

## WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT IT?

Do you like sports? You do? Good for you. So does just about everyone. Millions of people watch and play sports worldwide. Around (or over) 100 *million* people watch the Super Bowl every year. That's a lot of people. Compare that, for fun, to the ELCA Lutheran Church's 3.3 million baptized members, and we might have a religious movement on our hands.

It takes very little observing of an NFL (National Football League) stadium crowd to observe a high level of enthusiasm. Maybe even fanaticism. Is it just good fun? Too much fun? A religious experience? An idolatrous one? It also doesn't take much pro sports viewing to find an athlete crossing her/himself, kneeling in (presumably) prayer, or pointing heavenward. So: what, if any, relationship might there be between the sports that we play and watch so much, and the God we worship?

# GOD & SPORTS: SILLY or SERIOUS?

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER

What is your experience with sports? Do you have favorites? Have you ever seen an athlete pray or cross him/herself before or during a game/match? Does God care? How much time do you spend watching, playing, or talking about sports with friends or family? Compared to talking about or participating in your faith or church? Is there a connection? What, if any, relationship exists between God and sports?

## BIBLE BASICS

Spend some time with these. Read them, the surrounding verses, and think about sports stuff.

- **Exodus 20:1-6** – God's giving of the (Ten) Commandments to Moses.
- **Psalm 104 (v.26)** – The wonders of creation: great, marvelous and even *playful*.
- **Psalm 147** – God delights in those who fear God. Physical feats? Less so.
- **Colossians 3:17-25** – Whatever you do, do it in Jesus' name.
- **1 Corinthians 9:23-27** – On being athletes...both *for* the Gospel, and *not*.

# ESSENTIAL READINGS and LISTENINGS\*

## DOES GOD CARE ABOUT FOOTBALL?

First, briefly, "Does God care about football?" The comments that prompted this topic. Aaron Rogers, Russell Wilson, and God in the game.

## A RESPONSE BY A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE

Next, read a response to the above question from former NFL player Justin Forsett.

## SPORTS, ETHICS, AND CONSUMPTION

A brief ethical look at sports, and our consumption of them, from Dr. Martin Marty, Chicago Divinity School.

## SHOW ME THE (SUPERBOWL) MONEY

A review of the money involved in 2015's Superbowl 49 (spoiler: it's a lot. [More in 2022](#)).

## MORE THAN A GAME: FINANCIAL AND HUMAN COSTS

A look at the costs (financial and human) of a huge sporting event: the FIFA World Cup.

## “SPORTSWASHING” AND TURNING BLIND EYES

Sports Illustrated looks at the practice of using sport to hide dirt. Like human rights abuses.

## WE WORSHIP WHAT WE VALUE

A 6-minute YouTube video sermon by Pr. David Platt, on weekend “religion” in Alabama (and other places in America).

## BONUS READINGS for the overachievers.

### IS GOD INTERESTED IN SPORTS?

Another case affirming God's interest in sports

### AN (ACADEMIC) COST OF WINNING?

A study that shows an ‘interesting’ relationship between the Oregon Ducks’ success, and Oregon students’ GPA.

### THE MANY BENEFITS OF

And lest you think we’re just piling on sports as bad news, here’s a reminder of their many benefits.

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