

FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETES



Athlete's Handbook



GREAT GREAT GREAT GREAT GREAT

Athlete's Handbook: 2023 Edition
FCA Group Meetings and Training Time
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Athlete's Handbook



Contents

The FOUR	2
Greater Overview	3
FCA Meetings.	4
FCA Huddles	16
Get Involved with FCA	48

THE FOUR

THE GOSPEL EXPLAINED IN FOUR SIMPLE TRUTHS

The FOUR is a simple, repeatable way for anyone to share the Gospel.



GOD LOVES YOU

God made you and loves you! His love is boundless and unconditional. God is real, and He wants you to personally experience His love and discover His purpose for your life through a relationship with Him.

Genesis 1:27; John 3:16



SIN SEPARATES YOU

Sin damages your relationships with other people and with God. It keeps us from experiencing the fulfilling life God intends for us. The result: you are eternally separated from God and the life He planned for you.

Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23; 6:23



JESUS RESCUES YOU

Jesus died, but He rose to life again. Jesus offers you peace with God and a personal relationship with Him. Through faith in Jesus, you can experience God's love daily, discover your purpose and have eternal life after death.

Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 1 Peter 3:18



WILL YOU TRUST JESUS?

You choose to trust Jesus when you believe and confess that Jesus is Lord and surrender your life to Him. Are you ready to place your trust in Jesus?

John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:9-10; Revelation 3:20



The **FAITH RESPONSE TOOL** is for coaches and athletes who have recently made a decision to **START** a relationship with Jesus or they desire to **GROW** in their relationship with Jesus.

To use the tool, simply **TEXT** GOFCA to 46322 **OR SCAN** the QR Code.

After completing the form, you will receive a series of short “first steps” videos from professional athletes. These videos are designed to help coaches and athletes grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.



GREATER OVERVIEW

“He must increase, but I must decrease” — John 3:30

As competitors, we always dream of something Greater. We train tirelessly to reach our potential, seeking approval from teammates, coaches and fans. The promise of a trophy or praise pushes us to succeed. Our identity becomes about our performance—how well we play, not who we are. The pressure to succeed fuels our purpose to compete every day.

But what happens when our season ends, or we don’t perform well? What does that say about our potential or our purpose? The world will say we’re not good enough—that we’ve failed. But Jesus Christ says differently.

In Christ, we have a Greater potential than what is on a scoreboard. Through His sacrifice on the cross, we have the promise of a new life. When we surrender our lives to Jesus, we give up the old expectations to gain a new identity in Christ. The pressure to perform evaporates, and our performance is transformed. We no longer compete for something Greater, but for Someone Greater. We play with a new purpose: He must become Greater, and we must become less.

THEME TOPICS

MEETING 1: GREATER POTENTIAL

“Jesus spoke to them again: ‘I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’” — John 8:12

MEETING 2: GREATER PROMISE

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” — John 3:16

MEETING 3: GREATER PERFORMANCE

“I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.” — John 15:5

MEETING 4: GREATER PURPOSE

“As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” — John 17:18

HOW TO USE THE GREATER MEETINGS

At Camp: These four topics were designed to fit together for a complete message at camp. It’s not recommended to completely skip any of the topics. If you need to cover the contents in fewer than four meeting times, you may decide to focus a bit more on one or two topics while hitting the highlights in the others depending on your emphasis and group makeup. A Training Time devotional is added to the end of each meeting for a daily personal quiet time.

In Huddles: These 16 topics were designed for a deeper dive into the 2023 Greater theme. These can be studied over the course of a semester or a sports season with your Huddle.

MEETING 1 ✕ GREATER POTENTIAL

WELCOME

“Jesus spoke to them again: ‘I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’” — John 8:12

Maybe you tried out for Varsity and made JV instead. Or maybe you’re struggling to improve your speed, your strength or your stats. You give it your all, but it never seems good enough. Not achieving goals might make you feel like a failure, but God says differently. There is greater potential in your life than finding your identity in sports.

WARM-UP UNDER PRESSURE

In this game, you will name five things that fit into a category. The catch? You have only 10 seconds to do this. Have someone count down and keep track of your score. (Example categories: NFL mascots, countries in Europe, sports played without a ball, Marvel characters, music solo artists with one name, etc.)

Q: How difficult was it to come up with things under pressure?

Q: Have you ever felt this kind of pressure in your sport? How is it similar or different?

WORKOUT UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

As an athlete, it’s natural to feel like you have more potential than what is showing up in practice or in the heat of competition. And when you don’t feel like you’re living up to expectations, the pressure starts to build.

Living up to your potential is more than what you can do on your own. There’s more to life than playing for the scoreboard. In fact, your potential shouldn’t just be measured by athletic achievements. It should be measured by who God says you are. There is a greater purpose wrapped up in your potential when your potential is wrapped up in Him!

Q: Is your identity wrapped up in your sport or in a relationship with God?

Q: What are some things that might be causing your identity to get wrapped up in your sport?

TRUE LIGHT

The Gospel of John shares the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. His cousin, a fiery preacher known as John the Baptist, prepared the people for Jesus’ arrival. John did great things, and even the people thought he was great, but John knew someone was coming who was greater.

As John preached about the coming of Jesus, many religious leaders were anxious about this greater One. They were comfortable living under a system that emphasized the pressure to perform. If you were good at your job, then you were a good person. But Jesus had a better way. His way? Bringing light to a dark world:

“The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him.” — John 1:9–10

Therein lies the problem: "The world did not recognize him." Similarly, we often don't reach our full potential because we don't recognize that He is the true source of our potential.

Q: Why do you think the world didn't recognize Jesus when He first arrived?

Q: How do you think having a deeper understanding of Jesus would unveil more of your potential?

WRAP-UP

GREATER POTENTIAL

There is more to sports than just winning. It's an easy trap to fall into, but it's life-changing when you begin to recognize your full potential through Christ.

Here's how to see and apply the "Greater Potential" of Jesus:

1. Greater Way. There's a better way to reach your fullest potential. And it's the ONLY path that will truly get you there.

"Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" — John 14:6

2. Greater Truth. It's not just a greater truth. It's THE Truth. When you embrace the truth of Jesus, you experience freedom from the pressure to perform and see the purpose behind the gifts God has given you.

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." — John 8:32

3. Greater Life. This is what Jesus offers you through a relationship with Him: more joy, peace and purpose through a life focused on Jesus.

"A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance." — John 10:10

John the Baptist understood what it meant to live your greater potential in Jesus. It's not what you do but you who are. As you allow these truths to soak into your heart, pray that God will activate a desire to live for Him as exemplified in our theme verse:

"He must increase, but I must decrease." — John 3:30

OVERTIME

As a Huddle, go to thefour.fca.org or turn to page 2 and go through "The FOUR." Talk about each of these key points with a teammate. If you haven't surrendered your heart to Jesus Christ, talk to your Huddle leader about making that life-changing decision today.



TRAINING TIME 1 ✕

GREATER POTENTIAL

RICK ISAIAH

READY

“Jesus spoke to them again: ‘I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.’” — John 8:12

SET

In any competitive sport, the goal is to defeat your opponent within the rules of the given sport. The joy of sport is when we have given everything we have and emerge victoriously. The exhilaration is powerful—so much so that we can’t wait until the next game or match. During competition, there are peaks and valleys that we have to endure; we call them momentum swings. When the momentum is on our side, we feel invincible and our opponent feels vulnerable.

Our mistake as Christ followers is assuming too much credit when we win and too much blame when we lose. Respectively, when we win and when we lose, we have an opponent whose goal is to take away our humility and sink us into utter despair. This opponent wants to keep us from depending on the Lord for provision and strength and wants us to wallow in self-pity and unworthiness.

But when we focus on the true source of victory in Jesus, we can overcome any opponent. In John 8:12, Jesus promises a well-lit path and a safe landing. We can fully trust in this based on Christ’s sacrificial love and promise of salvation for our lives.

As we compete, let’s remember that through Christ and Christ alone, we have victory over opponents who seek to draw us away from this safe place. Our victory comes from the One who lives in us who is greater than anyone or anything else.

When we achieve victory in competition, it is the Lord who gives us the ability. Compete today knowing that you have greater potential in Christ than any worldly promise or victory.

GO

1. Describe a time when you and/or your team gave everything you had to achieve victory.
2. How is God teaching you to trust Him in victory and loss?

WORKOUT

1 John 5:5; Romans 8:35, 37; 2 Corinthians 10:4; John 16:33

OVERTIME

Father, thank You for the greater potential You offer me. Teach me to be humble in victory and hopeful in defeat. I thank You that the Holy Spirit lives in me to help me overcome the world and things or people that want to keep me from You. I know that I am an overcomer because of Jesus’ work on the cross and His resurrection. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

MEETING 2 <

GREATER PROMISE

WELCOME

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” — John 3:16

You’re seeing glimpses of what you can be as an athlete, and it’s exciting to experience competitive growth. But is it just about improving, achieving and winning? If so, that feeling of excitement might not last for long. The great news is that God created you for something more!

WARM-UP FOR THE PRIZE

Let’s all line up for a race. We’re going to sprint to a designated spot and back. The winner gets a prize (e.g., a quarter, a piece of candy, a pen, etc.).

Q: How did you feel about competing in the race knowing there was a prize to win?

Q: Besides winning a prize, what are some other motivations for you to compete?

WORKOUT

No matter the competitive situation, it always seems like something is on the line—the game, starting positions, scholarships, reputations, locker room status, bragging rights, etc. But Oklahoma softball coach Patti Gasso has become known for encouraging her athletes to celebrate the greater promise they have through their identity in Christ.

The team’s rallying cry throughout its 2021 NCAA championship run was “BATL” or “Boast About The Lord.” Focusing on God allowed them to play without fearing a negative result. They saw beyond the short-term promise of competitive success and instead saw the bigger picture of why they were competing in the first place.

Q: When was a time that you competed with something on the line?

Q: How did you feel when you had that pressure on you?

IN THE LIGHT

As Jesus began His ministry, many religious leaders were anxious about His arrival. Most of them didn’t like the idea that someone else was greater than them, except for a few.

Nicodemus’ identity was wrapped up in his job and in his status. Nicodemus felt the pressure to perform, but what he really needed was the truth until that point, Nicodemus knew all about God but didn’t truly know Him. Fixating on the rules of his religion prevented him from having a relationship. But Jesus showed Nicodemus the Light of truth and revealed a greater promise of eternal life.

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.” —John 3:16–18

Nicodemus came to Jesus in the cover of darkness, but spiritually he was about to step into the light thanks to these powerful words:

“This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.” — John 3:19–21

That night Nicodemus stepped into the light of God’s promise. After meeting Jesus, he was no longer wrapped up in what he could do but instead was compelled to see what God could do through him and for God’s glory.

Q: Why do you think Nicodemus could know so much about God and yet not truly know Him?

Q: What are some accomplishments you need to shine a light on for God’s glory?

WRAP-UP

GREATER PROMISE

More than anything you can find through athletic success, God wants to give you the greater promise that comes from Jesus. Here are three amazing things His greater promise will bring:

1. Greater Love. God’s promise is only possible because of His great love for you—even to the point of sacrificing His own Son.

“As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love.” — John 15:9

2. Greater Gift. Salvation is the key to a relationship with God and the promise of eternal life.

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” — John 3:17

3. Greater Identity. There is no more confusion about who you are and your self-worth when you join God’s family.

“But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name.” — John 1:12

As you allow these truths to soak into your heart, the Holy Spirit will begin to cultivate and activate inside of you a desire to live out another powerful truth found in our theme verse:

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” — John 3:30

OVERTIME

Take some time to say this prayer to yourself:

Dear Lord, thank You for the greater promise of salvation. Help me receive Your love so that I might begin to find my identity in You.

If you want to learn more about receiving the greater promise of a relationship with God, talk to your group leader or another FCA staff member about making that life-changing decision today. You can also go to thefour.fca.org or turn to page 2 and go through “The FOUR.”

TRAINING TIME 2 ✕ GREATER PROMISE

SARAH FREYMUTH

READY

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” — John 3:16

SET

We’ve all experienced it: hope for the upcoming season. Think with me for a moment: your coach approaches you with a promise of a starting position or being named captain. You hold this excitement inside as the first day of practice begins.

You can place your identity and accomplishment in what you’ve been promised. But those promises may not be kept. Plans change. New coaches come in, and someone with a stronger ability at your position transfers to your school. You can’t count on the promise of something that has no guarantee.

But there is a greater promise you can cling to: God loves you (and all of His children) so much that He gave us eternal life through His only Son, Jesus, so that we can be with Him forever. God’s love will never go away or change; we can count on Him to stay faithful to His promise. Because of Jesus, we are saved from the perils of sin and set apart with a new identity as God’s child. It’s an unshakable guarantee.

Gone are the days of worrying about whether we can trust the promise of a starting role or the words of a coach. Instead, we stand strong on the greater promise Jesus offers: salvation forever and life in full in the here and now. We are newly identified as God’s son or daughter, an identity that cannot be taken away from a bad play, an injury or a losing season. Live in this unchanging truth and share it with those around you who need this greater promise.

GO

1. Have you been placing your identity in faulty promises like winning a game or earning a starting position?
2. Take a moment to pray to God for His gift of Jesus and tell someone about His saving grace.

WORKOUT

John 14:6; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 2:8-9

OVERTIME

God, thank You for sending Jesus to die for my sins. I believe He is the only way to You and receive Him as my Lord and Savior. When I compete, help me stand firm in my identity as Your child. Thank You for Your unchanging love. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

MEETING 3 >

GREATER PERFORMANCE

WELCOME

“I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.” — John 15:5

Performance counts. It isn't a bad thing, but an unhealthy point of view as a competitor can produce bad habits, wrong motivations and unnecessary pressures. The good news is that your identity in Christ gives you a new way to perform.

WARM-UP

EYES ON ME

Imagine you are in the middle of competition. You look into the crowd and notice some of the fans cheering or watching in anticipation.

Q: Whom do you see that might make you a) play harder, b) get nervous and c) have more fun?

Q: Why do you think some people can have an impact on your performance?

WORKOUT

AUDIENCE OF ONE

NFL quarterbacks like Carson Wentz, Russell Wilson and Tua Tagovailoa have become known for using the popular phrase “Audience of One.” It's their way of telling football fans that they play first and foremost for God. They want to give Him the glory by giving their best performance on the field.

That doesn't mean they don't feel pressure, but for any athlete who competes with this mindset, understanding that God is the only person they truly need to please can certainly bring peace, joy and freedom from fear.

Q: What does the phrase “Audience of One” mean to you as an athlete?

Q: Is playing for God something you think about always, some of the time or not at all?

LOSING TO WIN

When your identity is in Christ, you are no longer performing for yourself, your coach, your family or your friends. Like those NFL athletes and many more like them, you are playing for an Audience of One. Once you only compete for Him, others can see Christ working through you as an athlete.

That's why it's so important to stay connected to “the vine” and remain in Christ (John 15:5). But that also means you must sacrifice your wants and plans and commit your life to Jesus. It may not always make sense, but for the athlete, it's like losing to win.

“The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” — John 12:25

Giving your life to Christ and staying connected to Him might mean giving up some things that are holding you back or keeping you from experiencing the fullness of a life-changing relationship with God. But what you will receive in return is so much greater than anything the world can offer. You will have the power of Christ inside of you and be able to reach your fullest potential to perform for His glory.

You give up to gain something greater.

Q: Do you feel like your performance is mostly for God, yourself or someone else?

Q: What do you think “losing to win” might look like in your life?

WRAP-UP

GREATER PERFORMANCE

When you have found your new identity in Christ, it will help you unlock your full potential and lead to a greater performance for His glory. You are now playing for Someone, not something. Here are three key things you will receive through your relationship with God:

1. Greater Fuel. God is your Creator and He knows (and through Jesus will give) what you need most to glorify Him in all areas of your life.

“I am the bread of life,’ Jesus told them. ‘No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again.’” — John 6:35

2. Greater Freedom. Performing for Him first allows you to stay untangled from the world’s expectations of you as an athlete and as a disciple of Christ.

“So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.” — John 8:36

3. Greater Fruit. More than just athletic performance, staying connected to Jesus will produce godly characteristics in your life.

“My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples.” — John 15:8

As you allow these truths to soak into your heart, the Holy Spirit will empower you to live out another powerful truth found in our theme verse:

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” — John 3:30

OVERTIME

Read John 12:23–26.

Then, take some time to answer the following questions with your group or one-on-one with your huddle leader or an FCA staff member:

Q: What are some things that are holding you back that you might need to give up?

Q: Why is it so difficult sometimes to fully give your heart and your life to God?

Q: How do you think doing so might change the way you approach athletic performances and other areas of your life?

TRAINING TIME 3 ✕

GREATER PERFORMANCE

BRETT CAMPBELL

READY

"I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me." — John 15:5

SET

When I entered high school athletics, my identity was found in sports. I viewed my value and worth as a direct reflection of my performance. If I competed well and my stats were up, so were my feelings of worth and value went up too. Inversely, if I played badly or had an off game, my feelings coincided with that performance. Sports were my identity. Yet, through the influence of my coaches, the Lord grabbed hold of my life and revealed where my identity truly is.

Your identity is not dictated by what you do but what Jesus did for us! Our value and worth come from His sinless life, atoning death on the cross and His resurrection. His perfect love and ultimate sacrifice provide inherent value and worth, and when we receive the gift of grace, our lives can change. Our lives are redeemed and given a purpose far greater than increasing our level of performance. Our identity is found in what Jesus did and in whom we are following.

In John 15, Jesus calls His disciples to abide in Him. To *abide* means "to remain or continue to be present/held/kept." What an incredible invitation from our Lord, to remain in Him in all circumstances—in the challenging and heartbreaking times, to the incredible mountaintop moments. This freedom releases us from the chains of seeking the approval of the world and empowers us to live a life dedicated to glorifying the Lord in ALL areas of our life. The Apostle Paul reminds the churches in Galatia of this truth in Galatians 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

As competitors, we must allow the truth of the Gospel to transform our identity. Let our identity be in Christ alone, and let that freedom relieve the pressures of performance. Strive for a greater performance not for our own name but for the name of Jesus.

GO

1. How can you remind yourself of your identity in Christ every day?
2. What is one way you will reflect an identity found in Christ to your team?

WORKOUT

Colossians 3:23; Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:13

OVERTIME

Lord, thank You for never leaving us. Thank You for the life, death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus. Please give me the boldness and strength to walk in alignment with the life You have called me to, and may You be glorified in all that I do. Amen

MEETING 4 ✕ GREATER PURPOSE

WELCOME

“As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” — John 17:18

When things aren't going as planned, it might be hard to stay motivated to push through it all. But when you compete for God, you are playing for a far greater purpose.

WARM-UP

WHAT MATTERS MOST?

Purpose is a complicated word. Usually, your purpose depends on what matters most to you.

To illustrate, let's take a few minutes to walk around our nearby surroundings and search for one object you can bring back (piece of nature, sports equipment, etc.) that represents something important in your life.

Q: What did you bring back and what important thing in your life does it represent?

Q: What aspect of your athletic life matters to you the most and why?

WORKOUT

WHY DO I COMPETE?

It's a question all athletes ask themselves at some point in their life: Why do I compete?

Usually, that question comes up when dealing with adversity, and when you face adversity, tangible results like personal achievement, team goals, physical benefits and long-term dreams (such as scholarships or career opportunities) tend to be the default motivation.

Q: How often do you ask yourself the question, “Why do I compete?”

Q: What are some tangible results that help you stay motivated as an athlete?

WHO IS IT ALL FOR?

In John 17, Jesus was a few days away from being crucified, buried in a tomb and raised from the dead. He knew He had limited time with His followers. That's why Jesus spent a lot of His remaining time on earth praying for the disciples and all people who would one day believe and commit their lives to telling the world about Him.

Jesus wanted to make sure they had no question about their greater purpose:

“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” — John 17:16–18

Jesus also wanted to redefine what success and winning are all about. Life's greater purpose has much more to do with God and others than it does with you:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” — Matthew 22:37–39

Part of loving God is giving Him the glory for anything good you do, and part of loving others is to tell them about Jesus and remind them how to live like Christ:

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” — Matthew 28:19–20

Q: How often are you tempted to compete or live for yourself?

Q: How do the above passages challenge you to compete for a greater purpose?

WRAP-UP

GREATER PURPOSE

You have been called to compete and live for someone and something greater than yourself. Here are three ways your greater purpose will manifest itself in your life:

1. Greater Glory. Understanding your greater purpose reminds you that the glory goes first and foremost to God!

“Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him.” — John 13:31

2. Greater Team. Understanding your greater purpose means you will look for ways to share God’s love with others.

“This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.” — John 15:12–13

3. Greater Things. Understanding your greater purpose will launch you into a new mission and will exceed your wildest expectations.

“Truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.” — John 14:12

As you begin to understand your greater purpose, God will continue to cultivate and activate inside of you a desire to live out a powerful truth found in our daily theme verse:

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” — John 3:30

OVERTIME

Using the spaces provided below, write down some specific ways you might fulfill God’s greater purpose for your life through sports and through your everyday life:

	Sports	Everyday Life
1. Glorify God:	_____	_____
2. Love God:	_____	_____
3. Love others:	_____	_____
4. Make disciples:	_____	_____

TRAINING TIME 4 ✕

GREATER PURPOSE

DARLENE JOHNSON

READY

“As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” — John 17:18

SET

As a daughter of a four-sport athlete in high school, the pressure growing up to be a great competitor was felt, if not self-imposed. My dad was a great athlete who taught me a lot about sports. He came from a family of nine, and eight were boys. So growing up in a large extended family brought lots of pressure to perform on the field.

One day during my elementary school years, the neighborhood kids decided to play kickball at the local elementary school. In those days, there were not many girls playing with me. As the captains picked their teams, I always wanted to be one of the top three to four players picked first. At that time, I cared more about playing sports for the attention and praise of others.

At 13, that all changed when I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Then I realized my true purpose is found in Christ alone and sports was a vehicle He would use as a platform for a Gospel-centered life. Serving others through the world of sports gave me greater purpose than the early myopic view I had toward sports and what I got from it.

As you compete today, remember, God loves us and gives us a new identity and purpose to compete. Worldly accolades are temporary and often unreliable. With God through Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to experience a greater love, a greater peace, and a greater purpose in what we do. We are called to glorify Him. How are you answering?

GO

1. What or who was the driving force for your early involvement in sports? How has that shaped your purpose, positively or negatively, as an athlete?
2. How are you using your athleticism and leadership now to engage others to play for Jesus and His agenda rather than your own?

WORKOUT

John 3:30; John 17:18; Galatians 6:8; 2 Timothy 1:9; Matthew 28:19

OVERTIME:

Father, I thank You that You have ordained a greater purpose for my life than I could ever imagine. Thank You for giving me opportunities to share my faith and Your Gospel through the platform of sports. Thank You for blessing me to live a life of greater eternal purpose and impact. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HUDDLE 1 X GREATER POTENTIAL

WELCOME

“Jesus spoke to them again: ‘I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’” — John 8:12

Maybe you tried out for varsity and made JV instead. Or maybe you’re struggling to improve your speed, your strength or your stats. You give it your all, but it never seems good enough. Not achieving goals might make you feel like a failure, but God says differently. There is greater potential in your life than finding your identity in sports.

WARM-UP UNDER PRESSURE

In this game, you will name five things that fit into a category. The catch? You have only ten seconds to do this. Have someone count down and keep track of your score. (Example categories: NFL mascots, countries in Europe, sports played without a ball, Marvel characters, music solo artists with one name, etc.)

Q: How difficult was it to come up with things under pressure?

Q: Have you ever felt this kind of pressure in your sport? How is it similar or different?

WORKOUT UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

As an athlete, it’s natural to feel like you have more potential than what is showing up in practice or in the heat of competition. And when you don’t feel like you’re living up to expectations, the pressure starts to build.

Living up to your potential is more than what you can do on your own. There’s more to life than playing for the scoreboard. In fact, your potential shouldn’t just be measured by athletic achievements. It should be measured by who God says you are. There is a greater purpose wrapped up in your potential when your potential is wrapped up in Him!

Q: Is your identity wrapped up in your sport or in a relationship with God?

Q: What are some things that might be causing your identity to get wrapped up in your sport?

TRUE LIGHT

The Gospel of John shares the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. His cousin, a fiery preacher known as John the Baptist, prepared the people for Jesus’ arrival. John did great things, and even the people thought he was great, but John knew someone was coming who was greater.

As John preached about the coming of Jesus, many religious leaders were anxious about this greater One. They were comfortable living under a system that emphasized the pressure to perform. If you were good at your job, then you were a good person. But Jesus had a better way. His way? Bringing light to a dark world:

“The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him.” — John 1:9–10

Therein lies the problem: "The world did not recognize him." Similarly, we often don't reach our full potential because we don't recognize that He is the true source of our potential.

Q: Why do you think the world didn't recognize Jesus when He first arrived?

Q: How do you think having a deeper understanding of Jesus would unveil more of your potential?

WRAP-UP **GREATER POTENTIAL**

There is more to sports than just winning. It's an easy trap to fall into, but it's life-changing when you begin to recognize your full potential through Christ.

Here's how to see and apply the "Greater Potential" of Jesus:

1. Greater Way. There's a better way to reach your fullest potential. And it's the **ONLY** path that will truly get you there.

"Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" — John 14:6

2. Greater Truth. It's not just a greater truth. It's **THE** Truth. When you embrace the truth of Jesus, you experience freedom from the pressure to perform and see the purpose behind the gifts that God has given you.

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." — John 8:32

3. Greater Life. This is what Jesus offers you through a relationship with Him: more joy, peace and purpose through a life focused on Jesus.

"A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance." — John 10:10

John the Baptist understood what it meant to live your greater potential in Jesus. It's not what you do but you who are. As you allow these truths to soak into your heart, pray that God will activate a desire to live for Him as exemplified in our theme verse:

"He must increase, but I must decrease." — John 3:30

OVERTIME

As a Huddle, go to thefour.fca.org or turn to page 2 and go through "The FOUR." Talk about each of these key points with a teammate. If you haven't surrendered your heart to Jesus Christ, talk to your Huddle leader about making that life-changing decision today.

HUDDLE 2 > GREATER WAY

WELCOME

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
— John 14:6

Every athlete makes mistakes and no one is perfect. But when you try to take control and do things in your own way, it can create a whole lot of problems. Thankfully, there is a greater way that will lead you to the ultimate solution.

WARM-UP

MIXED-UP

In this game, one person will receive simple directions from three different people at the same time, each one shouting out a different set of directions (see the list below). The person playing has to decipher what the direction givers are saying and then decide which directions to follow.

[Directions: touch toes, spin around, run in place, jumping jacks, crawl, skip, knee lifts, dance moves, or punching bag motion.]

Q: What was it like trying to follow different directions at the same time?

Q: What did you do when you weren't sure which way to follow?

Q: Have you ever had different people tell you different ways to play your sport? How did you handle that?

WORKOUT

WRONG WAY

During the 1929 Rose Bowl, Roy Riegels, an All-American center for the University of California, grabbed a fumble on defense and headed toward Georgia Tech's goal line. But when the opposing players tried to tackle him, he got turned around and started running the wrong way!

Riegels thought he was going the right way and had every intention of scoring a touchdown. Instead, he ended up at Cal's one-yard line before his teammates could stop him.

Just like Riegels, you might find yourself trying to make the right play but doing the wrong thing because you've tried to do things on your own.

Q: What are some mistakes you've made as a competitor because you went about things the wrong way or tried to do things on your own?

Q: How did doing things the wrong way affect your relationship with your team, your coach or your family?

PREPARING THE WAY

As John the Baptist was preaching about Jesus, the religious leaders had lots of questions. They wanted to know who he was, what he was doing, and why he was doing it. John replied:

“I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord—just as Isaiah the prophet said.” — John 1:23

The religious leaders didn't understand what "the way of the Lord" meant. They thought if they performed certain rituals and followed certain rules, then it was the right way to know God. They didn't understand that there was a greater way—a way that would lead to real truth and real life.

The Apostle Paul reinforced this truth in one of his letters to a young christian from Greece.

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."
— 1 Timothy 2:5

Q: Why do you think the religious leaders' way didn't help them know God?

Q: Why do you think so many people today don't believe that Jesus is the only way to truly know God?

WRAP-UP **GREATER WAY**

It's great news knowing that we have a greater way through His Son, Jesus Christ!

Here are three key points to help you remember this truth:

1. Your Way. Trying to figure things out on your own will lead to confusion and frustration.

"There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death."
Proverbs 14:12

2. The World's Way Trying to follow the world's way will lead us away from God and ultimately to destruction. But God's way will lead us to life.

"Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it." — Matthew 7:13–14

3. God's Way. Following God's way through a personal relationship with Jesus is the only way that leads to truth and life.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
— Romans 6:23

OVERTIME

Take some time with a teammate during the Huddle or on your own to memorize today's main verse in John 14:6. Be prepared to share that verse at the next Huddle meeting.

If you want to learn more about following the greater way into a relationship with God, talk to your group leader or another FCA staff member about making that life-changing decision today. You can also turn to page 2 and go through "The Four."

HUDDLE 3 >

GREATER TRUTH

WELCOME

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” — John 8:32

As a competitor, the pressure to perform often comes from lies and not truth. Lies about your self-worth and the role your sport has in your life dominate your thoughts and actions. But there's a greater truth that can bring you freedom!

WARM-UP

TWO TRUTHS, ONE LIE

Let's go around the Huddle and tell three things about ourselves. The catch? One of those things has to be untrue. The rest of us will try to separate the two truths from the one lie.

Q: How difficult was it to tell the difference between the truths and the lie?

Q: In life, do you find it easy or difficult to know what is true and what is untrue?

WORKOUT

MORE THAN A COMPETITOR

There's a lot of talk these days about how athletes and coaches shouldn't be defined by their sport. It's a positive conversation that has helped free up many competitors from the pressure to perform.

But for those who are still stuck in the performance trap, there's a nagging feeling that the wins and losses, the statistical outcomes and the awards and achievements are tied directly to self-worth.

No matter where you land on the performance spectrum, the tension between those two mentalities will always follow you. The good news is that God does not care about your performance. He only cares about your heart.

Q: What are some lies that you have been told as an athlete?

Q: What helped you understand the truth about who you are as an athlete?

MORE THAN A CARPENTER'S SON

As Jesus emerged to begin His ministry, the religious leaders didn't understand the truth. They didn't believe God's Son was standing right in front of them. They saw Him as a simple carpenter's son who had little to offer with His teachings.

But Jesus was more than a carpenter's son. He had been sent to earth to do away with the old way of religion. Jesus was there to reconnect people with God through a personal relationship. When they didn't believe Him, Jesus spoke to them again:

“I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.” — John 8:12

Sadly, Satan has created the illusion that there are many ways to God, but none of them are based on the truth of God's Word. He has done so to confuse people into believing lies and to steer them away from Jesus. It's like walking in darkness instead of the light.

But when we know the truth and that truth gives us freedom from the lies of performance, self-worth and identity, we can feel protected from the lies of the world.

Q: What are some instances where you've struggled with self-worth and identity based on your competitive performance?

Q: How do you think embracing the truth of who you are in Christ can change things?

WRAP-UP

GREATER TRUTH

When you embrace the truth, you will experience freedom from that pressure and better grasp the purpose behind the gifts and talents God has given you.

Here are three key points to help you remember this powerful concept:

1. Seek Truth. You can find truth in God's Word—the ultimate source for every question you might have about your identity.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness." — 2 Timothy 3:16

2. Believe in Truth. Don't just read it; believe it! Have faith that God's Word is true.

"So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ." — Romans 10:17

3. Live Truth. Allow the Holy Spirit to make God's Word active and real in your competition and every other area of your life.

"But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." — James 1:22

OVERTIME

Pray this prayer sometime during your alone time with God:

Dear Lord, help me understand the difference between the world's lies and the greater truth that Jesus came to share with the world. Give me a stronger desire to study God's Word and to live by what it says.

Write down a plan for how you can be more consistent in learning the truth through daily time in the Bible and then share it with others!

HUDDLE 4 >

GREATER LIFE

WELCOME

“I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.” — John 10:10

It’s easy for us to allow our lives to get wrapped up in sports, but there is much more to our existence than what takes place during competition. A greater life is found in God through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

WARM-UP

BEST LIFE EVER

We all have ideas in our heads about what our best life should look like. For competitors, it’s often linked to achievements, awards and long-term success. In other areas of our life, it might be tied to relationships, possessions and career goals.

Q: How would you describe your best life as an athlete?

Q: How do you think having that best life would impact your daily existence?

WORKOUT

BIGGER THAN LIFE

You might see a professional athlete or Olympic competitor and wonder what his or her life might be like. But what you often learn over time is that those superstars have the same problems you do and sometimes even more so. They might be “bigger than life,” but they aren’t always experiencing their best life.

Ask John Smoltz who won the World Series in 1995, Mike Singletary who won the Super Bowl in 1985 or Bernhard Langer who won the Masters in 1985.

They, along with so many other great athletes, experienced a major letdown after their greatest achievements. All three can testify that they didn’t truly experience their best life until they surrendered it to Jesus.

Q: How do you think reaching the pinnacle of your sport would make you feel?

Q: Do you ever think about what your life will be like without sports?

ABUNDANT LIFE

In John 9, Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth, but the religious leaders were not happy that this man had received a new perspective on life through Christ. A conversation with the Pharisees and Jesus continued into John 10 where He explained that being blind doesn’t just mean physically.

Jesus also taught His disciples a similar lesson—that you can have what the world calls a great life and yet have no life at all.

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it. For what will it benefit someone if he gains the whole world yet loses his life? Or what will anyone give in exchange for his life?” — Matthew 16:25-26

The best life ever for everyone is the life that is surrendered to God. That’s the only life where our full potential can be reached through a relationship with God. It’s the only life that is rooted in truth.

As Jesus tells us in John 10:10, we can have an abundant, overflowing life through Him. It's a life with greater joy, greater peace, greater purpose and greater freedom from the pressure to perform.

Q: In what areas of your life could you use more joy, peace, purpose and freedom?

Q: What does it look like to surrender those areas to God?

WRAP-UP GREATER LIFE

There is no greater life than a life that is surrendered to God. Here are three key points to show what this truth can look like in your life:

- 1. Joyful Life.** Joy is greater than happiness. It's a state of contentment in all things, the good times and the bad, that only greater life in Christ can bring.

"You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures." — Psalm 16:11

- 2. Peaceful Life.** Peace is hard to come by inside the performance trap. But God's peace will overcome all of your fears and anxieties.

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." — Philippians 4:7

- 3. Purposeful Life.** There's more to life than awards, achievements or material gain that comes through competition or a career. God's purpose is life-giving and life-changing.

"However, I have let you live for this purpose: to show you my power and to make my name known on the whole earth." — Exodus 9:16

OVERTIME

Under each word in the table below, write down areas of your life where you would like to experience these benefits of a relationship with Jesus. Then ask God to help you apply the truth of His Word so that you might truly experience greater life.

<i>Joy</i>	<i>Peace</i>	<i>Purpose</i>

HUDDLE 5 >

GREATER PROMISE

WELCOME

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” — John 3:16

You’re seeing glimpses of what you can be as an athlete, and it’s exciting to experience competitive growth. But is it just about improving, achieving and winning? If so, that feeling of excitement might not last long. The great news is that God created you for something more!

WARM-UP FOR THE PRIZE

Let’s all line up for a race. We’re going to sprint to a designated spot and back. The winner gets a prize (e.g., a quarter, a piece of candy, a pen, etc.).

Q: How did you feel about competing in the race knowing there was a prize to win?

Q: Besides winning a prize, what are some other motivations for you to compete?

WORKOUT

No matter the competitive situation, it always seems like something is on the line—the game, starting positions, scholarships, reputations, locker room status, bragging rights, etc. But Oklahoma softball coach Patti Gasso has become known for encouraging her athletes to celebrate the greater promise they have through their identity in Christ.

The team’s rallying cry throughout its 2021 NCAA championship run was “BATL” or “Boast About The Lord.” Focusing on God allowed them to play without fearing a negative result. They saw beyond the short-term promise of competitive success and instead saw the bigger picture of why they were competing in the first place.

Q: When was a time that you competed with something on the line?

Q: How did you feel when you had that pressure on you?

IN THE LIGHT

As Jesus began His ministry, many religious leaders were anxious about His arrival. Most of them didn’t like the idea that someone else was greater than them, except for a few.

Nicodemus’ identity was wrapped up in his job and in his status. Nicodemus felt the pressure to perform, but what he really needed was the truth. Until that point, Nicodemus knew all about God but didn’t truly know Him. Fixating on the rules of his religion prevented him from having a relationship. But Jesus showed Nicodemus the Light of Truth and revealed a greater promise of eternal life.

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.” —John 3:16–18

Nicodemus came to Jesus in the cover of darkness, but spiritually he was about to step into the light thanks to these powerful words:

“This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.” — John 3:19–21

That night Nicodemus stepped into the light of God’s promise. After meeting Jesus, he was no longer wrapped up in what he could do but instead was compelled to see what God could do through him and for God’s glory.

Q: Why do you think Nicodemus could know so much about God and yet not truly know Him?

Q: What are some accomplishments that you need to shine a light on for God’s glory?

WRAP-UP

GREATER PROMISE

More than anything you can find through athletic success, God wants to give you the greater promise that comes from Jesus. Here are three amazing things His greater promise will bring:

1. Greater Love. God’s promise is only possible because of His great love for you—even to the point of sacrificing His own Son.

“As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love.” — John 15:9

2. Greater Gift. Salvation is the key to a relationship with God and the promise of eternal life.

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” — John 3:17

3. Greater Identity. There is no more confusion about who you are and your self-worth when you join God’s family.

“But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name.” — John 1:12

As you allow these truths to soak into your heart, the Holy Spirit will begin to cultivate and activate inside of you a desire to live out another powerful truth found in our theme verse:

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” — John 3:30

OVERTIME

Take some time to say this prayer to yourself:

Dear Lord, thank You for the greater promise of salvation. Help me receive Your love so that I might begin to find my identity in You.

If you want to learn more about receiving the greater promise of a relationship with God, talk to your group leader or another FCA staff member about making that life-changing decision today. You can also go to thefour.fca.org or turn to page 2 and go through “The FOUR.”

HUDDLE 6 >

GREATER LOVE

WELCOME

“As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love.” — John 15:9

You’ll do anything to keep playing the sport you love. You can gain so much enjoyment and benefit through athletic competition. But through Jesus, there’s something even better—a sacrificial love that will last forever!

WARM-UP

DEDICATED LOVE

Being dedicated to your sport can cause you to do some crazy things. Let’s spend a few minutes talking about how much you love your sport and how that plays out in your life.

Q: What is the hardest thing you have given up for your athletic career?

Q: Was the sacrifice worth it? Explain.

WORKOUT

SELFLESS LOVE

In a world where competitors often feel the pressure to achieve greatness at all costs, it is common for individual achievement to overshadow personal sacrifice and selfless love.

But it’s so inspiring to hear stories about athletes giving up a starting position, refusing to take advantage of an opponent’s injury, resisting the temptation to take credit for someone else’s hard work or not gloating. We are encouraged by sacrifice and selflessness.

A great example of this took place in 2014 when Eckerd College softball player Kara Oberer hit a three-run homer against Florida Southern College pitcher Chelsea Oglevie. When Oberer rounded first base, her knee buckled, and she fell to the ground in pain. What happened next was an absolute display of love and respect. Oglevie and a teammate rushed to Oberer’s side. They helped her get up and carried her around the diamond, stopping so she could tap each base and home plate.

Whether publicly recognized or not, those actions ultimately stemmed from the selfless love that originates with God. We first see this love in Scripture:

“Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.” — 1 John 4:7

Q: What is the most inspiring act of selfless love you have seen in sports?

Q: How do you view sacrifice?

SACRIFICIAL LOVE

No greater love is known to man than the love Jesus displayed when He died for us. His purpose in life was to live without sin and become the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Jesus was brutally whipped, tortured, publicly humiliated and then nailed to a cross. And even through all of that, He showed love and forgave His executioners before taking His final breath.

God sent Jesus to Earth knowing this would happen. It was all part of His plan to redeem mankind back to a relationship with Him:

“But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
— Romans 5:8

Not only can you experience God’s love through Jesus’ sacrifice, but you can also remain in His love every day and experience the blessings Jesus pours out. The apostle Paul teaches us what that looks like in real life:

“Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” — 1 Corinthians 13:4–7

Thanks to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, God’s love can be an extension of who you are as an athlete and through every aspect of your life.

Q: What does Jesus’ sacrificial love mean to you?

Q: How does His sacrifice impact your life and the way you play sports?

WRAP-UP GREATER LOVE

God’s promise of salvation is only possible because of His greater love for you—even to the point of sacrificing His own Son. Here are three ways that accepting and embracing that love should be expressed in your life:

1. Love Gives All. Sacrifice means doing whatever it takes to help others and show them how much God loves them.

“No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.” — John 15:13

2. Love Forgives All. It’s one of the hardest aspects of love, but God requires us to forgive others just as He has forgiven us.

“And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.” — Ephesians 4:32

3. Love Endures All. You will face adversity, opposition and even hatred in this world, but God’s sacrificial love gives you the strength to overcome everything that comes against you.

“[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”
— 1 Corinthians 13:7

OVERTIME

Take some time to read about the crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 27:27–44 and John 19:1–37). Afterwards, say a prayer of thanks for His sacrifice and then write down a few ways His greater love challenges you to love others:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

HUDDLE 7 **×** GREATER GIFT

WELCOME

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” — John 3:17

Your athletic ability is a gift, but it can only bring you so much happiness before it’s gone. Thankfully, God has a greater gift that will last forever!

WARM-UP

A SHORT-LIVED GIFT

Every athlete has experienced some level of success—something as big as a championship or something as small as a satisfying play. But one thing is for sure: the gifts of those moments are always short-lived, just like the athletic gifts that made those moments possible.

Q: What is your best athletic gift or talent?

Q: When have you experienced athletic success, and how long did the happiness you felt last?

WORKOUT

TEMPORARY GIFT

It’s the thing that all competitors dread—those moments when an injury or getting older exposes the fact that everyone’s athletic gifts are temporary.

Basketball Hall of Fame inductee Tamika Catchings experienced that reality at the worst moment possible—midway during her senior season at the University of Tennessee. A torn ACL robbed her of a chance to play in the NCAA tournament and forced her to sit out her first WNBA season with the Indiana Fever.

There was no guarantee that Catchings would recover, and that hit her hard. So she spent the next few months not just rehabbing her knee but working on her relationship with God. The injury was a harsh reminder of Catchings’ temporary gift.

For dedicated athletes, it’s a tough thing to face. But those who understand that sports are just one aspect of earthly life, rather than the only thing, find a clearer path to obtaining lasting contentment.

Q: If you’ve ever seen an athlete lose an athletic gift from an injury or circumstance, what did you feel?

Q: How often do you think about the temporary nature of your athletic gifts, and how does the thought make you feel?

ETERNAL GIFT

The religious leader named Nicodemus was having a conversation with Jesus late one night. He wanted to understand Jesus’ teachings about light and darkness, life and death, and Heaven and earth.

Jesus explained to Nicodemus that all of humanity had been born with sin in their hearts and needed to receive a new spirit through Christ in order to go to Heaven and “have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Eternal life means never-ending. It means that even though our bodies might wear out and die one day, we have the greater promise of an amazing, unending life with God. Unlike our short-lived, temporary athletic gifts and earthly lives, the greater gift of Heaven will last forever.

Q: How often do you think about what happens when you die?

Q: What comes to mind when you think about what happens after death?

Q: What excites you most about the gift of eternal life?

WRAP-UP

GREATER GIFT

There is no greater gift than the promise of eternal life through a relationship with Jesus. Here are three more gifts attached to that promise:

- 1. The Gift of Hope.** We will always have difficult times in this world, but the greater gift is the knowledge that we have hope in Jesus Christ.

“For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” — 2 Corinthians 4:17–18

- 2. The Gift of Heaven.** The good things we experience in this world will lack in comparison to the unimaginable blessings we will experience in our forever home.

*“But as it is written,
What no eye has seen, no ear has heard,
and no human heart has conceived—
God has prepared these things for those who love him.”
— 1 Corinthians 2:9*

- 3. The Gift of Eternity.** We will live forever in God’s presence. There will be nothing greater than that never-ending reality.

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.” — Revelation 21:4

OVERTIME

Use the space below to list some of the areas of your life where you need to focus on the eternal and not the temporary:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

If you want to receive the greater gift of eternal life through a relationship with Jesus, talk to your group leader or another FCA staff member about making that life-changing decision today. You can also go to thefour.fca.org or turn to page 2 and go through “The FOUR.”

HUDDLE 8 >

GREATER IDENTITY

WELCOME

“But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name.”— John 1:12

It’s easy to get wrapped up in your sport, but doing so can leave you empty. Competition takes on a whole new meaning when you find your identity in Christ and begin to experience the fullness of being part of God’s family and the plans He has for your life.

WARM-UP

FAKE ID

One person in the group will pretend to be a famous athlete or celebrity (secretly given to them by the huddle leader) and give verbal clues to another person. The guesser will have 15 seconds to figure out their partner’s fake identity.

Q: What was the hardest part about pretending to be a famous person?

Q: What was the hardest part about trying to figure out the famous person’s identity?

WORKOUT

PROPER ID

Patrick Ewing is one of the greatest NBA centers of all time. But when he visited his old home arena in 2021, the Madison Square Garden security repeatedly asked to see his photo pass before allowing him to access different parts of the building. Ewing was not happy and felt like everyone should have recognized him without asking for proper ID.

It’s a common feeling among popular athletes, coaches and other celebrities that who they are and what they’ve accomplished should allow them to gain access without any official proof.

This can even be a trap that lesser-known competitors might fall into—the need to be seen, known and treated well. That’s because it’s easy to get wrapped up in sports and allow competitive success to define who you are.

But God’s Word tells us that when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, our entire lives should be focused on Him and what He has done for us and wants to do through us.

Q: In what ways have you struggled to separate who you are as a competitor from other areas of your life?

Q: Have you ever let your competitive success define who you are? What does it say about you?

GOD’S ID

Not long after Jesus was gone, a man named Paul (also known as Saul) had a lot of pride in his many titles and descriptors. He was Jewish. He was Roman. He was a Pharisee. He was educated. He was an elite. He was a successful businessman.

Paul was also arresting Christians and having them killed for their faith.

But when Paul had an encounter with Jesus (in Acts 9), something inside him changed dramatically. He no longer held onto those parts of his identity so tightly. He was now, first and foremost, a child of God and a disciple of Christ:

“I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” — Galatians 2:20

Paul now understood these important truths. God created him (in His image), loved him (enough to save him) and chose him (for a much greater purpose). And because of his new identity, Paul had the boldness and courage to tell the world about Jesus.

Q: In what ways can you relate to Paul’s need to be recognized for his background, his heritage and his accomplishments?

Q: What are the benefits of being known as a child of God?

WRAP-UP

GREATER IDENTITY

There is no more confusion about who you are when you join God’s family. Here are three key things to remember about taking on His identity:

1. You Are Created. God wanted you in His life, so He created you with love and made you to be like Him.

*“So God created man
in his own image;
he created him in the image of God;
he created them male and female.”*
— Genesis 1:27

2. You Are Loved. Even though you were born a sinner, God still wants a relationship with you. That’s why He gave His Son to bring you back to Him.

“But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” — Romans 5:8

3. You Are Chosen. God has a plan for your life, and He chose you so that you could fulfill your greater identity through His purpose.

“You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.” — John 15:16

OVERTIME

Take some time to answer these questions as a group or one-on-one with your leader or an FCA staff member:

Q: In what areas of your life do you struggle to find your identity?

Q: How might focusing on your identity in Christ help you redefine who you are?

Q: What changes in your priorities might need to take place as a child of God?

HUDDLE 9 >

GREATER PERFORMANCE

WELCOME

“I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.” — John 15:5

Performance counts. It isn't a bad thing, but an unhealthy point of view as a competitor can produce bad habits, wrong motivations and unnecessary pressures. The good news is that your identity in Christ gives you a new way to perform.

WARM-UP

EYES ON ME

Imagine you are in the middle of competition. You look into the crowd and notice some of the fans cheering or watching in anticipation.

Q: Whom do you see that might make you a) play harder, b) get nervous and c) have more fun?

Q: Why do you think some people can have an impact on your performance?

WORKOUT

AUDIENCE OF ONE

NFL quarterbacks like Carson Wentz, Russell Wilson and Tua Tagovailoa have become known for using the popular phrase “Audience of One.” It's their way of telling football fans that they play first and foremost for God. They want to give Him the glory by giving their best performance on the field.

That doesn't mean they don't feel pressure, but for any athlete who competes with this mindset, understanding that God is the only person they truly need to please can certainly bring peace, joy and freedom from fear.

Q: What does the phrase “Audience of One” mean to you as an athlete?

Q: Is playing for God something you think about always, some of the time or not at all?

LOSING TO WIN

When your identity is in Christ, you are no longer performing for yourself, your coach, your family or your friends. Like those NFL athletes and many more like them, you are playing for an Audience of One. Once you only compete for Him, others can see Christ working through you as an athlete.

That's why it's so important to stay connected to “the vine” and remain in Christ (John 15:5). But that also means you must sacrifice your wants and plans and commit your life to Jesus. It may not always make sense, but for the athlete, it's like losing to win.

“The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” — John 12:25

Giving your life to Christ and staying connected to Him might mean giving up some things that are holding you back or keeping you from experiencing the fullness of a life-changing relationship with God. But what you will receive in return is so much greater than anything the world can offer. You will have the power of Christ inside of you and be able to reach your fullest potential to perform for His glory.

You give up to gain something greater.

Q: Do you feel like your performance is mostly for God, yourself or someone else?

Q: What do you think “losing to win” might look like in your life?

WRAP-UP

GREATER PERFORMANCE

When you have found your new identity in Christ, it will help you unlock your full potential and lead to a greater performance for His glory. You are now playing for Someone, not something. Here are three key things that you will receive through your relationship with God:

1. Greater Fuel. God is your Creator and He knows (and through Jesus will give) what you need most to glorify Him in all areas of your life.

“I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again.” — John 6:35

2. Greater Freedom. Performing for Him first allows you to stay untangled from the world’s expectations of you as an athlete and as a disciple of Christ.

“So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.” — John 8:36

3. Greater Fruit. More than just athletic performance, staying connected to Jesus will produce godly characteristics in your life.

“My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples.” — John 15:8

As you allow these Truths to soak into your heart, the Holy Spirit will empower you to live out another powerful Truth found in our theme verse:

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” — John 3:30

OVERTIME

Read John 12:23–26.

Then, take some time to answer the following questions with your group or one-on-one with your huddle leader or an FCA staff member:

Q: What are some things that are holding you back that you might need to give up?

Q: Why is it so difficult sometimes to fully give your heart and your life to God?

Q: How do you think doing so might change the way you approach athletic performances and other areas of your life?

HUDDLE 10 > GREATER FUEL

WELCOME

“I am the bread of life,’ Jesus told them. ‘No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again.’” — John 6:35

As an athlete, you might be looking for nutritional and healthy ways to unlock your full potential. But with God, there is a greater fuel that will empower your body, mind and spirit!

WARM-UP

GOOD FUEL, BAD FUEL

Your ability to compete at a high level is often determined by how you fuel your body. There’s good fuel and there’s bad fuel. Good fuel works perfectly with all your natural systems—nervous, muscular, cardiovascular, etc. Bad fuel might give you a temporary boost but will run out quickly and can cause long-term damage.

Q: What are some good fuels you consume that help you do your best (fruits, vegetables, natural or organic food, etc.)?

Q: What are some bad fuels that drag you down and keep you from doing your best (energy drinks, pre-workout, illegal substances)?

WORKOUT

NATURAL FUEL

Athletes are always looking for a competitive edge, and now more than ever, the sports world is emphasizing what you put inside your body. Olympic gold medalist Allyson Felix is a prime example of an elite competitor who extended her career far beyond the norm, and now many others are following her lead.

Unfortunately, many athletes are still tempted to take unethical and even illegal shortcuts that might have an immediate benefit but end up causing long-term and potentially life-threatening problems.

Q: What are some natural ways today’s athletes are trying to get the most out of their bodies and extend their careers?

Q: What are some shortcuts you’ve seen athletes take that might be beneficial for a time but bad for them later?

SPIRITUAL FUEL

The world has fuel for your body, mind and spirit—things like drugs, alcohol, godless entertainment, false religions and self-serving ideologies—that can keep you from getting closer to God. The world’s fuel can also have damaging, long-term effects on your mental and spiritual health.

But when your life is consumed with Jesus (the Bread of Life), His fuel will bring peace, freedom and joy, and you will have a greater ability to share that fruit with others. The Apostle Paul taught there are three most important spiritual gifts:

“Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love—but the greatest of these is love.” — 1 Corinthians 13:13

Your access to God's greater fuel will not only change your identity as a competitor, but it will also empower you to fulfill the greater purpose to which He has called you.

Q: What are some things the world has to offer as fuel for your mind and spirit?

Q: What are some of the differences between the world's fuel and God's fuel?

WRAP-UP GREATER FUEL

God is your Creator, and He knows (and through Jesus has given) what you need most to glorify Him. Here are three ways that Jesus' greater fuel will impact all areas of your life:

- 1. Jesus Fuels Your Faith.** While the world is offering fear, God is offering belief in something bigger and better that goes beyond confusion and doubt.

"Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen." — Hebrews 11:1

- 2. Jesus Fuels Your Hope.** While the world is offering hopelessness, God is offering the promise of a better today, a brighter future and an unimaginable eternity.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." — Romans 15:13

- 3. Jesus Fuels Your Love.** While the world is offering anger and hate, God is offering unconditional, sacrificial and selfless love that can flow to you and through you.

"And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him." — 1 John 4:16

OVERTIME

Go back and review some of the things the world has to offer as mental and spiritual fuel. Write some of them down in the spaces provided below, and then use the other column to list God's greater fuel that counters each of those things:

The World's Fuel

Example: Fear

God's Fuel

Example: Faith

Q: What are some ways you can begin eliminating or limiting access to the world's fuel?

Q: What are some ways you can begin to spend more time and energy receiving God's fuel?

HUDDLE 11 ✕ GREATER FREEDOM

WELCOME

“So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.” — John 8:36

Everybody has expectations for you as an athlete—including you! It can be especially easy to feel trapped by the world’s expectations for your life. But trusting God’s plan and embracing your identity in Christ will allow you to stay untangled and free to do your best no matter what.

WARM-UP

ALL TIED UP

Split into two teams and then take off your shoes and throw them into two separate team piles. Keep track of where your shoes are while someone from the other team takes 30 seconds to tie all of the shoelaces together. On the leader’s command, the first group to untie their shoes wins.

Q: What was the hardest part of getting your shoes untangled and freed up?

Q: How did it feel to finally have your shoes separated from the others and back on your feet?

WORKOUT

ALL MIXED UP

A lot of things might go through your mind while you compete, and many of those thoughts can involve your expectations, others’ expectations and maybe even God’s expectations. To make matters worse, there are often persistent feelings of comparison—trying to be like someone else or wanting what someone else has.

There’s no freedom to do your best with that kind of conflict, tension, confusion and doubt swirling around inside of you. It’s easy in those moments to feel trapped by your own thoughts and unsure of what to do.

Q: What are some athletic expectations that sometimes make you feel stuck and held back from reaching your full potential?

Q: How often do you think about God’s expectations for your athletic performance?

ALL FREED UP

There is no difference between freedom in your athletic performance and freedom in other areas of your life. You won’t find true freedom anywhere without Christ.

That was His message to the people who believed He was God’s Son:

“If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” — John 8:31–32

They didn’t understand at first because they were thinking about their natural freedom, but Jesus was talking about their spiritual freedom and how being trapped in their sinful behavior can limit their growth as followers of Christ.

God has greater things in mind for you, and His expectations for your athletic performance and your life are the same. He wants you to do everything for Him and His glory. He wants

you to do everything without fear of what others think. He wants you to give your best in all things and trust Him for the outcome.

Once you fully surrender those expectations and any other things in your life that are holding you back, that's when you can experience true freedom. That's when God will begin to unlock your full potential and help you fulfill His purpose for your life.

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."
— 2 Corinthians 3:17

Q: What would it look like for you to fully surrender your expectations and other things in your life that might be holding you back?

Q: How do you think being free of any expectations other than God's might help you give your best?

WRAP-UP

GREATER FREEDOM

When you surrender everything to God, you can fully embrace your identity in Christ and stay untangled from all other expectations and become free to do your best no matter what. Here are three benefits you will experience through God's greater freedom:

1. Freedom from Worry. There is no more pressure to perform when your main concern is living for God.

"Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." — Philippians 4:6

2. Freedom from Doubt. There is no room for disbelief when your trust is wholly placed in God and His Word.

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding." — Proverbs 3:5

3. Freedom from Fear. There is no more need to be afraid when you know God is on your side.

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment."
— 2 Timothy 1:7

OVERTIME

Either in your group or at another time with your Huddle Leader or an FCA staff member, answer the following questions:

Q: What are some areas of your life that you haven't fully surrendered to Jesus?

Q: In what ways do you think those things might be keeping you from experiencing God's greater freedom?

Q: What do you need to do today that will help you surrender those things to Jesus and begin to experience true freedom in Him?

HUDDLE 12 **×** **GREATER FRUIT**

WELCOME

“My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples.”
— John 15:8

It's hard to avoid the performance trap when everyone is consumed with wins, but Jesus wants to produce a different kind of fruit (outcome or result) that will last forever.

WARM-UP

UNDER YOUR SKIN

Look around at the group and think about the first things that come to mind based solely on what you know about their athletic abilities. Then look again and think about their character or personality.

Q: Would you rather be judged on your outward performance or on your inward character?

Q: Why do you think it's easier to see outward traits and performance-based results than inward traits?

WORKOUT

UNDER THE JERSEY

Back in 1973, Tom Osborne took over as Nebraska's head football coach and took full advantage of NCAA rules by having 180 players on the roster (compared to 105 players allowed today)—many of them walk-on, nonscholarship players.

Some of them would stick through preseason camp long enough to be in the team picture but would eventually quit as practice got tougher and more demanding. From the photo and the jerseys they wore, they'd be on the team, but in actuality their time was short-lived. Osborne understood that competition reveals character. He was more concerned about what was represented under the jersey. Osborne knew their character would make or break their performance on the field, their impact in the locker room, their results in the classroom and their future away from athletics.

Q: What are some aspects of your character that sports can sometimes reveal (good or bad)?

Q: In what areas of your life away from sports can your character make an impact?

UNDER THE SURFACE

When Jesus was traveling from town to town and teaching the truth about God, religious leaders were good at looking good on the surface. They wore the right clothes, said the right words and performed the right rituals.

But Jesus was far more interested in what was under the surface and inside a person's heart. He cared about inward character over outward performance. In John 8, we see this principle carried out in a metaphor—what Jesus describes as the vine, the branches and its fruit. Many years later, the Apostle Paul would list nine characteristics a follower of Christ should have on the inside:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things.” — Galatians 5:22–23

For a competitor, here's what that looks like:

Showing **love** (and respect) when you're winning.

Having **joy** and **peace** when you're losing.

Displaying **patience** and **kindness** when a teammate is messing up.

Embracing **goodness** when others are breaking the rules.

Choosing **faithfulness** when friends are giving up.

Demonstrating **gentleness** when opponents are talking trash.

Focusing on **self-control** when things don't go your way.

Q: Which Fruit of the Spirit do you struggle with the most?

Q: How do you think having the Fruit of the Spirit inside you might change your perspective in competition and life?

WRAP-UP GREATER FRUIT

Staying connected to Jesus will allow Him to cultivate lasting, godly characteristics inside of you. Here are three kinds of greater fruit He wants to produce through your life:

1. **Fresh Fruit.** Godly characteristics can be produced no matter what the circumstance—good or bad.

“Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”— James 1:2–3

2. **Healthy Fruit.** Godly characteristics are for your benefit and the benefit of others.

“So that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.”— Colossians 1:10

3. **Lasting Fruit.** Godly characteristics can be produced consistently and have a long-term impact on those around you.

“He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”— Psalm 1:3

OVERTIME

Below are some scenarios you might face as an athlete. Under the two columns provided, write down a good fruit (from Galatians 3:22–23) and a bad fruit for each:

<u>Athletic Scenarios</u>	<u>Good Fruit</u>	<u>Bad Fruit</u>
Ex: Winning big	Love, respect, self-control	Pride, disrespect, bragging
Winning big	_____	_____
Losing badly	_____	_____
Opponents cheating	_____	_____
Getting benched	_____	_____
Teammate struggling	_____	_____

HUDDLE 13 × GREATER PURPOSE

WELCOME

“As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” — John 17:18

When things aren't going as planned, it might be hard to stay motivated to push through it all. But when you compete for God, you are playing for a far greater purpose.

WARM-UP

WHAT MATTERS MOST?

Purpose is a complicated word. Usually, your purpose is dependent on what matters most to you.

To illustrate, let's take a few minutes to walk around our nearby surroundings and search for one object you can bring back (piece of nature, sports equipment, etc.) that represents something important in your life.

Q: What did you bring back and what important thing in your life does it represent?

Q: What aspect of your athletic life matters to you the most and why?

WORKOUT

WHY DO I COMPETE?

It's a question that all athletes ask themselves at some point in their life: Why do I compete?

Usually, that question comes up when dealing with adversity, and when you face adversity, tangible results like personal achievement, team goals, physical benefits and long-term dreams (such as scholarships or career opportunities) tend to be the default motivation.

Q: How often do you ask yourself the question, “Why do I compete?”

Q: What are some tangible results that help you stay motivated as an athlete?

WHO IS IT ALL FOR?

In John 17, Jesus was a few days away from being crucified, buried in a tomb and raised from the dead. He knew He had limited time with His followers. That's why Jesus spent a lot of His remaining time on earth praying for the disciples and all people who would one day believe and commit their lives to telling the world about Him.

Jesus wanted to make sure they had no question about their greater purpose:

“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” — John 17:16–18

Jesus also wanted to redefine what success and winning are all about. Life's greater purpose has much more to do with God and others than it does with you:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” — Matthew 22:37–39

Part of loving God is giving Him the glory for anything good you do, and part of loving others is to tell them about Jesus and remind them how to live like Christ:

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” — Matthew 28:19–20

Q: How often are you tempted to compete or live for yourself?

Q: How do the above passages challenge you to compete for a greater purpose?

WRAP-UP

GREATER PURPOSE

You have been called to compete and live for someone and something greater than yourself. Here are three ways that your greater purpose will manifest itself in your life:

1. Greater Glory. Understanding your greater purpose reminds you that the glory goes first and foremost to God!

“Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him.” — John 13:31

2. Greater Team. Understanding your greater purpose means you will look for ways to share God’s love with others.

“This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.” — John 15:12–13

3. Greater Things. Understanding your greater purpose will launch you into a new mission and will exceed your wildest expectations.

“Truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.” — John 14:12

As you begin to understand your greater purpose, God will continue to cultivate and activate inside of you a desire to live out a powerful truth found in our daily theme verse:

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” — John 3:30

OVERTIME

Using the spaces provided below, write down some specific ways that you might fulfill God’s greater purpose for your life through sports and through your everyday life:

	Sports	Everyday Life
1. Glorify God:	_____	_____
2. Love God:	_____	_____
3. Love others:	_____	_____
4. Make disciples:	_____	_____

HUDDLE 14 >

GREATER GLORY

WELCOME

“When he had left, Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him.’” — John 13:31

There are moments when you receive praise and applause, and that can feel good. But your greater purpose reminds you that the glory goes first and foremost to God, and that’s always the best strategy.

WARM-UP

INWARD GLORY

Athletes have a natural desire to be told good things while training, in practice and, of course, during and after competition. In those moments, there is a decision to be made about how to process and dispense that inward glory.

- Q: Which of the following do you give credit when you get praise for your athletic performance: you, your family, your team, your school, your hometown, God or something or someone else?
- Q: How does your desire to hear good things from others impact your performance?

WORKOUT

OUTWARD GLORY

It’s a common scene at most collegiate or professional athletic events and is becoming increasingly common in sports everywhere. Athletes are always setting the bar, and it’s pretty high.

When a great athletic feat or accomplishment is made, the accolades roll in—the high fives, the roaring of the crowds, the announcer booming through the speakers. It’s easy to live for praise.

And of course, after the competition, how you respond to praise and whom you credit for your success says a lot about who you are.

In all of those moments, a choice has to be made. That choice is not usually made on the spot but rather in private when an athlete is either thinking about themselves or spending time with God.

- Q: What do you usually do when you have a moment to celebrate something good that you or your teammates have done during competition?
- Q: How often do you think about giving God the glory for your accomplishments?

UPWARD GLORY

Jesus was sent to Earth for the greatest purpose ever—to live a perfect life, die for our sins, defeat death and leave us with the greater promise of eternal life. Another part of His purpose was to bring glory to God through His teachings, His compassion and His miraculous works.

If anyone had a right to take the glory for Himself, it was Jesus. He always said the right things. He never did anything wrong. He loved everyone. He was perfect.

In John 13:1–20, Jesus lowered Himself to wash the disciples’ feet—something a servant would do, not something you would expect from the Son of God. Jesus’ ultimate glory to God came through in His death, burial and resurrection, which was God’s plan for His life:

“I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” — John 17:4

While Jesus was glorified upon His resurrection, He was glorified to bring greater glory to God. In the same way, when we receive glory for things we have done through Jesus, we are to point people to God and pass all of the glory along to Him.

“Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that Father may be glorified in the Son.”
— John 14:13

Q: What are some ways you can glorify God through your athletic career?

Q: What are some ways you can glorify God in other areas of your life?

WRAP-UP

GREATER GLORY

Understanding your greater purpose reminds you that the glory goes first and foremost to God. Here are three ways we can express a greater glory in all areas of our lives:

1. Glorified Life. God didn’t just create us, but He also sent Jesus to die for us. How we use our mind, body and soul should always bring greater glory to Him.

“For you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.” — 1 Corinthians 6:20

2. Glorified Works. That means everything we do in competition, at work, at school, in our relationships, in our free time and for others should glorify God.

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”
— 1 Corinthians 10:31

3. Glorified Future. When we glorify God today, it’s just a taste of what our eternal lives will be like in Heaven one day.

*“For from him and through him
and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever. Amen.”* — Romans 11:36

OVERTIME

Take some time during the Huddle or in your devotional time to say this prayer:

Dear Lord, thank You for blessing me with athletic gifts and competitive success. Help me to always give You the glory first and to recognize that everything I do is first and foremost for You. Amen.

HUDDLE 15 > GREATER TEAM

WELCOME

“This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.” — John 15:12–13

You love your teammates, and you’d do anything for them. But when you understand your greater purpose, you’ll realize that your team is much bigger than you’ve ever imagined, and God wants that team to experience His love through you!

WARM-UP

NO TEAM

We’re going to have a relay race with a twist. One team will have four runners. The other team will be one person running all four legs on his or her own.

Q: For the person running alone, how difficult was it racing with no team?

Q: For the people who ran as a team, how did having four people working together make the race easier?

WORKOUT

DREAM TEAM

In 1992, the International Olympic Committee allowed NBA players to compete in the Summer Olympics for the first time ever. USA Basketball assembled one of the greatest collections of athletes ever, and they became known as the “Dream Team.” To no one’s surprise, they dominated the competition all the way to the gold medal.

But there are more aspects to a team than athletic ability and talent. In fact, a team can be gifted and not be successful if its individual members don’t have chemistry and unity—two important factors determined by loyalty, selflessness, sacrifice, honesty and trust.

Q: Who are some of the athletes you would want to play on your “Dream Team” and why?

Q: Other than athletic talent, what other elements of team do you think are important to long-term success and impact?

GOD’S TEAM

One of the first things Jesus did when He began His ministry was put together a team. He found 12 ordinary men to become His disciples. Several other people also joined the team—men and women who gravitated toward Jesus because of His wisdom, compassion and miracle-working power and believed He was the Messiah.

But Jesus’ team was never meant to be limited to just a handful of people. When Jesus went back to Heaven, around 120 followers were ready to take on the challenge of building the Church.

In Acts 2, a smaller group gathered to pray for God’s direction during the Jewish faith’s annual Feast of Weeks. The promised Holy Spirit arrived to empower them to witness to the many people in Jerusalem at the time. Within a matter of hours, God’s team grew to more than 3,000 people!

Now, with billions of Christ followers around the world, there is still room on God’s team. Because of His love for you, God wants you on His team. This is how Jesus prayed to God on your behalf in the days before His death and resurrection:

“I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.” — John 17:23

And as part of your greater purpose, He wants you to invite more teammates to do the same.

Q: Why do you think Jesus assembled a team?

Q: What does being a part of God’s team mean to you?

WRAP-UP **GREATER TEAM**

Understanding your greater purpose means you spread God’s love to others in an effort to glorify God’s Kingdom. Here are three ways the world will know that you are part of this greater team:

1. Sacrificial Team. People will see a difference in you and God’s team when they see the love you have for others.

“This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.” — John 15:12–13

2. Limitless Team. People will see a difference in you and God’s team because of the people you have invited to be on His team—limited to no one and open to everyone who chooses to follow Jesus.

“There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus.” — Galatians 3:28

3. Powerful Team. People will see a difference in you and God’s team because of the greater things you will do together.

“Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, according to Christ Jesus, so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice.” — Romans 15:5–6

OVERTIME

Using the spaces provided below, come up with some ideas on how you can be a part of God’s greater team:

Ways to Reach Your Athletic Team

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Ways to Expand God’s Team

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

HUDDLE 16 >

GREATER THINGS

WELCOME

“Truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.” — John 14:12

Being an athlete has some incredible benefits. It’s amazing what you can accomplish through your gifts and talents. But with God’s greater purpose for your life, you can do greater things than you could ever imagine!

WARM-UP

BIG DREAMS

Every one of you has some sort of athletic dream—something you would love to accomplish as an individual or with your team.

Q: What is your biggest athletic accomplishment so far?

Q: What would you do if you had no limitations on your athletic ability?

WORKOUT

CHAMPIONSHIP RINGS

Many experts and fans consider Michael Jordan to be the greatest basketball player of all time. Ironically, Jordan didn’t make the varsity team as a sophomore and was so disappointed that he went home and cried.

While many young athletes might have given up hope, Jordan knew he had something special inside of him. He worked harder than anyone else that next year and not only made the varsity team as a junior, but he went on to become an NCAA All-American, won an NCAA title and, of course, won seven NBA championship rings.

Like Jordan, there’s something to be said about not limiting what God wants to do through you. When you embrace His purpose, you will experience all of the greater things He has planned for your life!

Q: How often do you put limitations on what you can do as an athlete?

Q: In what ways might you be limiting what God wants to do in your life?

AMAZING THINGS

Jesus did some amazing things during His time on Earth. He took 12 disciples and showed them how to live. He overcame sin on the cross and defeated death in the tomb. He empowered those disciples and other close followers to do greater things than they could imagine through the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew that there was so much more a mobilized, empowered group of His followers could do.

In fact, it’s always been in God’s plan to use you to lead the world to Jesus, and His greater purpose for you will lead you to do greater things just like the disciples. Those greater things are fueled by His greater love for you and the greater love He wants you to have for others.

So, how will you do greater things? You will do greater things through your obedience and faithfulness to God, through instruction from His Word, and through the empowerment of His Holy Spirit, which you receive when you accept Jesus into your heart:

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn’t see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you.” — John 14:16–17

Q: What are some greater things you would like to do for God?

Q: What do you need to do today that will help you begin doing those greater things for Him?

WRAP-UP

GREATER THINGS

Understanding your greater purpose will launch you into a new mission that will exceed your wildest expectations. Here are three ways that doing greater things will show up in your life:

1. Greater Power. It’s not an easy thing God has asked you to do, but He will give you everything you need to do it.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you.” — Acts 1:8

2. Greater Mission. There’s nothing better way to spend your time, talent and treasure than to share God’s life-changing and life-saving love with others.

“And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” — Acts 1:8b

3. Greater Future. The greater things you do will have an impact today and last for eternity.

*“I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus.”
— Philippians 3:14*

OVERTIME

As we conclude this journey, take a moment to reflect on the reason we started walking together in the first place—to fulfill the words John the Baptist spoke when Jesus’ ministry was about to begin:

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” — John 3:30

Take some time on your own to make a list of some greater things you want to do for God in different areas of your life (like in sports, school, community and your church).

Now take some time to pray this prayer:

Dear Lord, I want to do greater things for You. I want my life to make a difference that will last for eternity. Help me use the power of Your Holy Spirit to accept this mission to share the life-changing and life-saving message of Your love with everyone around me. Amen.

GET INVOLVED WITH FCA

DAILY IMPACT PLAY

Geared toward Christian coaches and athletes, **Daily Impact Play** is an email newsletter and social media outlet to engage, equip, and empower readers to be stronger Christian competitors. Sign up at fca.org/quick-links/daily-impact-play-other-e-newsletters to receive Daily Impact Play devotionals every day or follow @fcaimpactplay and our Facebook page at facebook.com/thefcateam.



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GREATER



COMPETITOR'S CREED

LET THE COMPETITION BEGIN.
LET THE GLORY BE GOD'S.

I AM A CHRISTIAN FIRST AND LAST.

I am created in the likeness of God Almighty to bring Him glory. I am a member of Team Jesus Christ. I wear the colors of the cross.

I AM A COMPETITOR NOW AND FOREVER.

I am made to strive, to strain, to stretch and to succeed in the arena of competition. I am a Christian Competitor and as such, I face my challenger with the face of Christ.

I DO NOT TRUST IN MYSELF.

I do not boast in my abilities or believe in my own strength. I rely solely on the power of God. I compete for the pleasure of my Heavenly Father, the honor of Christ and the reputation of the Holy Spirit.

MY ATTITUDE ON AND OFF THE FIELD IS ABOVE REPROACH—MY CONDUCT BEYOND CRITICISM.

Whether I am preparing, practicing or playing, I submit to God's authority and those He has put over me. I respect my coaches, officials, teammates and competitors out of respect for the Lord.

MY BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST.

I protect it from within and without. Nothing enters my body that does not honor the Living God. My sweat is an offering to my Master. My soreness is a sacrifice to my Savior.

I GIVE MY ALL—ALL THE TIME.

I do not give up. I do not give in. I do not give out. I am the Lord's warrior—a competitor by conviction and a disciple of determination. I am confident beyond reason because my confidence lies in Christ. The results of my efforts must result in His glory.

