



Monday Matters

April 8, 2013

WHEN BASKETBALL BECOMES A GOD

by Bob Russell

I've enjoyed March Madness for years. Cheering for the University of Louisville has brought a lot of joy to me and my family. However, living in Kentucky it's easy to become so obsessed with basketball that instead of a diversion it becomes our god. The first commandment is, "...no other gods before me." My friend, Kyle Idleman, has a new book, "gods at war," which reminds us how a god is anything that takes precedent over the Almighty. So I'd like to talk about ten signs, for all of us, that suggest maybe basketball is becoming too important.

1. When you become uncharacteristically profane. We've all heard gross profanity coming from fans that don't normally swear. The Bible tells us, "He who holds his tongue is wise" (Prov. 10:19). If you can't control your tongue during a close game, basketball is too important.

2. When it threatens friendships. We've all witnessed incidents where, "trash talk" deteriorated into harsh, personal words and friendships were destroyed. If you can't be close to people who cheer for "the other guys"



No Other Gods by The Grace Project

Quote of the Week

"Whatever we desire, whatever we love, whatever we find worth suffering for, will be Dead Sea fruit in our mouths unless we remember that God comes first."

~Joy Davidman~

basketball has become too important to you.



3. When it negatively affects your personality for days.

If sports are a diversion, you are naturally disappointed when your favorite team loses. If sports are a god you battle depression for weeks.

4. When it's your primary topic of conversation for months. If you like basketball you enjoy the review around the water cooler on Monday morning. In the middle of the summer if your primary interest is the latest buzz about a tenth grade recruit or the coach's latest tweet, you probably have an addiction that needs attention. Besides you are boring some people!

5. When you miss church because of it. Church attendance can be negatively impacted when one of the local teams is playing a big game at the same time. I've had people tell me, "I didn't come to church because my team lost and I didn't want to face any hecklers." That's sad!

6. When you spend more money on basketball games than you give to benevolence. I went to the Big East Tournament in New York City last week for the first time ever. So did thousands of others. That's expensive! That's fine if you can afford it but if you're spending more to follow your favorite team than you give to help others, chances are it's probably your god.

7. When it makes you so nervous that your heart pounds and threatens your health. NCAA basketball is tense. That's what makes it fun. But if it threatens your physical well-being you'd be wise to take a walk and find another hobby.

8. When you boldly proclaim your loyalty to a team but are too cowardly to ever say a word about Jesus. You put bumper stickers on your car, wear a shirt with the team logo and fly a flag on your car but you excuse yourself from ever talking about Jesus or inviting someone to church on the grounds that you're shy or you don't want to impose your values on others.

9. When basketball games take precedent over more important matters. I once performed a wedding that

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"Dance of Joy"

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**This week's guest post was
written by Bob Russell and
used with his permission.**

At just twenty-two years of age, Bob became the pastor of Southeast Christian Church. That small congregation of 120 members became one of the largest churches in America, with 18,000 people attending the four worship services every weekend in 2006 when Bob retired.

Now through Bob Russell Ministries, Bob continues to preach at churches and conferences throughout the United States, provide guidance for church leadership, mentor other ministers and author Bible study videos for use in small

was scheduled to begin at the same time as a UK vs. UL basketball game went into overtime. The grooms-men and best man refused to leave my office because they were watching the game on television. The bride finally announced the wedding would be delayed until the game was over. Can I make rational decisions based on spiritual priorities or do the most important matters get sacrificed because of the obsession with the immediate?

10. The Final Four weekend becomes more important than Easter Sunday. "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..."

Enjoy the games. Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.

groups. An accomplished author, Bob has written over one-dozen books.

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