

June 4, 2025 – “In the Game” – Softball/Baseball

Parables. **Sports theme.** About strengthening walk/relationship w/ God
Empowering our spiritual lives - **Practical** Christian living.

Softball history: an indoor, winter baseball game in Chicago, 1887.

George Hancock, a Chicago journalist. 16-inch softball.

9 players . . . 9 principles:

1 – 4-base Diamond. Run the bases in order, touch each one. Not easy.

Can't bypass or skip ahead; no shortcuts.

Heb. 12:1-2 – *“...since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

- It **takes perseverance** to run the bases. May spend time on 1 base --
... waiting & watching – and **Learning!** It is Jesus **perfecting** our faith!
- **Pick-off** throws . . . Can't leave early & stay in your lane.
 - **1 Pet. 5:8** – *“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”*
- **Obstruction** is blocking the basepath... Yes, the enemy will!
 - **Gal. 5:7** – *“You were running so well. Who has obstructed you from obeying the truth?”*
 - **He will try to stop you - get out of the game.**

2 – Player has assigned position. Coach tells where to play based on skill.

- - God has places for us, too – based on “gifts.”

- **1 Cor. 12: 4-7** – *“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.”*
 - **Accidents/conflict happens** when we play beyond our position.

3 – One great player won't win the game.

It's a multi-player sport. **Teamwork.** Each person on the team **matters.**

- God needs all of us... everyone has the ability to reach someone.
- **1 Cor. 12:7** – *"A spiritual gift is given to **each** of us so we can help each other."*
 - Can't sit back, let preachers do it all. Billy Graham is gone. M.T.
- Jesus sent out a team – 12 – to make more disciples. Win the world.
 - We've been sent. . . shine/light. . . salt/earth. . . run/race . . .
get in the game!

4 – Keep your Eye on the Ball.

Tune out & ignore the noise. You can't catch/hit what you don't see.

- We lose focus of God & our purpose. Life will have problems... there will be evil in this world... people will focus on self, greed, lie, cheat...
- **Heb. 12:2** – *"... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."*

5 – Swing the bat to get on Base... to advance runners... to score!

- There are 3 principles to hitting: balance, vision, and timing.
Timing is everything.
- **Isaiah 60:22** – *"At the right time, I, the LORD, will make it happen."*
 - God had a plan for possessing the land... to be a mighty nation.
 - God has a plan for you, too.

At the right time... you'll get the \$, get that job, find your person...

6 – Look for your pitch. Don't chase balls; wait for a "strike" – in the zone.

- There's an opportunity being prepared for you... **a strike** just for you.
- **Eph. 2:10** – *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life."*
 - **Don't chase every pitch from the enemy!**

7 - You can't throw the Ball until you receive it.

Ball must be caught in the glove, then transfer it to throw.

- Transferring the ball is what happens when we **receive & comprehend** Biblical teaching ... understand life. Many disillusioned.
- We then **throw hope** to others... share the good news of the gospel.

8 – Need equipment – bat, ball, glove, batting helmet, cleats...

Christian equipment – Paul - Eph. 6 – “put on the **full Armor of God**” - 6

Ephesians 6:14-17 – **Belt** of Trust; **Breastplate** of Righteousness; **Feet** fitted with the gospel of peace; **Shield** of faith to extinguish flaming arrows of the enemy; the **Helmet** of salvation; & **Sword** of the spirit.”

We can't live this life victorious w/o the right equipment:

- **Bat** – **hit** down enemy... not today, Satan. Send problems... steal joy... strike u out... pick u off. “Get behind me” ... know/throw
- **Glove** – **receive** blessings.
 - **James 1:12** – “*God blesses those who patiently endure testing & temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*”
- **Helmet** – **protect** mind & heart.
 - **Prov. 4:23** – “*Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.*”
- **Ball** – **love**. Love sent Jesus. Love draws us... love reaches out.

And we are called to love each other as Jesus loved us.

9 - You're going to get dirty.

You don't end a softball game with a clean, white uniform.

- Life is messy. Dirty. There is hurting from sin... evil... selfish living.
- **1 John 1:7** – “*But if we keep living in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*”