

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

Thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways—
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.
And if you ever doubt yourself, remember us, who love you well—
We know all the gifts you bring into the world each day.
So thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways,
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.

—by Judy Fjell and Lisa Bregger

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent, and to come to the group one last time and say good-bye if I need to quit
- to avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people’s stories
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn

Covenant Groups

SPORTS & Spirituality



Sports and Spirituality

Chalice Lighting

Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.

Blessed is the flame that burns in the heart's secret places.

Blessed is the heart with strength to stop its beating for honor's sake.

Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.

—Hannah Senesh

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings

There is nothing Spirit doesn't touch—from our highest ideals of love, respect, and sportsmanship, to the drunken bloodlust of hearing millions of people cheering you to victory—everything finds its home in the transcendent mind of God, nestled in the immanent heart of the Sacred, where the line between winning and losing becomes the very same line that separates self and other, part and whole, here and eternity.

—Corey W. deVos

You have to be able to center yourself, to let all of your emotions go. Don't ever forget that you play with your soul as well as your body.

—Kareem Abdul Jabbar

Sport is important because it's one of the most readily available ways of generating the state of being called "flow." This is the state we experience when our attention is completely absorbed in an activity, and our awareness of our surroundings even of ourselves fades away.

—Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

We are inclined that if we watch a football game or baseball game, we have taken part in it.

—John F. Kennedy, 1961

To dope the racer is as criminal, as sacrilegious, as trying to imitate God; it is stealing from God the privilege of the spark.

—Roland Barthes

Summer swimming changes us like no other sport. We're suspended amidst the depths, buoyed up as we have never been since leaving the womb. Diving into an environment in which we can't breathe, we demonstrate how alone we are.

—Brian Nelson

The most important thing in the Olympic games is not winning by taking part; the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well.

—Pierre de Coubertin

The sacredness of a sporting event is that individuals rise beyond their limitations, achieving a state of abandon that is usually known only at the peak of spirituality.

—Sadhguru

Sport strips away personality, letting the white bone of character shine through. Sport gives players an opportunity to know and test themselves.

—Rita Mae Brown

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening

Round 1: When you discuss sports with family and friends how does the discussion usually go? What type of remark do you usually make?

Round 2: Share stories, feelings, and experiences in response to the homework.

Round 3: Use this time to make a connection to something another participant said during sharing.

Closing Words

In sports, spirituality is cultivated through allegiance or commitment to a team, either as a fan or as a spectator. Themes within sports may also typically include freedom and escape from normal life, discovery of meaning in life, commitment to a set of ethics and possibly a rediscovery of play in its purest sense.

—Ian Lawrence

Closing Song

"Thank You for Your Loving Hands"

Group Business

Homework for the next meeting.

Homework: Sports and Spirituality

This session focuses on the subject of sports and spirituality.

Sports are at their heart a matter of deep and joyous spiritual significance.

—Pat Toomay, *Dallas Cowboys*

Sports . . . exert a great “purchase on the soul” . . . They can open us to a selfless awareness that expresses our deepest nature.

—Reb Anderson, *Tenshin Roshi*

All human bodies are things lent by God. With what thought are you using yours?

—*Shinto scripture 3.41*

Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules, and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence. In other words, it is war minus the shooting.

—George Orwell

To me, boxing is like a ballet, except there's no music, no choreography, and the dancers hit each other.

—Jack Handey

To play is to yield oneself to a kind of magic . . . to enter a world where different laws apply, to be relieved of all the weights that bear it down, to be free, kingly (sic), unfettered and divine.

—Hugo Rahner

Sport is where an entire life can be compressed into a few hours, where the emotions of a lifetime can be felt on an acre or two of ground, where a person can suffer and die and rise again on six miles of trails through a New York City park. Sport is a theater where sinner can turn saint and a common man become an uncommon hero, where the past and the future can fuse with the present. Sport is singularly able to give us peak experiences where we feel completely one with the world and transcend all conflicts as we finally become our own potential.

—George A. Sheehan

Questions to Ponder

- Most of us have had numerous experiences with sports, either as a participant or as an observer. Can you recall any that you would consider spiritual? If not, why not?
- Ask someone you know if they believe there can be spirituality in sports. If they say yes, ask if they have experienced it. If they answer yes to this also, ask them to describe the experience and why they felt it was spiritual.
- Some people like to use sports metaphors or phrasing in discussions of religion such as, “No pain, no gain.” List at least 10 you have heard. Circle the 3 you find most powerful. What do they mean to you? Where does their power reside? What qualities do both sports and spirituality require of those who choose to have them be important in their life?
- As you observe the life of professional sports figures, how would you rate them as examples of having a deeply spiritual life? Why do you think this is true?
- One of the appeals of sport is the existence of clear-cut rules and goals. What rules and goals in your life do you find clear cut? How do you achieve greater clarity when it is missing in your “game” of life?

Leader's Guide: Sports and Spirituality

This session focuses on the subject of sports and spirituality.

Pre-Meeting Instructions

Make a list of the last names of your covenant group members in alphabetical order. Bring a small ball (such as a tennis ball or Nerf ball) to use as a speaking token to be passed from speaker to speaker. The shared readings will be done differently. Read over the shared readings section here to acquaint yourself with the changes for this session.

Chalice Lighting (2 min)

Ask someone to read the chalice lighting reading found in the bulletin as you light the chalice.

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Blessed is the flame that burns in the heart's secret places.

Blessed is the heart with strength to stop its beating for honor's sake.

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—Hannah Senesh

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows (10 min)

Ask each person, for one minute each, to identify what has been most prominent in their life in the last couple of weeks.

Silence (3 min)

Start with the following words: "Get comfortable in your seat. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath in, and then a deep breath out. And now just breathe gently." Then give your group the gift of three minutes of silence.

Shared Readings (5 min)

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening (65 min)

Round 1 (10 min): When you discuss sports with family and friends how does the discussion usually go? What type of remark do you usually make?

Round 2 (40 min): Share stories, feelings, and experiences in response to the homework.

Round 3 (15 min): Use this time to make a connection to something another participant said during sharing.

Closing Words (1 min)

In sports, spirituality is cultivated through allegiance or commitment to a team, either as a fan or as a spectator. Themes within sports may also typically include freedom and escape from normal life, discovery of meaning in life, commitment to a set of ethics and possibly a rediscovery of play in its purest sense.

—Ian Lawrence

Closing Song (1 min)

"Thank You for Your Loving Hands"

Group Business (5 min)

Pass out the homework for next time.