

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## *Old Hickory Church of Christ*

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## **I Could Have Been a Better Athlete**

By the age of 13, I had made the Little League All-Star team several years in a row and both hoped and expected to be able to continue doing that. But, my experiences in sports were not quite as successful in the following years which disappointed me. At that phase of my life, sports were very important to me—not more important than being a Christian but still pretty important. As I have looked back, I have wondered why my early success didn't continue. Most likely, I was an early bloomer who was soon surpassed by more talented athletes. But I believe there's another contributing factor, and as is en vogue today, in part I blame my parents for my lack of continued success--

**If my parents had spent more time honing my athletic skills, I could have been a better athlete.**

Do not misunderstand—my parents took me to practices and games and gave me individual attention. They showed an interest in my areas of interest without pressure, while making the final decision for the activities of each member of their house (Josh. 24:15). But, they could have spent *more* time in the early mornings and evenings honing my skills.

Of course, that would have meant less time to read the Bible and pray together (2 Tim. 3:15). And, since there were three of us children, it might have meant less time with or encouraging my brother or sister in their interests—but after all, am I my sibling’s keeper (Gen. 4:9)? It would have meant fewer opportunities to visit gospel meetings in the area, where I could meet other Christians, young and old, who over time I came to recognize when they would come to our meetings or who would coincidentally be visiting the same gospel meeting we were visiting. But, after all, they weren’t members of the same local church I was, so I didn’t have real responsibility toward them (1 Pet. 2:17). And, in order to stir up my teammates and maintain my commitment to my team, I would have had to miss some nights of gospel meetings and Sunday or Wednesday assemblies and classes (Heb. 10:24-25). It would have meant even less time was available to be with other Christians my age (outside of the church’s assembly) who were not on my athletic teams (Isn’t it odd how some parents want to find a local church “with young people,” but then they make little effort for their children to be with other young people outside of the assembly?). But, those things are a small price to pay for the joy of athletic success, right? Yep, my parents are to blame.

**If my parents had spent more money, I could have been a better athlete.**

Again, be sure you understand—my parents spent money which allowed me to participate in the sports they allowed me to play. But, if they had spent *more*, I might have been better. I recently heard a mother call a financial advice call-in radio show. She asked whether it was fair to ask her fiancée to share the \$500/week (\$25,000/year) costs of figure skating lessons for her daughter (she said that she made \$80,000 per year). Maybe if my parents had spent just \$100/week on improving my athletic skills, then I could have kept up with the competition.

Of course, doing so might have required that they contribute a smaller portion of their income to the Lord’s local work (1 Cor. 16:1-2)—but not

necessarily. My mom could have done some extra work on the side, selling her delicious cinnamon rolls. After all, the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 was probably making and selling garments so that her children could have the luxuries of life (Prov. 31:24). Maybe she would not have been able to participate in Bible studies with other women but, after all, are those commanded anyway (Tit. 2:3-5)? Maybe she would have had less time to develop close spiritual relationships with other Christians, take food to the sick or bereaved or do other good works (1 Tim. 5:10)---but she would still be giving her son (who already had health, friends, school work, video games, books, etc.) things he hoped for like any “good mother” would do, right? Or, she would not have had to make any of those sacrifices—Dad could! (Need I list all that Dad could have given up?).

Instead, only my Dad’s work resulted in regular income. From that, my parents chose to regularly give to the Lord, as He allowed them to prosper (1 Cor. 16:2). They had money to give to someone whom they knew was in need (Eph. 4:28). They lived within their means and taught us to do the same. They avoided the debt which adds pressure to the husband who works, the wife who shops, and the regular financial discussions and decisions-- all of which takes a mental, emotional, and often a spiritual toll on each individual and the family as a whole. But, after all, everyone has their crosses to bear and anything is worth the smile on a child’s face, for whom hundreds of dollars are annually spent on athletics, right?

### **Your Child Can Be A Better Athlete Too! Have You Counted The Cost?**

Parents, I hope you show an interest in the interests of your children and, without pressure, help them choose wholesome areas of interest. In those areas, your child could probably be a *better* athlete, musician, vocal performer, student, etc. than they currently are, but it will cost them and you something. Have you counted that cost?

Someday, your children are going to need the skills of earning an income with thanksgiving (Eph. 4:28), wisely handling money with contentment (1 Tim. 6:6), preparing food (maybe even raising their own food), keeping house (Ti. 2:5), understanding the milk and meat of the word (Heb. 5:13-14), personally teaching others the gospel (Mt. 7:12), teaching Bible classes and generally filling their roles in the local church (Eph. 4:16), etc. When they grow up and see where they excelled and where they did not excel---what reasons will they remember for their successes and failures? When they are mature enough to look back on their childhood, will their fondest memories be the countless days and dollars spent on them in athletics? Or will those memories, though fond, pale in comparison to the sacrifices they remember their parents taught them to make for the God who loves them?

I could have been a better athlete during my teen years, but, in my opinion, it would have had a negative spiritual impact. Today, I can thank God and my parents that these are some of the reasons why I was not a better athlete. Parents, help your children find healthy interests and spend time with them doing those things. But emphasize, focus on, sacrifice for, and hone your children's skills in learning about and serving God and His people. Do your best to maximize their potential as God's children by bringing *them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* (Eph. 6:4).

- David Halbrook

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## **ARE PREACHERS THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO BAPTIZE?**

Many people, when discussing baptism, believe that in order for one's baptism to be valid or "official" he must be baptized by a preacher or some "clergyman". Many have the concept of "holy" things being placed in the hands of the "clergy" or "priesthood", even under the New

Covenant. Our question then is: Does the New Testament teach that in order for one's baptism to be valid he must be baptized by the hands of a preacher?

We must first mention the fact that the New Testament says very little about WHO did the baptizing. A careful study of I Corinthians 1:10-17 shows that the Apostle Paul did very little baptizing in Corinth, but at the same time did much preaching there ("a year and six months" - Acts 18:11), "and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." (Acts 18:8b). From this example we can observe that baptism was NOT NECESSARILY performed by a gospel preacher (nowhere identified in the Bible as "clergy"). Note also that baptism may indeed be performed by one who preaches.

Further, the revealed facts concerning Paul's conversion indicate that the person who baptized Paul was "a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias" (Acts 9:10). Was the Apostle Paul's baptism invalid simply because it was performed by one of the Lord's disciples? Paul received remission of sins, NOT because Ananias did the baptizing, BUT because Paul obeyed from the heart the Lord's instructions (Acts 9:6; 22:12-16; cf. Rom. 6:17-18). THIS is "valid" baptism! There is no indication in the New Testament that baptizers must be of a particular restricted class of disciples.

In view of the fact that valid baptism stems from a genuine faith in Christ and humble, submissive obedience to Him, the question as to whether or not one's baptism is valid is between the one who is baptized and the Lord. I have no business whatsoever in making a determination about the validity of one's baptism on the basis of WHO BAPTIZED HIM. We may think that one has pleased the Lord when in reality he is

still in the kingdom of Satan. On the other hand we may think that one is yet in his sins when in reality Christ has forgiven him.

Consider Matthew 28:18-20. Here the Lord instructs the eleven apostles saying, "All authority hath been given unto<sup>1</sup> me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." They were to: (1) Go and make disciples, (2) Baptize them, (3) Teach them to observe all things that the Lord had commanded them. What had the Lord JUST commanded baptized disciples to observe? They were to make disciples and to BAPTIZE them. Therefore, baptized disciples were authorized to make disciples and baptize them, and teach them to make disciples and baptize. If not, why not? The baptized disciple must observe his Lord's commands to make disciples and baptize them and teach them to do likewise. This passage authorizes baptized disciples to baptize. This includes, but is not limited to gospel preachers. No scripture can be given which authorizes preachers exclusively to baptize.

- GFS

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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*Precious Things!*" (text: Deut. 33:13-17); Sunday evening: "*Esther: God Protects His People!*"