

Spiritual Gameplan

Discussion Guide

Chapter 1

1. Read Genesis 2:15. Remember that “work” and “worship” are the same word. How does that affect the way you view:
 - your working life?
 - your non-working life, including your sports?
2. Sports are part of creation, gifts from a generous God. How does thinking of them that way change the way you play and enjoy sports?
3. How and when have you most enjoyed the community aspect of sports in a way that reflected how God made us?
4. How has this chapter prompted you to praise God for your involvement in sports? How might it encourage you to pray differently as you prepare or train or play or watch?

Chapter 2

1. Read Genesis 11:4. How are you tempted to “make a name for yourself”—to bring yourself glory and praise—in your sports?

2. How could the idea that cheating is an attempt to break out of our God-given creaturely limitations help you the next time you're tempted to bend or break the rules?

3. "If we love a sport, then of course, as fallen sinners in a fallen world, we will be tempted to love that sport too much to make of it an idol—a substitute god" (p36). What do you make of this idea? Can you see this at all in your own attitude to your sport?

4. Read Romans 3:23. None of us is immune to sinning in the way we think about or participate in our sports! So, as you reflect on this chapter, what are the ways you are most likely to "fall short of the glory of God" in the way you play, or watch, sports?

Chapter 3

1. Read Ephesians 2:1-7. "We have won the trophy and we have all the benefits of being the victor, even though we didn't play the game ... Because Jesus wins, you win" (p50). From those verses and any other places in the Bible you can think of, what have we "won" through faith in Jesus?

2. How can you worship God (instead of yourself, or your sports) as you train and play?

3. Think about your own team/training group. How can you contribute to that community in a way that pleases God?

4. How does seeing sports as a gift rather than a god free us to enjoy it *more*?
5. “Nothing on this earth is as pleasurable as Christ” (p58). How is this both wonderful for us, and challenging to us?

Chapter 4

1. “It’s never enough” wrote the England rugby player Jonny Wilkinson. He was writing of the athletic goals he chased because he thought they would satisfy him, but found that whatever the “it” was that he chased, it didn’t give him what he’d hoped for. Does that resonate with you—have you experienced chasing goals in sports that have delivered you less joy or satisfaction than you had thought they would?
2. Re-read the questions on p67. Do any resonate with your own experience?
3. Read Galatians 4:7. In what ways can we be “slaves” in our sporting lives? What difference does it make to know we’re sons and daughters of a Father who loves us regardless of our performance or achievements?
4. “We don’t need to pretend that bad things are good things; we do need to trust that God will use them for our good ... to be like his magnificent Son” (p73). Think about a recent or current sporting disappointment you’ve experienced. How might God have been using that to make you more like Jesus? How does that make you feel about the disappointment?

5. “Think back over your sporting efforts this last week, and give thanks for some specific things God has given to you” (p74). Take some time to do this now!

Chapter 5

1. Read Philippians 2:1-8. How do these verses explain what it means to “have the same mindset as Jesus”? What will that look like in a sports context?
2. There are lots of stories in this chapter of athletes serving others at cost to themselves. Which do you find the most inspiring and/or challenging?
3. In what specific ways can we “love people off the pitch” in terms of our:
 - purity?
 - speech?
 - relationship with alcohol?
4. Spend some time thinking of answers to the question on p90: What will change as you head to your next game or training session asking yourself, “*What is good for other people?*”

Chapter 6

1. Read Colossians 4:2-6. What commands do these verses give us, as those who seek to proclaim Jesus, here?

2. Let's be practical. How can you continue, or start (or restart) to:
 - Pray for those you are in contact with because of your sport?
 - Play (on and off the field) in such a way that others might notice something different and attractive about you?
 - Say what you believe about Jesus?

3. Are there ways you could get other Christians—perhaps your church—involved in your efforts to make disciples as you play sports?

4. What keeps us from living and sharing our faith through our sports lives? Has this chapter helped you with any of those barriers?

Chapter 7

1. On p108, Graham and Jonny encourage us, next time we experience the camaraderie and joy of being part of something bigger than ourselves, first to thank God for that moment with those people; and second to think, “This is just a glimmer of what heaven will be like”. Are either of those ideas new to you, in connection with being a fan? What difference do you think it would make if you paused and did both those things?

2. What are the spiritual dangers of being a sports fan? Do you recognise any of them in your own life? (Use the questions on p111 if it's helpful.)

3. Read James 3:9-10 and 17-18. In what ways can we use words, positively and negatively?

4. “Today our tongue includes what we type, text, post and sing. What would it look like to be someone who is pure and peace-loving in [our] speech? What would it look like to be distinctive in [our] words about others when [we’re] discussing a game with [our] friends or sitting in front of the TV with [our] kids?” (p113)

5. How can you approach fandom as “an opportunity to love others, live distinctively, and share Jesus when you can” (p115)—as well as enjoying it as a good gift from God?

Chapter 8

1. Read Deuteronomy 6:5-7. How do these verses instruct our approach to parenting as members of God’s people?

2. When it comes to your own family involvement with sports, how is it both an opportunity and a threat in terms of you obeying the commands of those verses?

3. We can point our children to Jesus by:
 - helping our children place sports in their proper place
 - not leaving discipleship to the coach
 - making the most of every opportunity
 - remembering God’s grace in our live

For each of these areas, think through: (a) What doing this really well in your own context would look like; (b) What is currently going well for you; (c) What you would like to change.

4. “Your own identity is not to be found in your children’s achievement or even in their profession of faith but in being loved unconditionally as a child of our heavenly Father” (p125). Why is this encouraging for every parent to hold on to?

Chapter 9

1. Why is the “sports on Sunday” question such an emotive one, do you think?
2. How did you arrive at your own position? On reflection, is there any more thinking or seeking others’ wisdom that you’d like to do?
3. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. “It may not be too strong to say that the single most important thing believers can do is meet together with other Christians to sit under God’s word and participate in the sacraments” (p133). To what extent do you agree, or disagree? How does your answer affect how you plan your Sundays?
4. What will it look like to honour each other’s consciences in this area?
5. Spend some time thinking or talking through the questions at the end of the chapter on p138.

Chapter 10

1. How has this chapter shaped or reshaped your view on what it means to coach in a distinctly Christian way?

2. Read Colossians 3:8-14. What do these negatives and positives look like in practice when it comes to coaching?

3. As you think about your own coaching:
 - how are you encouraged because you can see one or more of the positive aspects?
 - are there ways you need to challenge yourself?

4. “How could you ... look to foster an environment in which your faith is evident, so that it becomes plausible for those you coach to consider what following Jesus might look like for themselves?” (p147)