

# Competitive Sports Their Place in the Christian's Life

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We are living in a competitive age. Almost everything we engage in is associated with competition in some manner. Competition breeds forth organization. To be competitive an organization or individual must produce organized efforts. Sports are competitive in nature. The questions whether or not sports should be organized is very significant. Many people confuse the terms physical education, recreation, and sports. Although they have a similar nature they are each specific fields. Physical education is a field of endeavor which has as its aim the development of physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially fit individuals through the medium of physical activities. Recreation is a worthwhile socially accepted leisure experience that provides immediate and inherent satisfaction to any individual who voluntarily participates in the activity. The field of sports is an organized competitive branch of both physical education and recreation. Everyone should participate in some form of physical education and recreation in as much as neither requires any specific skill. When an individual has a desire to develop a skill he participates in sports.

All three of these areas of physical activities have been growing by leaps and bounds in the past half century. The sports world today is fascinating to say the least. Millions of people are participating in sports yearly. It cannot be determined how many more millions are spectators of these same events. Organized sports have been with us a comparatively short time when we consider that competition came into existence soon after the beginning of time. We compete in almost everything we do. Our entire educational system is based on competition. Competition provides us with a unique stimulus to perform to our very best.

Most people will grant the fact that competition in itself can be good. The question then is raised whether or not competition has to be associated with sports. The primary objective of all sports and games is to win. Take for example a simple game of checkers or chess. If one of the two players does not care whether he wins or loses, there is no sense in playing the game. The object is to win. If both players do not compete for the victory there is no contest. The same is true of any sport. Therefore we see that sports are necessarily competitive in nature.

Sports provide the individual who possesses physical talent the opportunity to develop his various skills. At the same time it provides the participant with a wholesome form of recreation. There is a strong correlation between the development of our physical and mental faculties. A strong body does not necessarily produce a strong mind, but seldom does a weak body produce a strong mind.

One of the major objections to participation in organized competitive sports is that they are performed during leisure time. Some people feel it is a waste of leisure time to participate in sports. To such people sports are sin in disguise. They feel that sports are a temptation to the Christian, and if the individual is to participate in any organized sport he should only compete with those within his church. They feel that leisure time could better be used for spiritual study and similar activities. It is true that sports can be over emphasized and in many cases are. It is imperative that we do not forsake our spiritual life for our physical wellbeing. No matter how strong the physical body may be, the mind is weak if it is not spiritually strong. We must balance the use of our leisure time. There is an increasing need for spiritual enlightening. We will never fulfill this need on earth. Just as Bible study strengthens the spiritual body,

participation in sports strengthens the physical, mental, emotional, and social atmosphere of our bodies.

Sports are beneficial to the spectator as well as the participant. In many ways the spectator is challenged just as much as the participant. On many occasions our character is given the real test. Every athletic contest provides a winner and a loser. Both have equal opportunity to exhibit Christian sportsmanship.

Frequently the objection is raised that we as Christians just not entertain ourselves by competing with people outside the church. There is a grave misunderstanding of what an athletic contest really is when this objection is raised. We must understand that when we play outsiders in athletic contests we are playing against them, not with them. Our lives are filled with circumstances in which we must meet the world. We live with the world, but we are not one of them. Our physical bodies are the same whether we are in the church or of the world. Many of our competitive sports can be indulged in within the circles of various churches. It is difficult to conceive of a reasonable objection of competing in athletics against other church groups. Certainly the fact that our opponent may not be Protestant Reformed is not a logical basis for an argument against competitive sports. Success in competitive sports is determined by the physical skill of the individual not his religion.

Competitive sports are beneficial to both sexes, young and old. Women are in need of physical activities just as well as men. The physical activities for women are geared to fit their physical aptitudes. In many ways participation in organized competitive sports is like eating. If an individual eats the right amount of food and the right kind of food, it will have beneficial results. However, if he eats too much food and does not eat the right kind of food, it may have harmful results. Competitive sports are very similar. If a sport is over emphasized, it may be harmful: whereas, if it is adapted to one's personal needs, it will be helpful. Almost everything that is done in excess is sin. Therefore it is imperative that the Christian maintain a well-balanced physical life. Sports can play an important role in every person's life. Pleasure comes from engaging in the activity. Competitive sports are only a small part of the Christian's life. It matters not if one is young or old, rich or poor, strong or weak, active or bedridden, man or woman, or boy or girl, competitive sports can contribute to the welfare of the individual.

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