

Championship Basketball – Respect

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The whistle blows. Both sides are tense as the tip-off begins the game, a game that will decide which team will win the championship trophy.

Respect. It's a matter of life—or death.

Bang, bang . . . the ball bangs against the floor as the blue team dribbles it toward their hoop. The opposition is there, seemingly everywhere, but somehow . . . swish!

“Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long ...”

The red team possessively takes the ball across the court. This will be no easy steal for the blue. It's up ... up . . . and in the hands of the blue! Back across the court again.

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath ...”

The blue has the ball under the net, but the red's defense is so intense, every member of the blue is needed to get it up. Finally there's one last bang against the backboard before the ball slips through the net.

“ . . . but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

Yes, it's a serious game. Respect is not just an abstract topic for study, rather, it involves the stuff that life is made of. God created us to worship and reverence Him, to respect Him as God. He also created us to respect one another, “Yea, all of you be subject one to another,” I Peter 5:5. Respect must enter into all of our relationships, and to the degree that it does, that is to the degree that we truly experience life.

Let's go back to the court. Hear the beat of the ball as it bounces against the gym floor. Hear the squeak of athletic shoes as they run and stop with the blow of a whistle. Now zero in on those feet, shod with shoes that are fitted to the task, shoes that possess different parts, parts that contribute to that task. Look at the sole of one of those shoes. It's molded out of rubber material in a configuration that will yield maximum traction. The sides and top are sewn out of sturdy yet flexible leather to allow for maximum movement and support.

Respect has different parts to it too. What is the soul of the matter? “ . . . Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13. Respect and reverence for God is first. This is the first table of the law. Every other aspect of respect supports this one.

It's halftime. The blue players huddle together, discussing a strategy they might use in the next half. Enter—the coach. He tells them the strategy they will use in the next half. They return to the court, unified in their plan to win.

Now let's look at the second table of the law, and the very first thing taught us is “Honor thy father and thy mother.” Paul further expounds on this, “ . . . which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth,” Ephesians 6:2, 3. With what kind of an attitude do we treat our parents, or anyone in authority? Do we honor them? See how the promise connected to this commandment makes it indeed a matter of life or death.

The buzzer sounds. Time-out. There's only two minutes left on the clock, and so far the blue team has only been able to implement part of the strategy the coach called for. He does not despair or look down upon them, but has confidence in his team. The coach explains the plan one more time.

Children have a great responsibility, but parents aren't off the hook either. Paul immediately continues in verse 4, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath ...” There is a kind of respect

that parents must have for their children, it is an attitude of nurturing and admonition of the Lord. It's not tyranny, it's not an "I can do no wrong" attitude. Rather, we must confess that we are children of God together. (Young People take note, you will be parents soon enough yourselves!)

The remaining two minutes go by quickly and smoothly—for the blue. They work together as a team, with one purpose and one plan. No one member despises another, but each one acknowledges the others' strengths and works to capitalize on them.

Finally, there is a respect or esteem that all of us must have for anyone else. Paul makes this clear in Philippians 2:3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Just as a team is not likely to be successful whose members are out for themselves, neither will we be blessed if we in pride seek our own good. What is our attitude towards our brothers and sisters, our peers, our girlfriends or boyfriends? Is it one of esteem? It takes humility to have this respect for others. It takes grace.

The buzzer sounds one last time. The blue team has won!

But with respect comes life, "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5. Be meek. Be humble. Be respectful. The trophy is priceless!

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