

## June 18, 2025 – “In the Game” – Basketball

**Sports/Parables.** Strengthen relationship w/ God... **Practical** Christian living  
**Basketball’s 1<sup>st</sup> game** – 1891, Dec, Springfield, Mass. YMCA training school  
**James Naismith – “to win men for the Master at the gym”**

The game was part of his Christian vision – inspired by his faith, nurtured at a Christian college, shaped by Christian ideas... distributed around the world thru a global Christian network. **Basketball - truly a Christian sport.**

### 7 principles:

Objective: outscore opposing team w/in game’s time limit/shot clocks.

#### **1 – Our lives have a time limit... have only so much time.**

**Matt. 10:30** – *“And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”*

**Psalm 139:1-4** – David says God knows all our ways. *“You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you understand my thoughts from afar.”*

Basketball - 2 teams of 5 players each trying to score by shooting a ball through a hoop (basket) mounted 10 feet high. . . all are equal, level.

#### **2 – To score, you have to look up. Focus on the goal, not the chaos.**

- David’s story – look up to God, not the size of your giant.
- **Psalm 123:1** – *“I lift up my eyes to You, the One enthroned in heaven.”*
- **Psalm 121:1-2** – *“I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? <sup>2</sup> My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”*

You have to bounce (dribble) the ball with 1 hand while moving both feet. If you stop / both hands touch the ball – you can only move one foot. That stationary foot is called the pivot foot.

#### **3 – When you stop, you are vulnerable to attack.**

**2 Thess. 3:3** – *“But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.”*

In basketball, Players play defense & offense. Offense is w/the basketball.

#### 4 – Christians must play defense as well as offense.

- **Offense:** Advance God's Kingdom: Be a light... sharing the truth of Jesus.
- **Defense:** Defend against Satan's tactics. He's the "deceiver of the world" Know the enemy **will attempt** to distract, blind, and corrupt believers . . . to derail spiritual growth, hurt your relationship w/ God. He'll lie to you.
  - Jesus explained the Parable of the Sower (**Mt. 13**) – "*the evil one comes & snatches away what was sown*" in people's hearts.
  - **Know that you have an Enemy... don't be surprised at Defense.**

5 offensive players... each can take a shot. From anywhere. Creative!

#### 5 – Know when to pass the ball.

- When you "force it" – it usually ends up badly.
- **Romans 12:6-8** - <sup>6</sup>"In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. <sup>7</sup> If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. <sup>8</sup> If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly."
  - **Pass the ball ... be channels of blessings to others to use gifts.**

Once the offensive team crosses half court, can't go back in the backcourt.

#### 6 – Can't go back to the life you used to live before knowing Jesus.

Jesus said: "*Anyone who starts to plow and then keeps looking back is of no use for the Kingdom of God.*" – **Luke 9:62**

- **Plowing.** Metaphorically used to describe preparation and readiness. Phrase suggests the beginning of a task or commitment, start/ journey. Discipleship requires commitment; looking back implies hesitation. Lot's wife... divided heart. **Jesus wants us totally in the game.** Fully commit.

Shooting the basketball

**7 – Sometimes we miss ... we'll fail... miss the mark... airball.**

**God doesn't give up on us.** He doesn't bench us... we stay in the game. -

- - He just keeps working on us, in us, thru us.

- **And also – God forgives.**

- **Luke 15:21-24** - The son declared, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' / But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. / Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us feast and celebrate...'
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