

SESSION 19: RESPECTING OFFICIALS IN SPORT

 1 PETER 2

DISCUSS

IN YOUR SPORT WHAT ARE THE WAYS THAT PEOPLE QUESTION THE AUTHORITY OF THE OFFICIAL?

In the heat of competition, we can react negatively both in what we say and in how we act towards an official who has penalised us or - in our eyes- acted unjustly. In a split-second we can go from worshipping God with our gifts and abilities, to anger and slander against an official. How are we to understand a godly attitude towards sports officials?

BIBLE

What you need to know: Peter writes to Christians who have been scattered throughout modern day Turkey, due to persecution. A big theme in Peter's two letters is the return of the Lord 'on the day he visits us'; it is a powerful motivation in 1 Peter for godly behaviour.

READ: 1 PETER 2:11-12

- 1 What does it mean to be foreigners or exiles? What does this look and feel like in your sporting context?
- 2 Describe what this 'war against your soul' is like in the context of living a good life in sport. Where have you found this to be true and difficult?
- 3 In v.12, what is the benefit of living (or competing) in a way that honours God both in and out of competition with sportspeople?
- 4 What does 'such good lives' look like in your sport? Describe how this would appear in moments of intense competition or pressure.
- 5 Why is it hard not to react when we are unjustly accused of doing wrong? Why is it important?

SUM UP

As Christian sportspeople we are to be fully involved in our sport whilst at the same time recognising that we are 'foreigners or exiles'. We need to retain the motivation to live in a way that glorifies God – this may require us to live differently to those around us.

BIBLE

What you need to know: Verses 13-16 would have been particularly challenging for the original readers. Whilst at this point in Emperor Nero's reign there wasn't a systemic persecution of Christians, there were certainly localised examples of state persecution.

READ: 1 PETER 2:13-17

- 6 What is surprising about Peter's instructions here?
- 7 When we submit to an authority in sport (e.g. a referee/an official), who are we submitting to and why?

- 8 As Christians, God is our ultimate authority. We do not have to obey sporting authorities if they ask us to go against God's principles. When do contradictions like this arise in sport?
- 9 In your sport, are officials always respected? How are they treated by the teams? How can Christians provide a positive example for others in this regard?

SUM UP

As Christians, our attitude to the officials should be full of integrity. We should act in a way that respects their authority, even if we disagree with their decisions. This can be a powerful witness, particularly where others are doing the opposite.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

Here are two scenarios to discuss as you apply 1 Peter 2:

- 1 The Official makes a decision that is obviously wrong. You are a senior person in the club and others are complaining and slandering the Official and you want to join in. What do you do?
- 2 The approach to the Official of everyone in your sport is to push them in order to undermine them; it's part of the culture. You feel pressure to follow in the same way but how should you respond?

