

Triple Play

It's summertime! Time for picnics, vacations, and a friendly game of baseball! Below are three short devotions written by umpire Sarah Allarding. Join her as she shares God's Word through her umpiring experiences.

Safety Equipment

**Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the devil's schemes.
(Ephesians 6:11)**

If you were asked to umpire a baseball game, would you go behind the plate to call balls and strikes without protective equipment? First, it wouldn't be allowed. Second, it would be very foolish. You would be in great danger of serious injury and even death, if you were hit without protective gear.

In Ephesians 6:14-17, God tells us to put on the armor of God to protect us against the devil. **"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."**

The devil wants us to forget to put on the armor of God. He wants us to let the study of God's Word become such a low priority for us that we totally forget about it. If we don't protect ourselves with the Word of God, the devil will take the opportunity to throw a 100 mile an hour fastball of temptation right in our faces. When this happens we could end up falling down because we rely on ourselves instead of God. Even worse, our faith could die if we decide we no longer need Jesus because the devil convinces us to think that we are "just fine" without him.

We need to be armed with the Word of God in order to fight against the temptations the devil "pitches" at us. Then, even when the devil puts doubts in our minds, we will be confident of the salvation Jesus won for us when he died on the cross. We will be able to hold on to the promises of God to take care of our every need and help us avoid sin. Every time we use the word of God to say "no" to temptation, it is like a fastball harmlessly bouncing off our face mask.

If we would not go out to umpire behind the plate unprepared, we will not want to face the devil without protection that comes from being in the Word of God on a daily basis.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, please remind me to put on the whole armor of God so I can, with your help, defend myself against the temptations the devil throws my way every day. In your name I pray, Amen.

Major League Dreams

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Do you have a dream job, or a career goal for your future? My goal is to someday umpire in the Major Leagues. I can't wait for the day I get the call to the Majors--that would be one of the most exciting days of my life. While that might be a great goal for me to push for, what happens if that day never comes? What if I get released before then? Was all of my work in the Minor Leagues for nothing?

I know God has a plan for me. I believe he works out everything for the good of his children. God knows what is best for me. If he wants me to umpire in the Major Leagues, I will get there. If not, whatever he gives me will be for my good. It may not seem like anything good could come from news that I didn't make it, but God knows infinitely more than I do. He knows what he is doing with me. I just need to trust that he knows what he is doing. If I am one of those who gets the news that I will not be a Major League umpire, I can look at it not as a failure, but as a new part of God's plan for my life.

Your career goal may not be to umpire in the Major Leagues. Whatever your dreams or life goals may be, you can be sure that God has the best plan in mind for you, to guide you to heaven. That is why he sent his son, Jesus, to pay for the sins of all people, to win for you an eternity with God in heaven. That's an even better game plan than a career in the Major Leagues!

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, please help me to trust you will work out everything in my life for my good. Help me trust you know what you are doing with me, even if it isn't what I dreamed or expected. In Jesus name, Amen.



The Perfect Call

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

Perfection. That is what everyone wants from an umpire or referee. We must get every call right or someone will be upset with us. We know how impossible it is for us to be perfect in our umpiring. It can be really discouraging when we don't get our calls right and everyone is upset with us. What is worse is when our evaluators tell us all the reasons we are not good enough to make it to the next level.

God demands perfection from all people as well. If we sin even once, we cannot make it into heaven. Galatians 3:10 states, "**All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.'**" If we were to try to get into heaven on our own, we would be told we are not good enough. We would get what we deserve--eternal punishment in hell for our sins.

But there is someone who does not want us to go to hell. He is Jesus. He came to earth and lived a perfect life in our place. He got every "call" 100% perfect. He was the only one who could "make it" to the highest level. God the Father, who was his "evaluator", said that he was "well pleased" with him. (Matthew 3:17)

Jesus took our sins on himself and died the terrible death we deserve in order to win eternal life for us. We can do nothing to get to heaven. Jesus did it all. He was punished in our place. Because of what he did for us, we have eternal life. 2 Corinthians 5:21 explains, "**God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**" Jesus' righteousness -- his perfection-- is ours through faith. Now when God looks at us, he calls us "Safe!", as he sees Jesus' perfection instead of our sins.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for dying to take my sins away. I can't be perfect, but you were perfect for me. Because of what you have done, your perfect righteousness is credited to me. Please don't let me forget this. In your name I pray, Amen.

Reviewed by Professor-emeritus Joel Gerlach