

CHAPTER 13

COMPOSURE VS. PRESSURE



Biblical Lessons for Students, Athletes & More

Individual or Group Experience

FOCAL VERSE

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;
2 Corinthians 4:8 (NIV)

WISE WORDS

“You can measure a man's character by the choices he makes under pressure.”
Sir Winston Churchill

Introduction

The most exceptional athletes, *in every division*, are seldom defined on their skill set alone, but rather by the combination of physical and mental capabilities that allow them to thrive when the stakes are highest. Great players compete at the top of their game when they are both *physically and mentally prepared*. They achieve high levels of composure and confidence through situational practice.

As followers of Christ, we can also gain confidence and composure through situational practice—meditating on God's Word daily. It's a practice (or discipline) that can prepare us for difficult situations that will unquestionably come our way. As we intently focus on God's Word, we should try and relate the scriptures to a daily situation, or a modern-day experience that applies to our own lives—*situational practice*.

There's an old adage that says, “practice makes perfect,” but I prefer “practice makes prepared.” Preparation is the action or process of making ready or being made ready for use; something done to get ready for an event or undertaking. For example, a final exam, a playoff game, a marathon, a band competition or an oral presentation. The more prepared a person or team is, the more composed they will be at the time of the event. The time one spends in preparation is revealed when the event takes place. That will be the moment of truth!

Children of God, we would be wise to prepare for life's “moments of truth” by reading, studying, hearing, meditating, and memorizing God's Word. By hiding God's Word in our hearts, they will be available and ready for use when we need them most!

But first...

In our previous session you were asked to be intentional about showing an extra measure of respect to officials. How did you do? If you're in the off-season, did you show a greater degree of respect to any of your other authority figures?



Iowa's, Caitlyn Clark, handling the defensive pressure with ease.
Photo: The Gazette —Feb. 4, 2023

“What matters most is not what these obstacles are, but how we see them, how we react to them, and whether we keep our composure.”
– Ryan Holiday

Adopted by the Emporia State Men's Basketball Program

Page 85

Read page 85. To watch this play unfold, head to YouTube and search:

Curry Shakes LeBron and Scores!! 2017 NBA Finals GM 2

Page 86

- **Read the first paragraph and pause.** The text mentions various types of pressures that youths face.
- **What additional pressures can you add to this list, whether you're an athlete, coach, parent, student, or in the workforce? What pressures do you face as a Christian?**

Page 87

After reading page 87, look up **Philippians 1: 27-28a**. *“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you...”* (NIV)

- **What message is Paul trying to communicate in his letter? Consider how it might be relevant to you as an athlete and the way you conduct yourself as a player.**
- **How would you describe a life worthy of the gospel of Christ? Do outside pressures make it hard to live this kind of life?**

My Personal Experience

I'll never forget the day I opened a highly offensive email from a 5th grader's mom. I became furious as I read her accusatory remarks about my son. With knots in my stomach, I became shaken and rattled. I quickly sought out the advice of a faithful friend and mentor. I don't typically get rattled, but on this particular day, I was enraged. My friend said, "You just started teaching *One on One With God*, didn't you?" "Yes," I replied. "Well then, Satan is going to try and attack you." And she was right! Satan will use anyone or anything to pressure us into losing our composure. Fortunately for me, (and a certain 5th grade mom), I had been actively and consistently practicing my **5-point press break**:



Hearing God's Word
Reading God' Word
Studying God's Word
Memorizing God's Word
Meditating on God's Word

**5-POINT
PRESS BREAK**

After that short conversation with my mentor, (and a separate conversation with God), I called the mom on the phone. She acknowledged she had written the email in a highly emotional state and was short on facts. She apologized for her behavior and for falsely accusing my son. She was wrong and she knew it. I was calm, tactful, and graceful in our conversation; I was under the influence of the Holy Spirit. I am certain my reactions would have been drastically different had I not been consistently engaged in daily fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Player Application

- Explain why hardships, setbacks and times of severe testing are good for us.
- In Joshua Medcalf's book, *Chop Wood Carry Water*, he encourages the reader to write down this statement everyday: "Anything that happens to me today is in my best interest. It's an opportunity to learn and grow." **Did anything happen to you today that can be used as an opportunity to learn and grow?**
- Pressure situations are opportunities to put your faith into practice.

Coach Application

- Can you think of a poor coaching decision you made while under pressure? What did you learn from that decision and how has it helped you grow as a coach?

Personal Training Session

- Read through and answer the questions on page 89.

Closing Comments:

In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "*Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances.*"

This week, as you encounter difficult circumstances that would ordinarily "ruffle your feathers," practice the discipline of composure. The enemy won't ever call off his press, but you can become more effective at your press break through consistent preparation—engagement in God's Word and ongoing prayer.

"You do not get to choose the events that come your way nor the sorrows that interrupt you life. They will likely be a surprise to you, catching you off guard and unprepared. You may hold your head in your hands and lament your weak condition and wonder what you ought to do. To suffer, that is common to all. To suffer and still keep your composure, your faith, and your smile, that is remarkable. Pain will change you more profoundly than success or good fortune. Suffering shapes your perception of life, your values and priorities, and your goals and dreams. Your pain is changing you."

—Pastor David Crosby

“
The beauty of the soul
shines out when a man bears
with composure on heavy
mischance after another, not
because he does not feel them,
but because he is a man of
high and heroic temper.
Aristotle”