

PART OF A WINNING TEAM

Everybody wants to be a winner. Some people want to win every game that they play. Others want to win in sports, in school, in business, in love or life in general. Our society rewards and praises winners and that's why most people want to win.

However, being part of a winning team is especially fulfilling to the individual. It makes us feel good to share with others the "thrill of victory". There is glory when we realize our accomplishments as a team and when we succeed as a group instead of as individuals. In fact, have you ever noticed that the most popular sports in our country, like football and baseball and basketball and hockey, are "team" sports? There seems to be a certain satisfaction when a collection of individuals, the "team", wins.

To take it a level higher, being part of a championship team is a dream for many. When we come together as a group and we compete against other similar groups, our ultimate goal is to be the best team - the championship team! Many of you probably saw the news this summer about the aging basketball player, Karl Malone. For almost 20 years he played on the Utah team and helped mold it into a perennial playoff group. But they never could win a championship. So this summer he chose to be traded to another team. He gave up a huge portion of his salary (millions of dollars!) in order to be on a team which he hopes he can share a championship. Some critics thought, what a sacrifice! But the point is: he, like most of us, has a great desire to be on a winning team.

In a sense, Christians are already on a winning team. Think about it. We are members of the same body, the Lord's body of believers which is the church (Eph. 1:22,23). This is the same body which Revelation tells us will have a glorious ending by defeating Satan in the final battle! Now, doesn't that sound like we belong to a winning team, a championship team? Therefore, we should feel honored to be disciples of Christ, children of God having been added to his unique team (Acts 2:47).

Look at some of the members of your team, brothers and sisters in Christ. All of them share your same desire to be a part of this winning team. Some have even sacrificed much to be in this extraordinary group, like giving up their family, friends,

money, time, prestige, etc. Isn't it wonderful to be an element of this spiritual team (1 Cor. 12:13-20)?

Being part of Christ's team can also be so encouraging and uplifting to each member. Knowing that we are not alone in this world, that we have others to help us and support us can be very edifying. Consider the story about the man who got lost while driving through the country. As he tried to read a map, he accidentally drove off the road into a ditch. Though he wasn't injured, his car was stuck deep in the mud. So the man walked to a nearby farm to ask for help.

"Warwick can get you out of that ditch," said the farmer, pointing to an old mule standing in a field. The man looked at the decrepit old mule and looked at the farmer who just stood there repeating, "Yep, old Warwick can do the job." The man figured he had nothing to lose. The two men and the mule made their way back to the ditch.

The farmer hitched the mule to the car. With a snap of the reins he shouted, "Pull, Fred! Pull, Jack! Pull, Ted! Pull, Warwick!" And the old mule pulled that car right out of the ditch. The man was amazed. He thanked the farmer, patted the mule, and asked, "Why did you call out all of those other names before you called Warwick?"

The farmer grinned and said, "Old Warwick is just about blind. As long as he believes he's part of a team, he doesn't mind pulling." Unfortunately, some of us are like the mule in this story. We have become blind to the fact that we are on a winning team! If many of us could just see the truth, we wouldn't mind "harvesting" for the Lord. We wouldn't mind spreading the Gospel or standing up for Jesus because there are others alongside us who are already doing that! You are not alone, team member!

This summer I really learned the value of being part of a winning team. Just across the state line, a new congregation was established in Georgia -- the Mt. Carmel Road church. Right away this group of Christians made their presence felt. I think they attended at least one night every gospel meeting they could reach! And we are not talking about two or three members who made this incredible effort. Sometimes they would arrive at the revival by the bus load (and I literally mean, a bus!) and would help to fill the church building. Can you imagine how uplifting this was to the local congregation that was holding the meeting? It felt so great to be supported by these visiting brethren! It was pure joy to know that others shared our love for the Lord.

But the effect of the Mt. Carmel Road church didn't stop there. This summer I also witnessed several of our local members making that special effort to support the meetings in Georgia and other faraway sites. It was a matter of cooperation and fellowship! I could see we were on the same team and we needed to help one another in order to be winners. Yes, everybody wants to be a winner and especially to be part of a winning team. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psa. 133:1)

RAY McMANUS

THINGS AREN'T ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM

Two traveling angels stopped to spend the night in the home of a wealthy family. The family was rude and refused to let the angels stay in the mansion's guest room. Instead, the angels were given a small space in the cold basement. As they made their bed on the hard floor, the older angel saw a hole in the wall and repaired it. When the younger angel asked why, the older angel replied, "Things aren't always what they seem."

The next night the pair came to rest at the house of a very poor, but very hospitable farmer and his wife. After sharing what little food they had, the couple let the angels sleep in their bed where they could have a good night's rest. When the sun came up the next morning the angels found the farmer and his wife in tears. Their only cow, whose milk had been their sole income, lay dead in the field.

The younger angel was infuriated and he asked the older angel, "How could you have possibly let this happen? The first man had everything, yet you helped him," he accused. "The second family had little but was willing to share everything, and you let the cow die."

"Things aren't always what they seem," the older angel replied. "When we stayed in the basement of the mansion, I noticed there was gold stored in that hole in the wall. Since the owner was so obsessed with greed and unwilling to share his good fortune, I sealed the wall so he wouldn't find it. Then last night as we slept in the farmer's bed, the angel of death came for his wife. I gave him the cow instead."

Things aren't always what they seem. Sometimes that is exactly what happens when things don't turn out the way they should. If

you have faith, you just need to trust that every outcome is always to your advantage. You might not know it until some time later ...

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
(Rom. 8:28)

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
Sept. 7 - 10	Antioch Church Livingston, TN	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Sept. 12 - 14	Fayetteville Rd. Church Atlanta, GA	Carley Conner (Cookeville, TN)
Sept. 15 - 19	Lily Church Lily, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Sept. 15 - 19	Estesburg Church near Eubank, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Sept. 22 - 27	Mt. Zion Church Crab Orchard, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Sept. 26 - 28	Pleasant Ridge Church Woodbury, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. About what two people was it written, "The elder shall serve the younger"?
2. What giant was from Gath?
3. According to John 14, what are in the Father's house?
4. What side was Ezekiel to lie on to represent the iniquity of the house of Israel?

5. Which of Saul's daughters was in love with David?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who was the apostle to the Gentiles? PAUL (Rom. 11:13)
2. The first judgment the Lord showed Amos in chapter 7 was locusts. What was the second? FIRE (Amos 7:4)
3. When the Jews brought Christ to Pilate, why didn't they go into the palace? TO AVOID UNCLEanness BEFORE THE PASSOVER (John 18:28)
4. What did Jeremiah tell God that he could not do because he was a child? THAT HE COULD NOT SPEAK (Jer. 1:6)
5. What purpose did the veil serve in the tabernacle? AS A PARTITION BETWEEN THE HOLY PLACE AND THE HOLY OF HOLIES (Exo. 26:33)