



**FELLOWSHIP OF
CHRISTIAN ATHLETES
BASEBALL**

Team Devotions

East Georgia FCA

The Challenge

PRE-GAME

1. Have you ever had to fight for your position on a team?
2. What is the hardest part of playing your sport?
3. What is your attitude toward competition?
4. In what areas of life are you most challenged by competition?

READY “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” - [Proverbs 27:17](#)

SET Several years ago, as a senior on the baseball team, I had climbed the ladder and put in my time until it was finally my chance to be a starter. Each year I had been competing with older guys and had never ended up winning the job. This year, though, I was the oldest and most experienced, so I got the opportunity. All throughout our fall practices and into early spring I was performing well and was really earning my position. One week before our first game, though, our coach began moving other guys from different positions to begin working at third base with me. At first, this bothered me. I wondered what it was going to take for me to prove that I could do the job. Deep down, I felt like our coach was creating a back-up plan because he had no confidence in me and was waiting on me to fail. Through this experience, I began to realize that nothing worth having is ever going to come easily. In life, we have to work hard for things we want. Rarely will anything worth having just be given to us. And this relates to the Christian life as well. Living a life for Christ is not easy, but it is no doubt worth it. On the ball field, I realized that, as I felt like I had earned the starting position, it was always going to be a battle for me to keep it since there would always be guys capable of taking the spot. If I didn't have that competition and felt like the job was mine, I wouldn't feel the need to work as hard. I would become complacent and lazy. This is why we need other people involved in our lives to push us toward Christ. As the above verse from [Proverbs 27:17](#) says, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” While living for Christ is not a competition among Christians, it is still a daily battle to defeat our enemy. This is why it is vital to have people who challenge you in your walk with Christ to ensure that you don't become complacent and lazy and start thinking you can coast by on your salvation. Today, don't run from competition. Rise up to the challenge and realize the importance of others pushing you in sports and in your walk with the Lord. Keep God first; play for Christ; walk with and stand for Him. Do these things, and the Lord will never let you fall.

GO

1. Do you believe it is a challenge to live the Christian life? Why or why not?
2. How can you live up to the challenge of our calling to live for Christ?

WORKOUT [Psalm 37:23-24](#)

Perfection

PRE-GAME

1. What is the “worst call” you have seen in a game? Did it involve you? How did you react?

READY

“The Rock—His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. A faithful God, without prejudice, He is righteous and true.”

-[Deuteronomy 32:4](#)

SET

On June 2, 2010, MLB pitcher Armando Galarraga was one out away from a perfect game: no hits, no walks, no errors. An easy ground ball was hit to the first baseman who tossed the ball to Galarraga, who was covering the first base bag. His catch clearly beat the runner to the bag for the final out of the game, but a veteran umpire called the runner safe, therefore ending Galarraga’s perfect game. This mistake showed that even the veteran umpire wasn’t perfect. And, in reality, none of us are.

Every one of us makes mistakes. We all make misjudgments, bad calls and show our imperfections in a variety of ways. But there was one Man who lived the only perfect life in history: Jesus Christ.

More than 2,000 years ago, Jesus lived a life of perfection here on an imperfect earth. Everything He did was perfect. He spoke all the right words at the right times, did all the right actions and perfectly demonstrated God’s character and love.

On March 14th, 2011, I was one strike away from bowling a perfect game. After 11 strikes in a row, I only needed one more to have a perfect game. I was shaking so badly that I could barely hold my ball. With the whole bowling alley watching me I stepped up to bowl, and right when I released the ball I knew I had blown my chance at a perfect game. I hit the pins a little bit to the left and only knocked down seven, leaving my score at a 297. It was a great game, but not perfect.

This experience made me more aware of how amazing it is that Jesus lived a perfect life. It is truly amazing that in all the turmoil and negativity of a sin-filled world, that He still lived perfectly. He didn’t tremble at the thought of perfection. He didn’t even second-guess Himself. He knew that everything He was doing was exactly right.

While our goal every day should be to strive for Jesus’ model of holy perfection, we must understand that we will never be perfect. We are all sinners, and we will make daily errors in actions, words and thoughts. The closest we will get to perfection is by having a relationship with Jesus Christ—the One who made the perfect sacrifice of His life to save us from our sins.

Yes, by all means, continue to aim for Christ-like perfection, but focus more on cultivating a healthy personal relationship with Jesus, willingly repenting to Him for the sins that you do commit. Doing that will bring you as close to perfection as humanly possible.

GO

1. Do you strive for perfection in life, sports, or anything else you do? If yes, how? If no, why not?
2. What is your standard for perfection? Where does your standard come from?
3. How should you react when you mess up? Another word for “mess up” is sin.
4. What can you do to better stay on Jesus’ path of perfection?

WORKOUT

[Matthew 5:48](#)

No Excuses

PRE-GAME

1. What is the best excuse, or an excuse, you have heard for missing practice or class, dropping a ball, or being late?
2. What are some common phrases about excuses (i.e., “excuses are like elbows, everyone has two”)?

READY

But without exception they all began to make excuses. [Luke 14:18](#)

SET

When I was 12, I was playing second base for an all-star team. I still remember dropping that pop fly that ended up, in part, costing us the win. I made excuses—blaming the rain and even the lights (it was a night game). At the time, I didn’t think I was making excuses; I just didn’t want the loss to be my fault.

Excuses spread like a virus. We blame the refs, our teammates and even the weather! We make excuses for why we’re late to practice, why we didn’t work out, why we missed a shot—you name it. When we justify why we didn’t do what we should’ve, it’s easier to make excuses the next time.

“Excuses are the nails used to build a house of failure” (Don Wilder).

Every excuse we make may seem insignificant, but in the end it helps hold together a life of failure. Nobody sees the nails, but they are there.

In Luke 14, Jesus exposes excuses. Those who had been invited to the Great Banquet feast found many excuses for why they couldn’t attend, but none of the reasons were genuine.

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, “I have just bought a field, and I must go see it. Please excuse me.” Another said, “I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.” Still another said, “I just got married, so I can’t come” ([Luke 14:18-20, NIV](#)).

Excuses never make you better. And they don’t change your circumstances: they solidify them. When excuses become a habit, we’re running on a road to failure. These three words are a sure sign of an excuse: could’ve, would’ve and should’ve.

Instead of pointing the finger, we need to take responsibility and assume ownership of the problem. We must own both the problem and the solution. It’s time to stop making excuses.

GO

1. Why is playing the “blame game” so destructive to a team?
2. How do you take personal responsibility for your actions? What excuses do you make? Why?

WORKOUT

[Luke 6:41-42](#), [18:9-14](#), [Philippians 2:2-4](#)

OVERTIME

Father, show me ways that I've become an excuse-maker. Help me to take personal responsibility and make changes necessary for excellence. Amen.

Influence with Integrity

BY ADAM WAINWRIGHT

PRE-GAME

1. What does the word “INTEGRITY” mean?

READY

The one who lives with integrity lives securely, but whoever perverts his ways will be found out. [Proverbs 10: 9](#)

SET

In today’s world of sports, it seems that anything done for an advantage is fair game—as long as you don’t get caught.

As a Major League pitcher, I have seen it all. Managers who spend their entire careers stealing the signs of other coaches from the dugouts and down the baselines. Players who reach base do the same thing. Pitchers are supposed to throw a clean, unscratched ball, but you can do some pretty cool things with a scuffed baseball.

As Christians, however, we are held to a higher standard. Our goal should be to live a life that’s pleasing to God and that allows us to have influence on those around us. People seem to gravitate toward those who do things the right way. And on the other hand, if you’re not living with integrity, your influence will quickly be torn down. If you’re not trusted, then your relationships will have little eternal significance.

In the book of Daniel, we read about a young man who lived with great integrity. When he was given the chance to turn his back on God’s commands, Daniel stood strong and gained influence over an entire kingdom. And, of course, there has been no greater example of integrity than Jesus Christ. He was who He says He was, and He lived a sinless life despite many opportunities to succumb to temptation.

Living with integrity in this day and age isn’t easy. You might say it’s harder than ever before. But with God’s Word and the Holy Spirit guiding your steps, it is possible to be the person of integrity that He created you to be.

GO

1. What are some things that make it difficult to maintain integrity in today’s world?
2. How would you define the relationship between integrity and influence?
3. What can you start doing today that will help set you on a path toward godly integrity?

WORKOUT

[Psalm 41:11-12](#), [Proverbs 28:6](#), Daniel 1

OVERTIME

Lord, I want to walk upright in Your sight. Give me the determination to live with integrity through all that I say and do. Help me build trust within my relationships so that I might influence others for Your Kingdom.

Gaining Momentum

PRE-GAME

1. How do you feel about resolutions?
2. What are some of your goals for this year?

READY

“Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus.” - [Philippians 3:13-14](#)

SET

At the beginning of a new year many people set goals, and for the first several weeks they stay on track to achieving them. Sadly, many people get derailed even though we intellectually know what coaches, personal trainers, teachers and mentors tell us: that there is payoff when we persevere.

There is so much more to achieving a goal than just writing it down. First, as with our sport, we need to consider why we have taken on the goal. The "Why?" will assist us in overcoming many obstacles. Second, just as we anticipate the moves of our athletic opponents, we also need to anticipate the challenges to our goals and plan what we will do when these occasions arise. Sometimes the opponents of our goals may get the better of us. That’s why it’s also important that we decide ahead of time that setbacks don’t have to stop us. We can use them as opportunities to improve.

In pursuit of our goals, we also need to determine how success will be measured. As we work toward our main goal, we should have indicators that show us we are on the right track. One helpful way to stay on target is to tell others about our goals. This helps keep us accountable and makes us more likely to follow through. It also encourages others to pray for us and ask us how we are doing, and consistently reporting to others can keep us motivated.

Throughout the process, we must remember that our goals must be submitted to God. He is the One who supplies our strength and helps us press through to the end. We must keep God first and ask Him for wisdom and strength. [Matthew 6:33](#) says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.” No, it won’t require less effort when we keep God first. It will take faith, discipline and obedience. But by trusting Him and persevering we can cling to [Hebrews 12:11](#), which says, “No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the fruit of peace and righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

As a marathoner I connect with God, determine the goal, incorporate the support of athletes, make wise lifestyle choices and train hard in an effort to achieve the goal. With all that, I have yet to be handed a medal simply for showing up to a race. The award comes after I cross the finish line. God will help us on the journey but we must persevere and lean on Him to help us finish strong.

GO

1. How do you stay motivated to reach your goals?
2. Why should we ask God to be first in the process of goal setting?

WORKOUT

- [Romans 5:3-4](#)
- [Hebrews 12:1-3](#)
- [James 1:2-4](#)

OVERTIME

Lord, thank You for blessing me with godly people and resources to help me on my journey. Please forgive me for the times when I have not put You first in my life. I ask You to guide me in implementing and achieving the goals you have set out for me this year so I can be a witness for You. Without You I am nothing, but with You all things are possible. To You be all the glory, honor and praise. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

What's Your Purpose?

PRE-GAME

1. How long have you been playing baseball?
2. Who has helped you develop as a baseball player? As a person?

READY

The LORD will fulfill His purpose for me. LORD, Your love is eternal; do not abandon the work of Your hands. - [Psalm 138:8](#)

SET

I've been in the Major Leagues for more than 10 years with the Baltimore Orioles. Looking back I can think of specific guys who were crucial to my development and maturity as a person and a baseball player. Now, as a veteran, I feel that it's my role to share what I've learned from my experiences in the same way guys did with me when I was younger.

Just like David says in Psalm 138, I know the Lord has a purpose for me, and He will fulfill it. I've tried over the years to grow in the understanding of my purpose. As a Christian competitor, I try to use every opportunity I can to share the gospel of Christ along with the struggles I've faced and the lessons God has taught me along the way. I have realized that my purpose goes far beyond just playing the game of baseball. God has purposed this sport as my mission field.

We've all been put here by God to be lights for Him, and we've each been given our unique gifts. It is up to us to recognize those gifts and use them for God's glory. We must be willing to use our sport, no matter the level of competition, to fulfill His purposes and to share the amazing gift of His love and grace. It should be our ultimate goal to have those around us—teammates, coaches, fans—see Christ in how we perform within our sport.

And even though we will make mistakes, sometimes secretly and other times in front of the whole world, God's grace is sufficient enough to pick us up and continue to use us for His purposes. His plans are larger than our faults, and He will always fulfill the purpose He has set for us. Never forget, His love and mercies endure forever.

GO

1. What do you feel is your God-given purpose? How does that purpose apply to your athletic or coaching career?
2. How can you encourage others to pursue and fulfill God's purpose in their lives?

WORKOUT Psalm 19, [Hosea 14:9](#), [1 Corinthians 3:1-11](#)

OVERTIME

Almighty Father, You've given us each a specific purpose in this life. Let it be our passion to find that purpose and share Your saving message through it. As competitors and coaches, allow

us to never take the position of influence we have been given for granted. Let it always be an honor to point people to You and Your glory. Amen.

Walk A Mile In My Shoes

PRE-GAME

1. Do you have a favorite pair of shoes or cleats?
2. What is a challenge you have faced in your life?

READY “The Lord rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness.” [1 Samuel 26:23](#)

SET

Often times we are faced with adversity or obstacles in our path in life. Everyone’s trials, although similar in many ways, are unique to that person. We can never look at someone else’s suffering and how he or she handles it and lay judgment of the strength of their faith. Each one of us deals with our challenges in our own distinctive way as God deals with us in His unique manner.

When we look at the sports and fitness worlds we see many examples of athletes who face challenges that seem insurmountable. Some overcome those tests and enjoy the taste of worldly victory while others fail and seemingly experience the agony of defeat. Should we look at the ones who don’t accomplish what they set out to as faithless failures? Should we conclude that those that fall short of overcoming an obstacle as well have a lack of faith? It is not always our faith or lack hereof that determines our outcome. Sometimes God has a different plan for us than what we, as mortals, consider victory.

If all we had to do was have faith in Christ and believe we can change the outcome to every circumstance in life, we would all be healed of disease; wealthy in our possessions; successful in all we do; and content in every relationship we have. That is just not the reality of life nor is it the reality of faith.

As a person with faith beyond understanding and one with a powerful commitment to Christ it would seem that I would be walking a life that allows me to be victorious in whatever I choose...or would it? I have heard so many times that you can pray your way to healing and victory. I couldn’t agree more, as long as that healing or that victory is God’s will for your life. But what if it’s not?!

When I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2006 at the age of 47, I was a healthy bodybuilder and athlete. Initially I could not grasp why God would allow me to have MS. I was faithful. I was a former youth pastor. I was obedient to Christ and committed to my walk with Him. And, as time went by, I believed God would use me as an example of a miraculous healing of this incurable disease. So I prayed and I prayed and I prayed. But God had a different plan and I was not, by the outward appearances, victorious over my circumstance.

It was not my lack of faith or that I did something wrong or that I wasn’t strong enough to overcome my obstacles in life that I was diagnosed and later not healed of MS. It was that the Lord was going to use me in quite a different way with His plan and not mine. I would overcome my challenge in His way not man’s way. And once I embraced that fact with the same love and passion I embrace Him, I was good to go!

Now I am moving mountains with Christ in my battle against MS and helping people around the world to do the same through my cause, the MS Fitness Challenge, www.msfitnesschallenge.org. I am touching lives for Christ with my book, David's Goliath www.davidlyonsms.com. And I am fighting MS to show the world that with the power of Christ in your life ALL things are possible.

So, don't judge the faith of another by what the surface shows. We are not all willed by God to be healed or to win the trophy as a confirmation of His hand on our lives. The Lord rewards our faith in all different ways and in many inimitable blessings. Some are more expected than others. Walk a mile in my shoes and you will understand faith, hope and victory in a whole new light.

GO

1. Why do we consider it a failure if we do not meet a challenge?
2. How can we be thankful for the path that God has us on, no matter how difficult?

WORKOUT Hebrews 11 [2 Thessalonians 1:4](#) [Numbers 16:28](#)