

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

April 23, 2020

We hope and pray you all are doing OK. If you need anything at all, please let us know. The elders want to make sure we are doing all we can to keep the church together and in each others’ thoughts during this time of unprecedented separation. We love and miss you all.

FAN-atic

“So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.” I Corinthians 9:26

My aim in sharing stories is to make the point that there is a spiritual lesson in *everything* we experience. Looking back, I feel many parents (and preachers) made the mistake of unintentionally segregating corporate worship and “real life.” We did “church” on Sundays and Wednesdays, and got back to “life” on Monday. It would have been helpful if parents found ways to more explicitly connect life experiences to spiritual life. I think we would have seen faith develop more quickly.

Sandy Koufax's perfect game, September 5, 1965. My father was at the game – the first one he attended without me (he was invited by some men I didn't know). He felt bad about it, and as he was leaving, told my mom he felt like he was taking candy from a baby. [Stock photo]



Today I aim to connect our experience as sports fans to our spiritual lives. I feel comfortable with this topic because even the apostle Paul was a sports fan (see I Corinthians 9:24-27 and II Timothy 4:7).

This pandemic has abruptly deleted sports from our lives for now. It has especially affected those of us who are passionate fans of a team or a sport. Sadly, it has short-circuited sports for high school students. I feel for seniors who have been Covid-19'd out of playing their last year of soccer, baseball, track & field, tennis or cross country. Sports plays an important role in the life of many kids and is a valuable outlet for them.

I have been a fan of teams for almost all of my life. I'm a passionate follower, from my youth, of the Dodgers and the Rams. Twice in my lifetime, I have been a passionate fan of the LaQuinta High School Aztecs. For the two years I attended LaQuinta, I wrote stories for the school paper and yearbook about the football and basketball teams. 25 years later, David, Jr played football there and Christie and I were passionate fans while Dave played.

The loss of sports is not necessarily one of those “first world problems” we like to talk about. For many young people, especially in developing countries, sports allows them to escape poverty and/or oppression for a few hours of each day. One of my favorite baseball players of all time is Fernando Valenzuela,

one of 12 children growing up in a tiny house, in a tiny town in the state of Sonora, Mexico. His family was dirt poor but baseball provided a brief, but precious, avenue of escape for Fernando and his siblings.

For most of us, the impact of the loss of sports is minimal but it still feels strange. For six decades, at this time of year, baseball has been an integral part of my life. I became a “fan-atic” during the 1955 world series when the Brooklyn Dodgers, after several failed attempts, finally beat the dreaded Yankees. That was my first taste of “fandom.”

I was elated when the Dodgers moved to Los Angeles in 1958. We got tickets to a game that year, played in the LA Coliseum, and I got to see Duke Snider and Pee Wee Reese and a few other aging stars that had played in the '55 series. Some of the best memories of my life (BC, “before Christie”) are Saturdays at Huntington Beach listening to Vin Scully on a portable transistor radios. Sun and Scully added up to a nice day, win or lose.

Speaking of Christie, we went on our first date on January 10, 1969 and I left the next day for Hawaii. In April, Christie picked me up at SFO and we went on our *second* date — to a Dodger-Giant game at Candlestick Park. She knew right then that I was a rabid fan and smitten as I was, I didn't care who won the game.

Here's the spiritual connection: “fan” comes from the word *fanatic* (“...single-minded zeal”). True fans are like true disciples of Jesus: they are zealous and radical about something or someone. Fans and disciples have some characteristics in common.

Exercise

Below each description of a true fan, write an equivalent trait and/or action of a true disciple:*

- No matter where you live, or what happens, you'll never give up your devotion to that team. If you do, you're not a fan.
- You proudly wear attire – a “badge” that identifies you with that team, no matter what others think about the team.
- During the season, when that team is playing, you follow them faithfully – you literally can't help it.
- You have something in common with every other fan of that team, no matter how different you are in demographics or socio-economic status.

*I'm aware of the best-selling book entitled “*Not a Fan*” by Kyle Idleman. I haven't read the book but just going by the title, I don't think he understands what real “fandom” looks like. He says, “You may indeed be a passionate, fully devoted follower of Jesus. Or, you may be *just a fan who admires Jesus but isn't ready to let him cramp your style*. Then again, maybe you're not into Jesus, period.” True “fan-atics” are passionate, fully devoted followers of whatever they are fans of and, if you're not careful, it definitely cramps your style. If you just “admire” a team, you are not a true “fan,” in my book. *C'mon, get in the game, Idleman.*