

ALL I DO IS WIN

Series: Battlefield
January 19, 2020
Edgar King
Wisdom
1 Cor. 9:19-27

Yeah, let us talk about winning. I know it is a weird progression. In a series dubbed battlefield, we went from battle prep to winning. We are either optimistic and full of hope or very corky. But yeah, let us talk about winning.

Because of the brokenness of humanity battles have been part of human history for longer than we have known how to write history. And some of those battles have been wars with each other. And those are costly in terms of life and money.

And some of the worst reports to ever get is that a nation went to war without knowing who the enemy really is. Without knowing either what a win really looks like. So then there is this costly investment but no one could ever tell when this goal is achieved.

Same as life. You do not wanna do life wasting resources without a win in mind. I think this is why I like new beginnings. Because it is a chance to define what a win is.

I have to say I have always hated new years resolutions. Partly because I hate fads. I hate things people do just because society does them and everyone does them. And at some level, it felt like that.

But in all honesty, these are important. Not because it is a new year, but defining what a win is is so crucial at any point in the journey and a fresh beginning just adds to the value. So whether you are waiting for February for your fresh starts and treating January as a trial month, whether yours has started, whether you will do this in July I think it is important to define what a win is.

Otherwise, like any endeavour, without defining what the win is you can never quite tell if it has been achieved or not. And that then becomes a waste of resources.

But how about the things that matter in life? What is the win for your marriage? Is it that you finish the year without killing each other? Wow! And I mean, it could be. 2019 might have been such a hard year that all you hope for this year is that you can relearn how to be kind to each other.

Well without defining a win, you will do your marriage just how everyone else does it not knowing if you are putting your resources in the right place.

What is the goal for you as you date? Is it just to have someone you are seeing? Well for something that will influence your life greatly do you really wanna do that without knowing what you really want from it?

What's your goal as a disciple? Or will it just be a good surprise to finish the year still in church?

Some friends and I were talking last week about how sad it is to see that churches can have people who are not really being transformed. We have business people driving into the parking lot of churches every Sunday but nothing is changing about their business practices.

We have politicians walking into churches every Sunday but all we see are the cathedrals getting bigger from looted money but our politics getting dirtier led by these same people.

We have men and women driving posh cars into the church and still mistreating their spouses and kids out there with no remorse at all.

What's your win for parenting? And not the default ones like well-behaved kids. What really do you wanna see in your kids as a result of your parenting?

What is the win for this church? To get to the next comfort and joy in December? Let me tell you what the win is for us.

One, that you people will be confident in God's Grace and Love for you. That you will never doubt that at any moment. What that means is that you are forgiven, you are treasured and you are pursued

Two, that you will step into boldness joining God in things he is doing here and in this city. That for this church it will not be about the pastor and the professionals on staff. No, it will be all of us praying for the sick, loving the poor, feeding the hungry declaring and demonstrating God's Kingdom. Ordinary people, in ordinary places of lives empowered by the Holy Spirit for extraordinary lives.

Three, in light of everything God has done for us. In light of who God is, in light of the future ahead of us, we will make choices to live our lives for his glory. Not because we are condemned but because we are loved.

So young men and women will make choices in their colleges for God and not just because certain things are trendy. So that both unmarried and married people will live out their sexuality to honour God. So that CEO's and janitors will do their work bringing honour to God no matter the cost.

Here is the thing, we won't get another try at 20, we won't get another try at 30 and you will not get another try at your twenties or your forties. This is no dress rehearsal, this is it. You won't get another try at being their father or mother. And yet, you are living life in a certain direction. You will end up at a destination, you might as well decide which one is desired.

What is the win for you? So this year I wanna invite you, in the areas of your life that matter, not to have not-goals.

I will not be like my father. I will not be like the last CEO. I will not be that man or that woman. Well, what then will you be. Not-goals aren't wins. Not being like your father or like your mother does not really define who you have become. So, what are your wins?

Let's Pray

In the proverbs of Solomon, there is a verse that says,

“As a man thinks in his heart, so he is”

Prov 23:7

This is the cornerstone of this series. Where our mind goes, so do the rest of us. But it goes without saying that as a human being thinks, so they are. Our mind is the head of the arrow or the spear. Where our mind goes, so will the rest of us.

If you think you are not discipline. If you think you can not make it, then that is true. And the converse is also true. If you think you are discipline, if you think you can make it, that is true. And even more importantly, for followers of Jesus unless our worldview matches that of Jesus, we just will not live out the life he is calling us too.

And that is why I am asking us to take some time and define in our minds what the wins are. Because that is where then our entire being will go to.

And people are often making resolutions about money, weight, drinking and those are good. But sometimes they are detached from the things that really matter in life.

The challenge with the things that really matter in life is that there is often little to no pressure. Not until you have lost everything.

Say for example you wanna be a better husband to your wife. You are the only husband to your wife. Well, we both hope, so where is the pressure? Where is the competition? You would probably only realize the pressure and importance when your marriage is at the brink of collapse.

You want to be a more generous follower of Jesus. Well, what is the competition? Where is the pressure?

You want to pray more this year. What is the standard?

The areas of life that really matter are often very poor competitors. Another good reason to define what a win looks like in those areas.

I want us to read from someone in the New Testament whose story is actually quite impressive. He is such an important figure in that he even wrote a huge chunk of the letters we find in what is called the New Testament of the Bible.

His name is Paul. He was among the first people we call apostles, which means sent ones. He planted churches all over cities that were not Jewish and wrote so many letters to churches and pastors.

He was so important that at some point, Peter, another apostle and a guy who had spent time with Jesus himself in one of his letters would tell believers that the writings of Paul were scripture, meaning inspired word of God.

But that was not always the case. At one point, he actively persecuted those who followed Jesus. Imprisoned them and even matched on orders to have them killed, which he sometimes oversaw.

And he was doing this with a conviction that he was doing it for God. And I think that is kind of a good thing. He was so convinced that his goal was to live for and defend God which means when he met God in the person of Jesus, it was easy to go, "oh great goal but wrong direction." But if where you are going is not defined, how do you know you are in the wrong direction?

So in one of the letters to a church he wrote

Last of all, He (Jesus) appeared to me; I was like a child snatched from his mother's womb. You see, I am the least of all His apostles, not fit to be called His apostle because I hunted down and persecuted God's church.

Today I am who I am because of God's grace, and I have made sure that the grace He offered me has not been wasted. I have worked harder, longer, and smarter than all the rest; but I realize it is not me—it is God's grace with me that has made the difference.

1 Corinthians 15:8-10

And you can imagine why he is working harder than most. He starting from further than all other apostles. Everywhere he goes he is met with hesitation, "Wait, are you not the one who used to kill us?" And he has to say that he is a changed man and prove himself.

But what is he working towards? What is he trying to achieve? What is a win for him? That is what I want us to look at

And, even though no one (except Jesus) owns me, I have become a slave by my own free will to everyone in hopes that I would gather more believers. When around Jews, I emphasize my Jewishness in order to win them over. When around those who live strictly under the law, I live by its regulations—even though I have a different perspective on the law now—in order to win them over. In the same way, I've made a life outside the law to gather those who live outside the law (although I personally abide by and live under the Anointed One's law). I've been broken, lost, depressed, oppressed, and weak that I might find favour and gain the weak. I'm flexible, adaptable, and able to do and be whatever is needed for all kinds of people so that in the end I can use every means at my disposal to offer them salvation. I do it all for the gospel and for the hope that I may participate with everyone who is blessed by the proclamation of the good news.

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Everything he has done in his life has been defined by the goal he is trying to achieve. Now, this goal is a goal for the church I think. The desire to see the whole world receive freedom and the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

And at the same time, you can put your goal in there for the things that matter in life. So if being at the gym is a goal for you in the things that matter in life you can put that in there, but the point is, he had a defined win and everything else he did was geared towards this win. Actually, he did everything he had to do in light of his goal.

He became everything he needed to be for the win. It was easy for him to know what decision he had to make around the jews or around the non-jews because he knew what a win was for him.

The decisions you need to make for your marriage, your dating life, your health, your parenting and your walk with Jesus day today will become clearer if you know what the win is.

But as I said before, the challenge with important things in life is that they are very poor competitors. So he gives the following illustration

We all know that when there's a race, all the runners bolt for the finish line, but only one will take the prize. When you run, run for the prize! Athletes in training are very strict with themselves, exercising self-control over desires, and for what? For a wreath that soon withers or is crushed or simply forgotten. That is not our race. We run for the crown that we will wear for eternity. So I don't run aimlessly. I don't let my eyes drift off the finish line. When I box, I don't throw punches in the air. I discipline my body and make it my slave so that after all this after I have brought the gospel to others, I will still be qualified to win the prize.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

He says, think about the areas that matter in life like a race. In a race, you know who you are running against, you know what the price is and you know that only one of you will get it. And the only way to be the one who gets it is to be brutal about practice and sacrifice.

In our Olympics nowadays the winner is given gold and whatnot. Then they would be given a crown made of leaves, which by the way, looked great but in a few days would be withered and dead and no glory.

But in the things that really matter in life which are poor competitors for our time, sacrifice and commitment and investment the crown is often life. So Paul is saying, do those things with the same urgency, if not more, that you would do an Olympic race.

Imagine parenting as if there is the pressure of a gold medal and you wanna be the one to get it.

Imagine doing your devotion as if there is a gold medal and you do not wanna miss out.

Imagine doing sexual purity, which is different for married people as from single people, as if there is a gold medal and you wanna be the one to get it?

What does sacrifice look like? What do practice and training look like? How do you do the things that matter in life as though there was a race?

Is there a race, probably not. No one is going to line us up and ask who is a better disciple of Jesus. Yet if this is something that matters to you in life, to win you will have to do it as if there is one.

So I wanna mention a few things that can help us in this race to the win in the things that matter in life, in the wins you have described for this year.

1. Mentor

Have a mentor. Have someone who has walked the same journey and has achieved the goals you would like to see. You have to tell someone about your win. If you have a win and no one knows about it, you are not going to make it.

If you want to beat alcohol addiction, you cannot do that if all your friends are alcohol addicts. Or equally stuck in the same place trying to get out.

Here is the thing, everything we require for growth; assuming that the goals we are setting are growth goals, is within us. But no one grows, in the areas that matter without help.

It is like a child. In the system of a healthy child, is everything they need to grow. But they will need protection, they will need touch, they will need to be fed or they will die. And usually, that is not done by another baby, it's done by an adult.

Have a mentor or coach.

2. Motive

The function of a mentor and/or a coach is to help you question your motives. If the win does not have a 'why' you will not be able to sustain the effort.

For example, my win is to read the entire Bible in one year. Why? If I do not know why I wanna do that, then I will not see how important it is when it gets quite hard to when travelling or when you just want to sleep in a bit longer.

I want to allow the word of God to shape my worldview and influence how I think.

Don't should on yourself this year. I should do this, I should do that... Why? Because everyone else is doing it?

And answering the question of the motive also helps us see where our heart really is.

I should go to the gym more. Why? It could be well, I need some abs to feel better about myself. Well answering that shows that the problem might not be the abs and so that may not fix it.

Well, I am worried about my health. Well, then maybe there is a bit of gym to be done.

3. Momentum

Don't worry starts small. Never despise the small beginnings. If you are having a problem with an addiction you start gently and then you build up momentum. It is difficult and you may be setting yourself up for failure if you hope that in one day you will stop all at once.

Now I have to say, nothing is impossible with God. I have heard stories of people who upon giving their lives to Jesus have woken up with no desire of the addictions that once held them. Great but not everyone will quit cold turkey.

If you are a heavy drinker, you can go down to five from 7. Now everyone is going 5? Yeah. The encouragement you get in knowing that you can reduce it will provide energy and momentum to take it down further the next day. Allow yourself to build the momentum. Celebrate the small victories and I am sure God is cheering you on.

So as I finish, have a win and know what it is. Especially in the things that matter in life. Then do it as your life depends on it. And to set yourself up for success since there is often not enough pressure in these areas that matter have a mentor or a coach, be clear about the motive and build momentum.

Often in the things that matter in life, we cannot genuinely cannot sustain our own weight let alone get to any meaningful wings outside of God's help.

We forget easily. The worries of life choke us. Culture draws us away. SO scripture says that the steps of the righteous are guided by God.

I want us to read a prayer together.

Those who wait on the Lord

Will run and not grow weary

They will walk and will not grow faint for their strength will be renewed

They will rise and soar on wings like eagles

Lord teach me to wait on you

Father help me not sell out as I wait

Help me not give up as I run this race

Remind me not to forget as I trust in You

My win and my crown are only in You

Let's pray