

Discipleship Moment

Text: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

I'm not big into sports. I enjoy sports. But my favorite things about sports is the good food, ice cold drinks, and friendships that happen around sports. I was never that athletic, but I did compete regularly when I was younger. I remember, very clearly, competing in athletics my freshmen year of high school.

I was playing football that year, I had played in 7th grade but decided it wasn't for me. When I went out for it again my freshmen year, I was as much as 8 years behind my teammates. Some of them had been in competitive football since they were 7 or 8 years old. I most certainly had not. So, I struggled through practice, sat on the bench, enjoyed spending time with my friends and teammates, but ultimately wasn't very successful as a football player. None that really bothered me. What did bother me was how one of our assistant coaches treated me.

We had an assistant coach in charge of the defense. And I was not a very good offensive lineman, but I was just down right atrocious at playing defensive tackle. After the first two weeks, this coach had me stop running his drills. Not only did he coach me poorly in practice, but he also taught me history. Never once did he greet me by name, never once did he try to have a conversation with me. It seemed to me like if I wasn't any use to him on the field during a game, I wasn't worth building a relationship with. Needless to say, this did not make me want to compete harder or get better on the D-line. He did not help me succeed, he did not want me to succeed, he was not for me.

By the time I got to my sophomore year, I had wrestled in the winter and dove more deeply into puberty, so my body was bigger, stronger, I was more mentally tough, and was ready to compete again. Only, this time, I was recruited by a friend to try out for the local Rugby club. As I went to the first practice and met the coach, I felt intimidated: was this coach going to be like my last one? The first drill we ran was a warm up, we jogged for ten yards then sprinted for five. We got to the line and the head coach, Coach Rick, looked at me and said, "how fast are you?" "Not very." I replied, "Well, we'll see." He blew the whistle, I jogged then sprinted, and he said, "Boy, you aren't very fast, are you? We'll work on that."

This began a relationship that was crucial to me in high school. He helped me pay my dues by letting me work for him at his house and around the rugby grounds. He connected with me relationally before and after practice: phone calls, checkups, after my grandpa died he pulled me aside and had a long conversation with me to support me.

But he wasn't a soft man. I remember one practice he was so mad at us for not running low, he pulled out a long PVC pipe from the ground and chased around during our scrimmage and swung it at chest level to make sure we were running low. More than a few of us got bruises on our heads.

Coach Rick was for me, he wanted me to be better. And you know what? I started every game I played those few years in rugby. I was excited to compete, I worked hard at practice, I exercised on my own, and I watched film and studied the game. He was a good coach because he was for me, and I performed for him.

Yesterday Pastor Ben reminded us that God is for us. This infinite, all-powerful, all-wise, creator and sustainer of the universe God does not just tolerate us, he does not just let us slip by, but he is, in fact for us. And when he gives us a command or a promise, he gives it for us. God wants to resurrect you, and he's starting now. He wants you to be a new person. But that means that the old person has to die.

So, God goes about the business of killing us in order to resurrect us. We must die to our desires, we must die to our way of thinking, we must die to our need for approval from others, our need to be right, and our need to decide what's best for us. When Paul gives a list of things that disqualify a person from the Kingdom of God—like sex outside of marriage, greed, thievery, same sex relationships, or putting other things above God (idolatry)—we know that it is not because God is playing some gotcha game, where he is just waiting for us to mess up. We know that God is for us, he is like a good coach. Sometimes a coach needs to swing a PVC pipe around to get you where you need to go. God is for you. Your life is better when you let God be God and listen to his wisdom.

God uses the Law, he uses commands, to show us how much we fall short of his expectations. He uses commands like a magnifying glass, that (unless we seek God and receive from him the power to live a godly life) burns us with its strength. And he raises us up from this dying by giving us a promise: I am for you, I am enough for you, you are my child, and you have the Holy Spirit to live a godly and upright life.

Praise be to God that he loves us enough to swing a PVC pipe around, get our attention, and get us in the right direction.

Going Deeper

Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once.

1. In the past or present, how has a good coach, teacher, or parent been "for you?" What was that like? How did they benefit you?
2. Why do you think it is unloving, or being a bad coach, to leave someone alone, to not push them or try to make them better (like my freshman assistant football coach did)?
3. Look back at our Scriptures from this series: 2 Timothy 3:16, John 6:56, 1 Peter 3:21. How does God make us better? How does God "swing a PVC pipe" around, or build a relationship with us?
4. How do these things make us better? Read Colossians 3:17. What is our response to God's goodness to us? What does it make us do?
5. Who can you "be for" this week? How can you show them the love of Christ? Write it down, and do it.