Desire it most !**

C. The game of life goes on continuously and has eternal consequences.

1. The Isthmian games were held every 4 years near Corinth.
2. The Christian's race is run every day of his life.
 - a. We compete against Satan's influence.
 - b. The Apostle says, **"Run in such a way that you may win."**
3. Paul also tells us that we must *"keep on keeping on"* day after day.
 - a. **Phil. 3: 12- Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.**
 - b. The game isn't over until the final gun sounds. (**Christians go to be with God.**)

II. In order to be a Superbowl church we must be a disciplined church.

A. Desire is essential, but discipline is also essential to success.

1. One who desires to loose weight only succeeds if he is disciplined.
(**You may have the wanna, but if you don't have the gotta, you'll never experience the getta.**)
2. Years of training go into becoming a winning team, army, church, or anything else.
 - a. By the time they get to the game, the team is able to play without thinking about it.
 - b. Pros still practice the basics. (**Pro player shoots 100 foul shots daily.**)
 - c. Maturity in Christ doesn't just happen; we must work at it.

B. Exercise causes pain before it yields its benefits.

1. **ILL.-** Hall of famer Walter Peyton was one of the best running backs in history.
 - a. **He was always the first one at practice and the last to leave.**
 - b. **After practice he ran the hill by his house 20 time a day all year round.**
 - c. **NONE of his teammates could run that hill with him.**
2. Jesus never promised us an easy road.
 - a. He commanded us to share His cross.
(**I may know ... the fellowship of His sufferings. Phil. 3: 10**)
 - b. **II Tim. 4: 5- "... be sober in all things, endure hardship ..."**

C. Christian maturity doesn't just happen.

1. Just as there are no shortcuts in physical conditioning, there are also none in spiritual conditioning.
2. Discipline has become a dirty word in our culture, **but** success still depends upon it.
3. Most of us want to win; we just don't want to suffer to do it. **SELF- DISCIPLINE**

III. In order to be a Superbowl church we must be a committed church, focused.

A. Too many people view their Christianity like they view a recreational sport.

1. People who play golf on Saturday afternoons play only when it is convenient.
2. They may miss there game to work around the house. (**Tiger Woods doesn't miss.**)

B. The professional athlete's whole life revolves around his sport.

1. At a very young age, they commit themselves to their sport.
2. **ILL.-** Bill Heller ran every day for many years to get to the Olympics.

3. No one arrives at the professional level without years of hard work.
4. Teams don't make it to the Superbowl by just showing up for games.
5. LIKEWISE, Christians don't make it to Heaven by just showing up for services.

C. To be a Superbowl Christian or church we must commit and never look back.

1. This year both teams in the Superbowl have lost games, but they pressed on.
 - a. Championships are won one game at a time.
 - b. Every week presents its own challenge. (*Not the week before or after*)
 - c. **Winners focus only on the game at hand.**
2. Christians play the game of life one day at a time. (*Not the day before or after*)
 - a. The devil is a veteran opponent who just keeps on coming after Christians.
 - b. **Read ... Phil. 3: 12-14**
 - c. Even when put in prison, the Apostle Paul pressed on ... focused on the goal.
3. Without focus Christians become discouraged. (**James 1 = double-minded**)
 - a. We don't have to understand WHY things are the way they are, just press on.
 - b. The old song, "*Trust and Obey*" has a message we all need to take to heart.
4. **Once we've committed our whole heart to God, NOTHING can stop us.**
That's the difference between the "professional" and the amateur view of Christianity. ... commitment.

IV. To be a Superbowl Christian or church requires sacrifice.

A. Excellence in sports or anything in life does not come without sacrifice.

1. The Superbowl trophy is called the "Vince Lombardy Trophy."
Success is like anything else, it has a price. You have to pay the price to win and pay the price to get to the point where success is possible. Most important you must pay the price to stay there. Football is a lot like life. Vince Lombardy
2. To sacrifice is to give up something for a specific purpose. (**ILL. - Jesus**)
 - a. Imagine the sacrifices required for a team to get to the Superbowl.
 - b. They spent the better part of their lives getting to that point.
 - c. Most will live in pain the rest of their lives as a result of abuse to their bodies.

B. Success in the spiritual realm also requires sacrifices.

1. One can't be a disciple of Christ unless he gives Him his life every day of his life.
 - a. **Luke 9: 23**
 - b. One must make Jesus the single highest value in his life. **Luke 14: 25 f**

2. The Superbowl Christian will give up sin and pleasures to pursue righteousness.
3. The Superbowl Christian will give up freedom to take up servitude to Christ.

C. Sacrifice is not a one time thing; but a way of life.

1. There is no off-season these days. (*Even at the high school level*)
2. Christianity is a way of life, **NOT** a meeting that we attend each week.
Heb. 12: 1- ... let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

V. The Superbowl Christian or church will have a Christ-like character.

A. Character is what we are at heart.

1. It's what we do when no one is watching.
2. It's what we do when we don't have time to think about what we should do.
3. Every team has a game plan.
 - a. It incorporates all their training into a winning strategy.
 - b. The team's character is revealed when their game plan breaks down. (**ours also**)

B. The Superbowl Christian's character incorporates all four of the above.

1. The greatest desire of his life is for the cause of Christ to be victorious over Satan.
2. He will discipline his body daily to assure his assignment is accomplished for Christ.
3. He will remain totally focused on achieving God's purpose in His life.
4. He will sacrifice whatever is necessary to achieve God's success.

CONCLUSION :

A. What is our character ?

1. Individually, would God choose me to be on His Superbowl team ?
2. Were there a spiritual Superbowl would our congregation be in it.

B. The Apostle Paul used a lot of sports analogies because there are many similarities in what it takes for success.

- C. Is our strongest **desire** to win the crown of life which God will give ?**
Are we **disciplining ourselves to become the best Christians we can become ?**
Are we **focused solely on that one goal to the exclusion of all distractions ?**
Are we making the **sacrifices necessary to win or just wishing for success ?**