

I love to reminisce about my childhood days. You know every good story or account of our childhood days starts, “when I was younger or when I was a child, I...”, but I will not subject my readers to this. So I’ll start in this fashion: As a five year old all I ever wanted to do was play sports. I loved baseball, football, golf, tennis, soccer, you name it and it included hitting, throwing or kicking a ball and I was into it. My love for all sports originated from my father’s love for sports. I can remember watching my first world series in 1982 as the Milwaukee Brewers and the exquisite pitching of Rollie Fingers. My father was a baseball coach every since I can remember. He coached well into his fifties and then retired from the game. He can still be found watching the game with a wealth of knowledge and history of just about any game that has ever been televised or on the radio.

At an early age I was taught how to properly play every position on the baseball diamond. I was hit countless groundballs, flyballs, and how to properly and effectively block the ball as a catcher. I learned the ins and outs of the game. I loved it, slept it and lived it for many years of my life. I would say that out of my childhood during the month of March until sometime in July or early August, I was playing, watching, practicing, or working at a ball park. That’s how much I loved it. After my years of playing were over I became an umpire. I still umpire and travel back to Columbia every year to umpire in the Independence Day Classic. I still love the game.

Here’s the point I’m attempting to make. Even though my love for the game was so great, I cannot remember ever playing the game during or even close to time when “everybody” was going to church. I was not raised in the church, but I still remember there was literally no playing or even practicing on Wednesday or Sunday. My question is why now? Has our love for the “game” over shadowed our adoration for the Creator? Have we gotten so bent out of shape that “ball” is the great ruler of the universe and the center of all that is and ever will be?

I realize as I write this, there are those out there thinking here is just another fanatic, bible-thumper that hates sports because he was never picked first or unable to play the game. This is not the case. I played on a Babe Ruth baseball team that made it all the way to the Southeast Regional finals. I played on and started for many successful baseball teams at Columbia Academy, American Legion Post #19, and for the Columbia Cubs. My senior year we were 21-7 and I had only 5 stolen bases on me for the year. So, that is not the case. I played the game hard and I loved it. I still love it, but I realize it has a place.

We must place God first in our lives (Matthew 6:33) and “ball” somewhere else. “Ball” has taken the place of God in many people’s lives. Many parents deem it okay for a child to miss church services or church related activities due to “ball”, but ask them if they would allow them to miss geography, math, Spanish, or any other class their school offers to play “ball” and the answer would most likely be “no”. Why such the emphasis on placing ball in front of so many things? For many is a priority problem. We prioritize everything in our lives, but we fail to include God has the most essential, important part—FIRST.

After all is said and done, you, my readers, will react in a couple of ways. Number one: You will sit down and write a list of your priorities and see honestly where God fits into your life, or Number two: You will be angry that I brought up such a touchy subject. Number three: You will disagree all together, or Number four: You will take no action at all.

Question: Where does God fit into your life? Does He have first place in your heart, soul, mind, and strength? If not please take the time to make Him number one in your life. May God bless you in all you do to glorify His name.

In Christ,
Joe Rhodes