



# Truth Matters

*A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters*

Scripture Reading  
Week of  
March 20<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup>



Monday

- ❖ Deuteronomy 1, 2
- ❖ Psalm 56
- ❖ Luke 12

Tuesday

- ❖ Deuteronomy 3, 4
- ❖ Psalm 57
- ❖ Luke 13

Wednesday

- ❖ Deuteronomy 5, 6
- ❖ Psalm 58
- ❖ Luke 14

Thursday

- ❖ Deuteronomy 7, 8
- ❖ Psalm 59
- ❖ Luke 15

Friday

- ❖ Deuteronomy 9, 10
- ❖ Psalm 60
- ❖ Luke 16

Saturday

- ❖ Deuteronomy 11, 12

Sunday

- ❖ Deuteronomy 13, 14



## When Ball Becomes Baal

By Jim Elliff

It's rare to see kids playing sports in the neighborhood anymore. We're now organized and "professionalized"-including uniforms, state-of-the-art facilities, endless trips to the field, competitive coaches, equally competitive parents, and the after-season tournaments designed to give parents "bleacher bottom." In addition, you've got to pay to play-and when you've paid that much, you'll be *sure* to play.

It is also fun, and it can be instructive. I love to watch my kids play sports. In fact, they need to play-*some*. But, it's not so easy as handing over seventy bucks and saying, "Sign up Johnny and Susie this year." Making that decision means that you may be out four to five times each week during the season. Soon sports becomes all about calendarization and control of your life-especially if you have more than one kid. Perhaps nothing outside of a change in your job has so much potential to turn the family schedule upside down.

"This man understands," you say.

Now comes the part you won't like: "Behold, I say unto you, you have made sports the household god." Too strong? OK, not *all* of you. But the deification of sports is happening to many.

How does ball become Baal? Answer: When it controls you, and you give it devoted worship. It is around your god that you order your life-and you can almost never say

"no" to it.

Like "athlete's foot" on the hygienically-challenged teenager, sports has taken over more and more of the life of believers. Almost overnight we have awakened to the sad fact that, in many communities, sports has even usurped the hours believers meet on the Lord's Day. All too often members are saying to church leaders, "We'll be gone next Sunday because of the soccer tournament." In turn, leaders are supposed to acquiesce humbly. After all, we can't afford to appear "legalistic;" everyone knows that the greatest crime a church can commit is to demand something of someone.

You'll hear, "But the team *needs* all the players. We can't let the team down." It never occurs to them that the church *Body* is being deprived of a necessary body part, or that God is marginalized and disobeyed. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, states God in Hebrews 10:25.

Devotion is the operative word. When the team says, "We need you," we sacrifice to do it. But when it crosses the time allotted to spiritual edification and worship, the Ruler of the universe is often sent to the bench. In the process, we teach our children that devotion to sports is more important than both devotion to God and loyalty to our spiritual family. Have you considered that you may be

teaching your kids to worship *sports*?

Here are some ways to put sports in the proper place:

First, decide beforehand that there will be no contest between the church's essential activities designed for your family's spiritual growth and what the team plans for your lives. If you will talk this over ahead of time with your child and then the coach, there will be no confusion. Through the years I've found that many coaches respect that decision. But, it must be a prior decision, not one made on a case by case basis. When sports conflicts with Sunday worship or youth camp or a special spiritual activity, the decision has already been made.

Secondly, determine that your children cannot play every sport. There is a sanctity to the home life that must be protected. You need quiet evenings at home. You need meals together. Just let your children know that you are excited about sports, but there are limits. You then determine what those limits are. For us, we attempt to have only one sport per year for each child.

Finally, think about some creative choices. One of my sons played basketball, but the season was interminably long. I was also traveling. So, I would be gone speaking over the weekend, then, when I was home, I was out two or more nights sitting on the sidelines watching my son practice. It was not really "time together." This wasn't going to work.



... continued on page 2

## Nine Characteristics of Biblical Prayer

### by Daryl Wingerd

True prayer is not merely a matter of saying the right words. Biblical prayer is characterized and motivated by the right attitude-right thinking about the greatness of God, the beauty of Christ, and our own unworthiness and weakness. Ask yourself if your prayers are characterized by:

#### An Understanding of Your Own Insignificance and Sinfulness

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? (Ps. 8:3-4 NASB)

If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You that You may be feared (Ps. 130:3-4).

#### The Knowledge that Jesus is Your Only Access to the Father

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh . . . let us draw near (Heb. 10:19-22).

. . . you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:5)

#### Adoration for God because of His Character and Attributes

Ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He. (Deut. 32:1-4)

I will extol You, my God, O King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable. (Ps. 145:1-3)

#### Joyful Praise for God's Work in Creation and Redemption

Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created (Rev. 4:11).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. . . . In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:3-8, 10-11).

#### Thankfulness for God's Kindness in Giving Every Good Thing

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights . . . (James 1:17).

. . . let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name (Heb. 13:15).

#### A Sense of Your Need of Strength to Fight against Specific Sins

Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt. 26:41).

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live

according to the flesh-for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Rom. 8:12-13).

#### Humble Trust as You Ask the Father to Meet Every Need

Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You (Jer. 32:17).

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him (1 John 5:14-15).

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:15).

#### A Selfless Burden to Pray for Others

With all prayer and petition pray at all times . . . be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf . . . (Eph. 6:18-19).

Brethren, pray for us (1 Thess. 5:25). We pray for you always . . . (2 Thess. 1:11).

Pray for those who persecute you . . . (Matt. 5:44; also see 1 Tim 2:1-2).

#### A Thirst for Increasing Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding

Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law (Ps. 119:18).

For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek for her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God (Prov. 2:3-5).

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. (Eph. 1:18-19)

Copyright © 2005 Daryl Wingerd. Permission granted for electronic reproduction in exact form. All other uses require written permission [www.CCWonline.org](http://www.CCWonline.org)



### When Ball Becomes Baal

By Jim Elliff

...Continued from page 1

The solution came to me after prayer. I asked him if he would be willing to learn golf in the place of basketball. We could play together, along with his brother, and we could do it whenever we wanted. We could enjoy this for the rest of our lives. I've paid some extra money, but I've bought back some time with my sons and some good exercise for me also. It's a bargain.

God Himself uses sports language in the New Testament. He's not against it, unless it steals the devotion belonging to Him. All other gods have to go!

Copyright © 2004 Jim Elliff