

Part 2

Competitive Christianity: Sports and Spirituality

Self Worth
or
Self Period?

***Competitive Sports may be
popular and very
American...***



...BUT ARE THEY
CHRISTIAN AND
BIBLICAL?

IS IT GOD'S PLAN FOR
HIS LAST DAY PEOPLE?

“Seventh-day Adventists, above all people, should be patterns of piety, holy in heart and in conversation. To them have been entrusted the most solemn truths ever committed to mortals. They look for the soon return of Christ in the clouds of heaven.”

“For them to give to the world the impression that their faith is not a dominating power in their lives, is to greatly dishonor God.”

{PH145 3.2}



1) Sports build Character



***If sports build character, then
the more we compete in sports,
the better our character should
become, right?***



***We should expect that the
higher level of competitiveness,
the less we would see athletes
involved in violent activity...***

Scientific studies show that athletes generally score higher in the areas of “dominance, pride, egotism, and aggression” in multiple psychological tests.



***TWO CONCLUSIONS PROVEN
BY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH:***

***1) Sports do not build
character in most cases.***

***2) Sports can actually cause a
decline in character.***



***Competitive sports
do not typically
build character;
they reveal
character.***



2) Sports build Self Esteem

***Based
on what???***

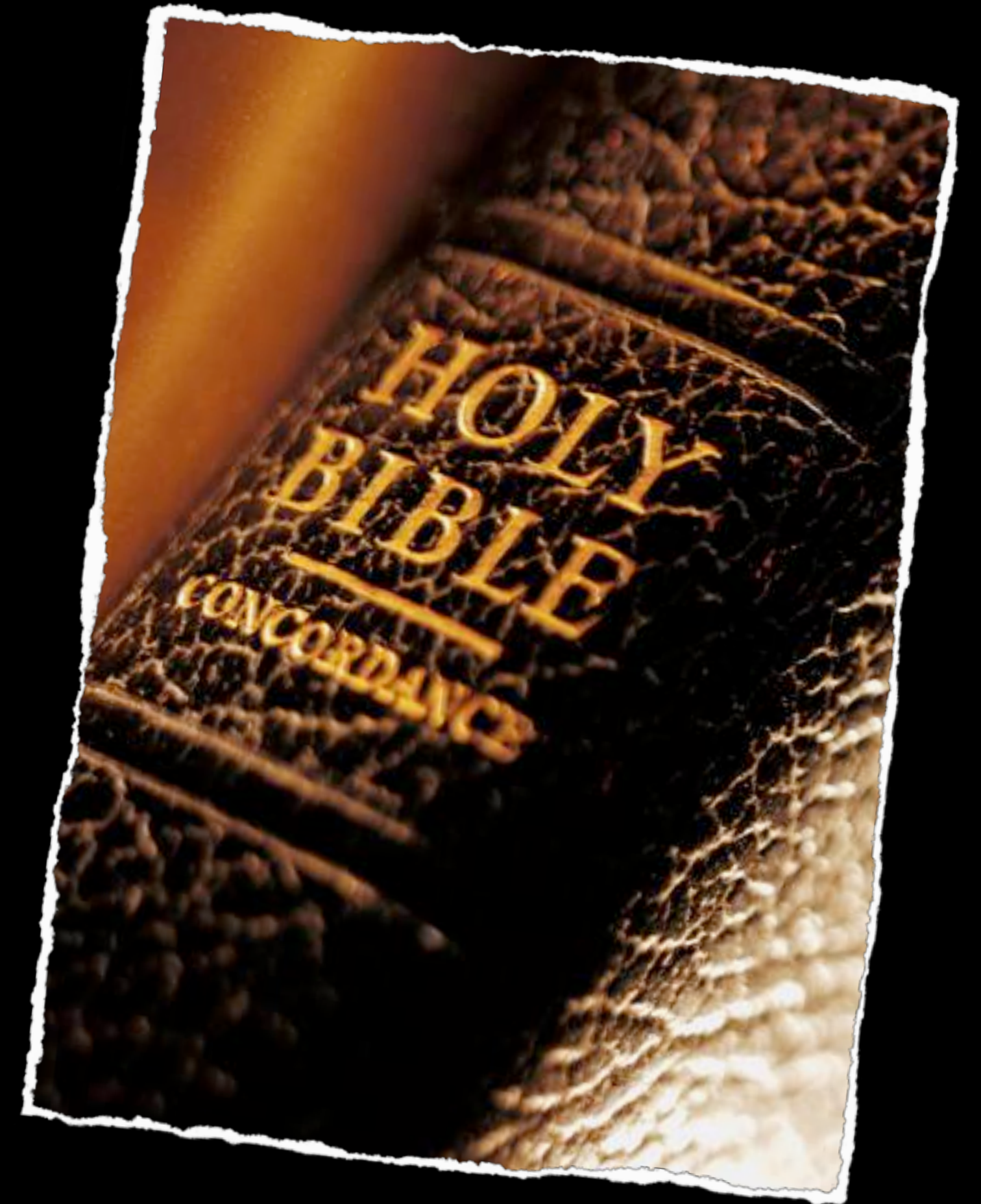


***In this type of setting,
self worth is based on
my own performance or
dominance of others. It
comes from myself, not
from God.***



2 Corinthians 10:12

“But we dare not class ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves **are not wise.**”



***Competitive sports
build a competitive
spirit, not self
worth.***

***The real object is to win
and be supreme.***



3) Sports Teach Teamwork





Even on my own team, do I:

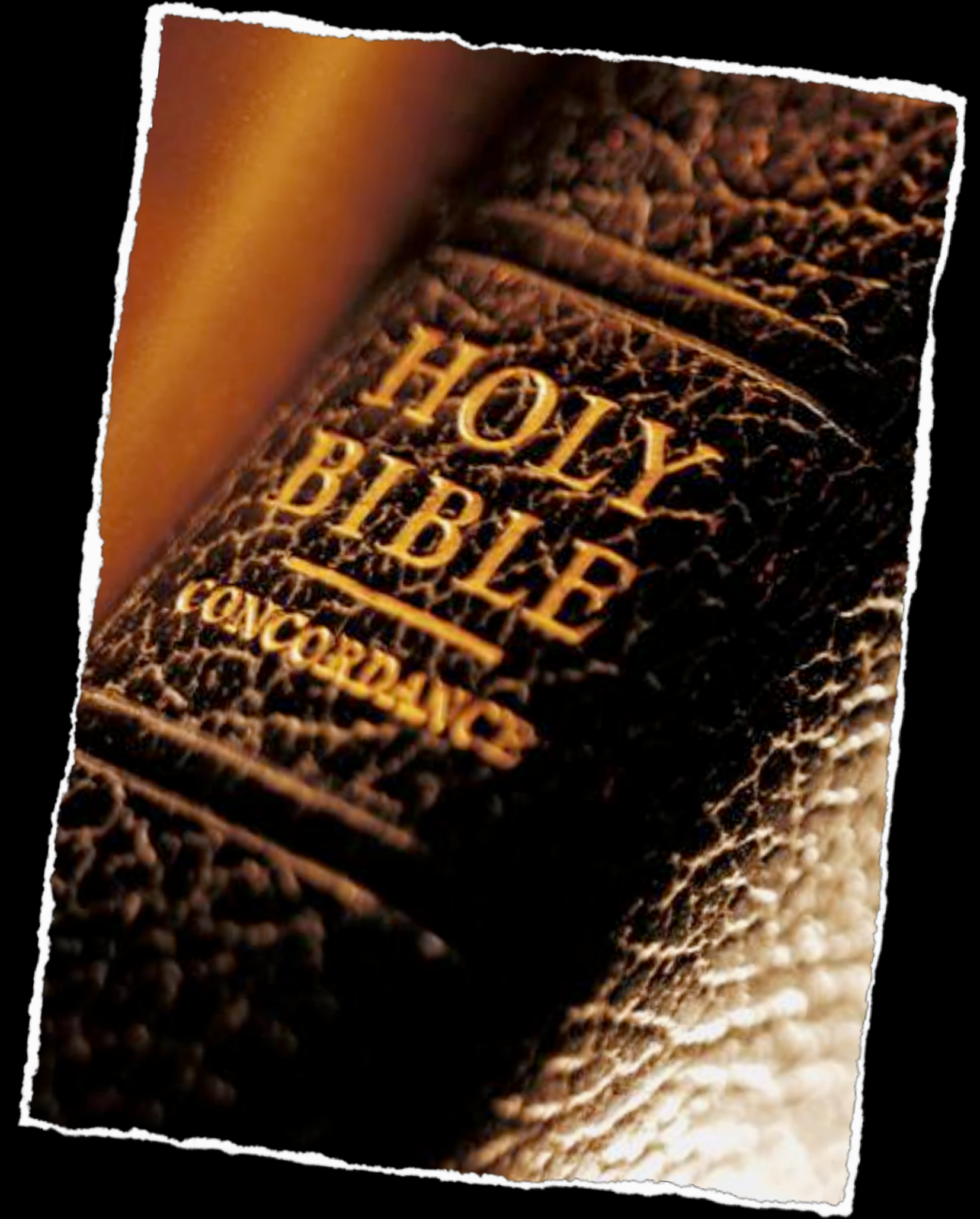


- Strive to be the best on the team?
- Dominate over other team-mates so that I can be the best?
- Sacrifice what's best for the team so that I can look good?
- Only find satisfaction when I am recognized or pointed out?
 - Blame others if things don't go right?

CIRCLE OF DOMINANCE...



Philippians 2



Jesus

Matthew 5:44: “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;”

Jesus washed the disciples feet in order to overthrow rivalry among the disciples about who was going to be the greatest in the new kingdom!



The Disciples and Rivalry

“Christ had on one occasion sought to prepare the minds of His disciples for the scenes of suffering that were before Him... They did not comprehend what He was trying to teach them, but a shadow, as of some great sorrow, fell upon them. Yet even in this time of sadness the spirit of unholy rivalry found a place in their hearts. Jesus read their thoughts...He called the disciples, and inquired in regard to their disputes by the way. And He took a little child and setting him in the midst of them, He said, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” [Matt. 18:3, 4]. This lesson is for us.”

Unselfish Love

“When the laborers have an abiding Christ in their own souls, when all selfishness is dead, when there is no rivalry, no strife for the supremacy, when oneness exists, when they sanctify themselves, so that love for one another is seen and felt, then the showers of the grace of the Holy Spirit will just as surely come upon them as that God’s promise will never fail in one jot or tittle. But when the work of others is discounted, that the workers may show their own superiority, they prove that their own work does not bear the signature it should. God cannot bless them.

Ms. 24, 1896, p. 4. “Unselfishness among Brethren,”
September 9, 1896.



***Humility isn't
thinking less of
yourself, but thinking
of yourself less often.***



***God wants us to have
rulership over ourselves,
not each other!***



“The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness.”

Faith I Live By, pg 87



What About Paul's Competition Illustrations?

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NIV



Questions:

Is Scripture contradicting itself?
Can Paul condemn rivalry on one hand and then support the rivalry of competitive sports?



The real answer is that he uses the Olympic games as a symbol of the discipline needed in the Christian's personal struggle against sin.

Can we learn positive lessons a better way?



Asian Youth Conference...



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Scientific Findings:

“High levels of competition are linked to high levels of stress and increased incidence of depression.”

Source: *Revista De Sanidad E Higiene Publica*



Scientific Findings:

“Those who engage in organized competitive sports may experience a stress condition known as pre competitive anxiety while preparing for the event, as well as emotional competitive anxiety during the game.”



Source: *Jones G., More Than Just a Game: research and developments and issues in competitive anxiety in sport. British Journal of Psychology 1995; Nov;86(Pt4): 449-478, Lane A, Terry P, Karageorghis C. Perceptual and Motor skills 1995 June and August. Swain A; Journal of Sports Science; 1993; Dec.*

The Prophet Knew Beforehand...

“Gymnastic exercises fill a useful place in many schools; but without careful supervision they are often carried to excess. In the gymnasium many youth, by their attempted feats of strength, have done themselves lifelong injury. Exercise in a gymnasium, cannot supply the place of recreation in the open air, and for this our schools should afford better opportunity. Vigorous exercise the pupils must have. Few evils are more to be dreaded than indolence and aimlessness. Yet the tendency of most athletic sports is a subject of anxious thought to those who have at heart the well-being of the youth.”

– Education, pg 210



Scientific Findings:

“Some sports such as karate, ice-hockey, are associated with elevated systolic blood pressure, anger and hostility.”

Source: *Perceptual and Motor Skills. Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica.*



Statistical Study from the Cooperative Learning Center

Did a study of 57 Olympic
Hockey players ages 18-29.

Examined the correlation
between cooperation/
competition and mental health.



Statistical Study from the Cooperative Learning Center

Results found that the more cooperative individuals were psychologically and physically healthier than their more competitive colleagues.



Statistical Study from the Cooperative Learning Center

Competition, or the constant feeling that one has to work against something, has unhealthy side effects, while cooperation and intentionally unselfish behaviors have the opposite effect.



Statistical Study from the Cooperative Learning Center



Some evidence even concluded that cooperation and unselfish behaviors can produce a type of “runner’s” high.

Statistical Study from the Cooperative Learning Center

Like individuals who exercise regularly to release endorphines, people who are cooperative and help others also experience a type of “high”, described as calmness and sense of freedom from stress.



Statistical Study from the Cooperative Learning Center

Additionally, individuals with a cooperative stance tend to feel more in control of their lives and do not live for approval from others. This is in sharp contrast to the constant intensity of the competitive individual.

Source: Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., & Krotee, M.L. "The relation between social interdependence and psychological health on the 1980 U.S. Olympic ice hockey team."

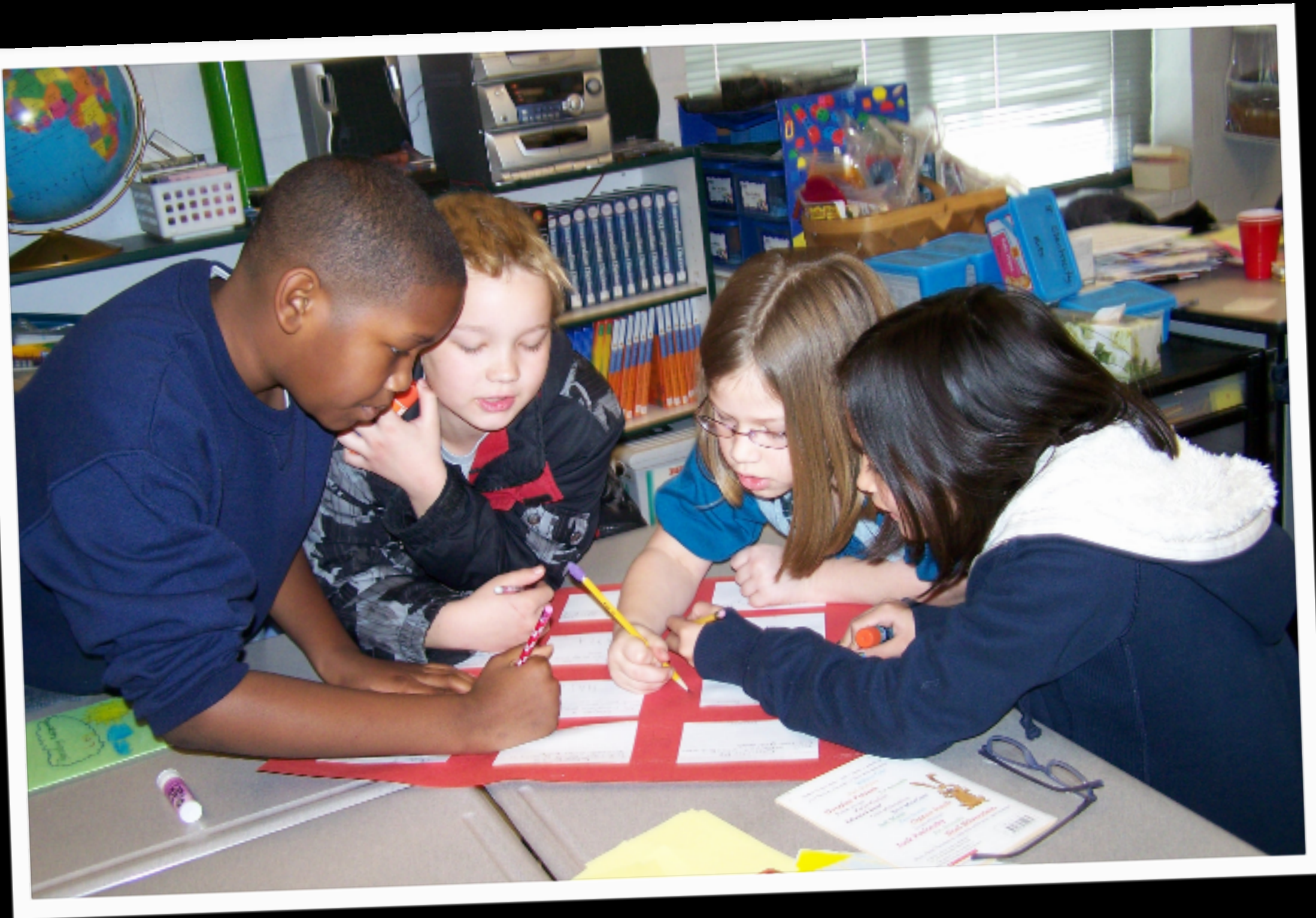


Conclusions From a Study at the University of California in Berkeley:

1. “Children who engage in such high-contact games as football develop moral standards more slowly, are more aggressive off the playing field, and less mature in their oral reasoning.”



Conclusions From a Study at the University of California in Berkeley:



2. “Children who are placed in a cooperative rather than competitive setting tend to have higher levels of self-efficacy and achievement than those who compete.”

Conclusions From a Study at the University of California in Berkeley:

3. “Cooperative games result in better cooperation during free play time, while competitive games result in increased aggression during unstructured play time.”



Conclusions From a Study at the University of California in Berkeley:



4. “Cooperative problem-solving increases intrinsic motivation, more rapid problem-solving, positive interaction, and higher belief in success.”

Contrast Between SDA & the World's Education

“In God’s plan there is no place for selfish rivalry. Those who measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves, are not wise. 2 Corinthians 10:12. Whatever we do is to be done “as of the ability which God giveth.” 1 Peter 4:11. It is to be done “heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” Colossians 3:23, 24. Precious the service done and the education gained in carrying out these principles. But how widely different is much of the education now given! From the child’s earliest years it is an appeal to emulation and rivalry; it fosters selfishness, the root of all evil.

- Education, pg 225

***Is God trying to take all
our fun away from us?***





PSALMS 84:11

“... No good
thing will
He withhold
from those
who walk
uprightly.”

The Book of **PSALMS**

PSALM 2

WHY ¹do the ²nations rage,
And the people plot a vain
thing? Acts 4:25, 26 • Gentiles

2 The kings of the earth set
themselves,

And the ³rulers take counsel
together, (Mark 3:6; 11:18)

Against the Lord and against His
⁴Anointed, saying, (John 1:10)

3 “Let ⁵us break Their bonds in
pieces

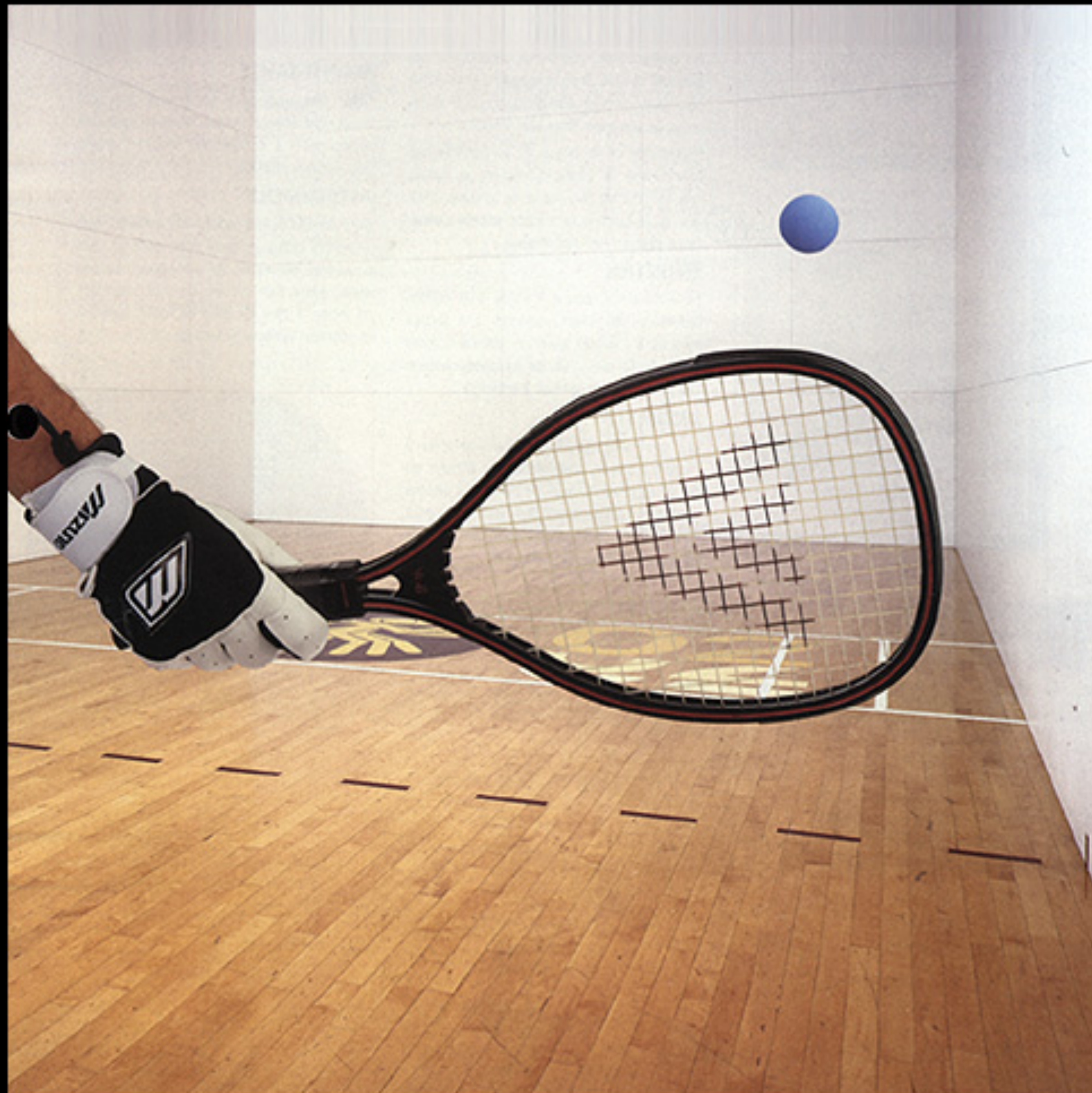
And cast away Their cords
from us.”

“I do not condemn the simple exercise of playing ball; but this, even in its simplicity, may be overdone.”

“I shrink always from the almost sure result which follows in the wake of these amusements. It leads to an outlay of means that should be expended in bringing the light of truth to souls that are perishing out of Christ. The amusements and expenditures of means for self-pleasing, which lead on step by step to self-glorifying, and the educating in these games for pleasure produce a love and passion for such things that is not favorable to the perfection of Christian character.”

Adventist Home, 499





Raquetball

How do I know when to draw the line?



1. When it lowers my desire to seek holy things.

2. When it lowers our desire to sacrifice self to help others.

3. When it increases our desire to dominate or be supreme to those around us.

How do I know when to draw the line?



4. If it places us in a position where we are tempted to compromise the principles of God in or order to gain advantage over others.

5. When we are placed in a position to become angry, envious, jealous, or hostile at someone else over the game.

***What if I fall into these
things every time I play?***



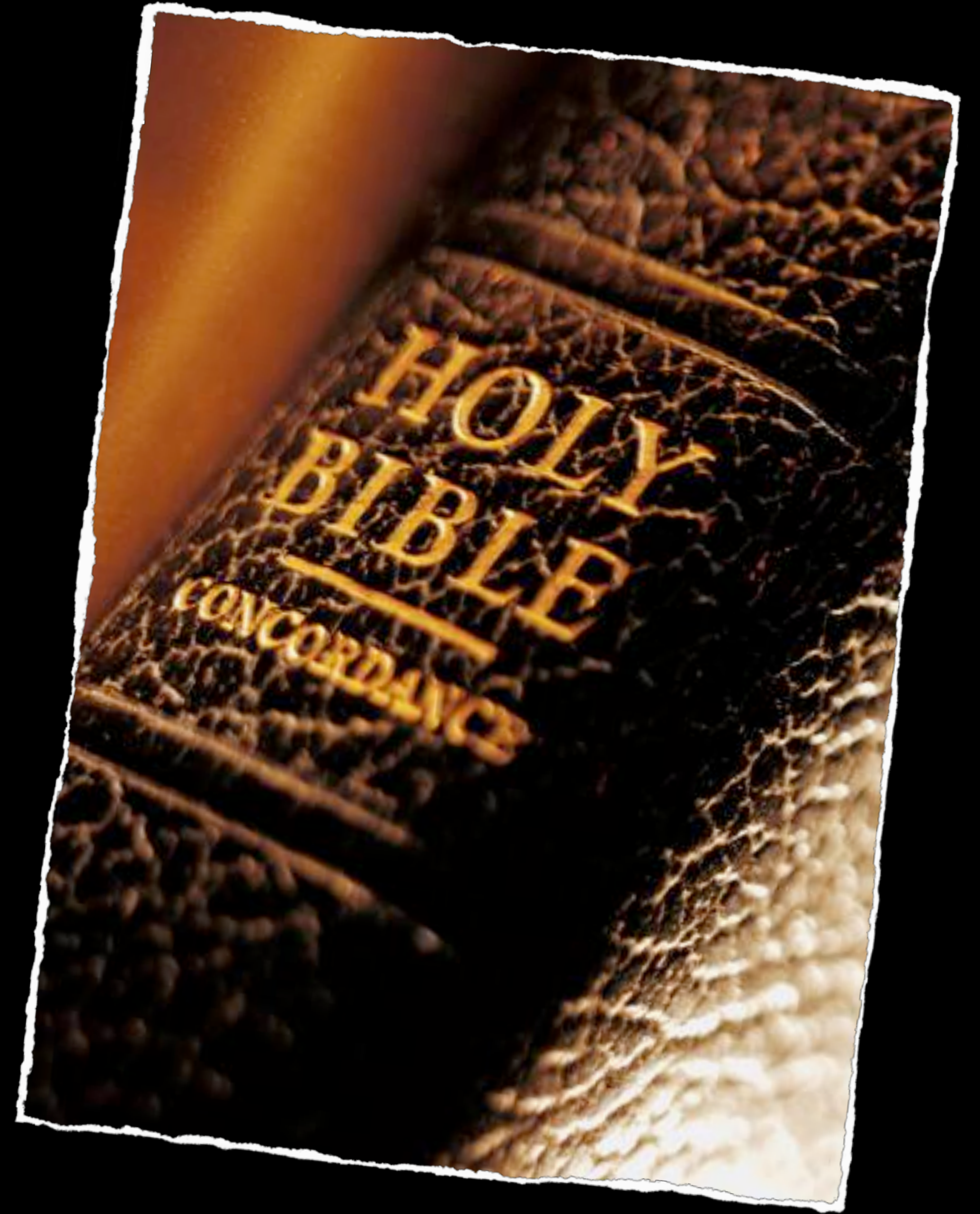


RISK

The Game of Global Domination



1 Peter 4



***What should be the
standard for
recreation?***



“Christians have many sources of happiness at their command, and they may tell with unerring accuracy what pleasures are lawful and right. They may enjoy such recreations as will not dissipate the mind or debase the soul, such as will not disappoint and leave a sad after-influence to destroy self-respect or bar the way to usefulness. If they can take Jesus with them and maintain a prayerful spirit, they are perfectly safe.”



Would Jesus do this with me? If not, it is not likely that this activity would bring me the greatest joy and happiness.

Jesus always gives us the best - never less!!!



“Let us never lose sight of the fact that Jesus is a well-spring of joy. He does not delight in the misery of human beings, but loves to see them happy.”

{PH145 34.1}



“There is great need of temperance in amusements, as in every other pursuit. And the character of these amusements should be carefully and thoroughly considered. Every youth should ask himself, What influence will these amusements have on physical, mental, and moral health? Will my mind become so infatuated as to forget God? Shall I cease to have His glory before me?”

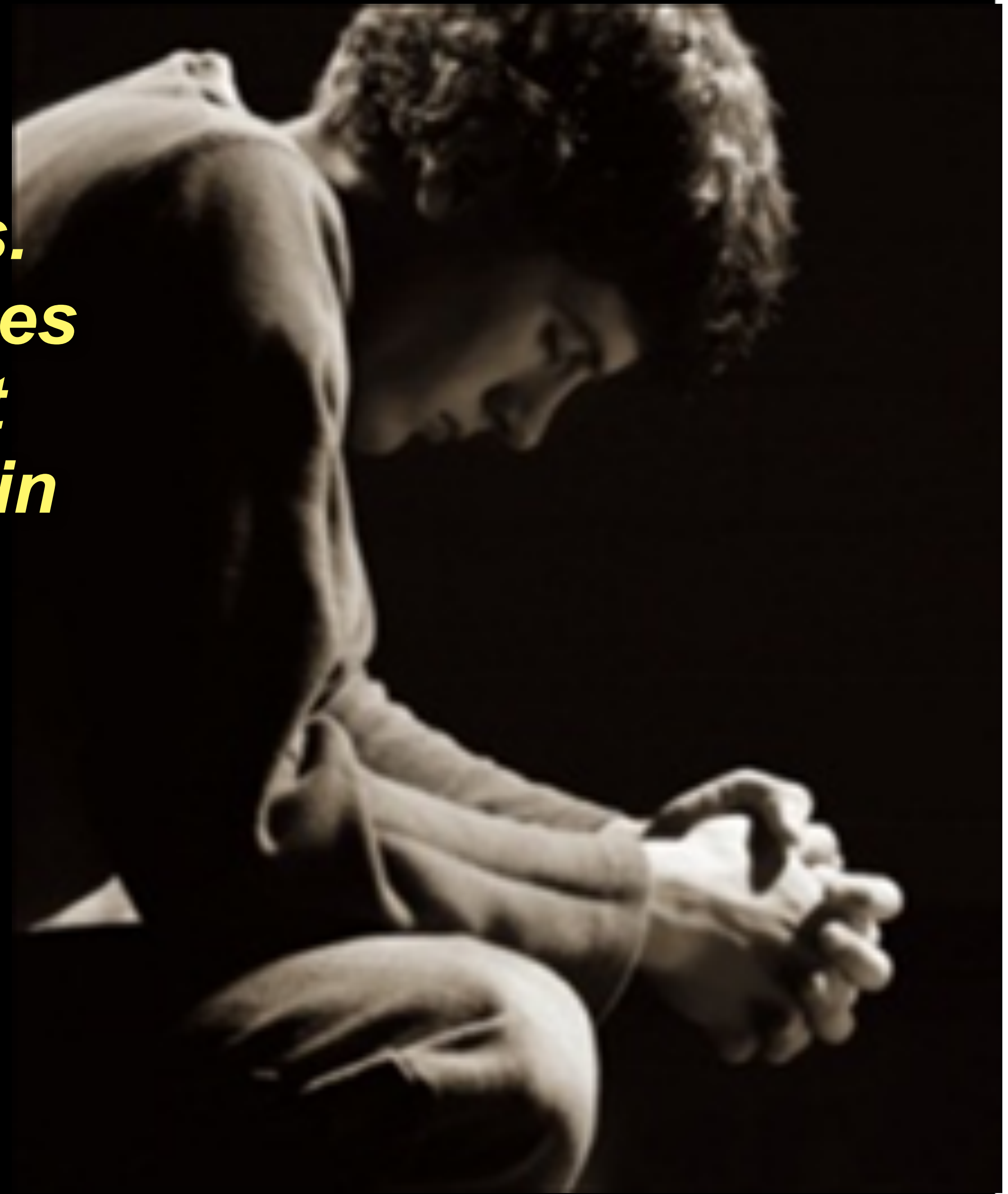
{PH145 34.1}



“Any amusement in which you can engage asking the blessing of God upon it in faith will not be dangerous. But any amusement which disqualifies you for secret prayer, for devotion at the altar of prayer, or for taking part in the prayer meeting is not safe, but dangerous.”

Adventist Home - pg 513

You know in your heart of hearts if God will approve it!



You can search it from Genesis to Revelation and find no mention of sports as a part of God's plan for man.



God's gift of work given to man in the Garden of Eden was/is a means to learn and grow and to occupy his time.

- In Gen. 3:17-19 we find where God made labor more difficult as a safeguard for man against the temptations of sin.**
- God did not design us to find meaning and pleasure in artificial entertainment.**
- We were designed to find fulfillment and pleasure in the practical duties and responsibilities of life, and in works of service for God and man.**

The Very Best God Has to Offer...

“As a rule, the exercise most beneficial to the youth will be found in useful employment. The little child finds both diversion and development in play; and his sports should be such as to promote not only physical, but mental and spiritual growth. As he gains strength and intelligence, the best recreation will be found in some line of effort that is useful. That which trains the hand to helpfulness, and teaches the young to bear their share of life's burdens, is most effective in promoting the growth of mind and character.”



The Very Best God Has to Offer...

“The youth need to be taught that life means earnest work, responsibility, care-taking. They need a training that will make them practical--men and women who can cope with emergencies. They should be taught that the discipline of systematic, well-regulated labor is essential, not only as a safeguard against the vicissitudes [changes] of life, but as an aid to all-around development.”

Education, p. 215



Tips for Real, Practical Life:

1. Focus on doing well. Scott Isaksen (Director of Creative Studies at Buffalo College, New York) points out that attempting to do well and trying to beat others are two separate mental processes. It is impossible to concentrate on both. Of the two, cooperating with yourself and others to create a positive outcome has more rewards.



Tips for Real, Practical Life:

2. Allow ample time. Cooperation comes to a grinding halt as time pressures increase. Time pressures produce non-agreement, decreased information exchanges, and firmer negotiator demands. The perception of available time facilitates cooperation.



Tips for Real, Practical Life:

3. Share leadership. Isaksen sees cooperation as a form of leadership, equally shared by all group members. By sharing the leadership, you allow others to take on initiative and to be integral parts of the group. There is an increased sense of "ownership" of plans and ideas by all members, and the work environment is pleasurable.



Tips for Real, Practical Life:

4. Practice reciprocity.

When someone helps you out, make it a point to help them. Better yet, be the first one to help them. This has been shown empirically as one of the few ways to gain an adversary's cooperation.



Tips for Real, Practical Life:

5. Reinforce team efforts. Rather than praising one person for a job well done, utilize a team approach to problem solving. When the team does well, the entire group is rewarded. This minimizes individual competition, and maximizes cooperation. Distribute the rewards equally among group members.



Tips for Real, Practical Life:



6. Exponentiate Cooperation.

Research supports the fact that individuals who have witnessed a cooperative act will "pass it on," sharing some degree of cooperation with the next person they meet.

Source: Journal of Psychology, 120, 279-291.
Kohn, A. "How to succeed without even vying."
Psychology Today, 20.22-28.

HOW DID COMPETITION ORIGINATE?

Revelation 12:7

Isaiah 14

Ezekiel 28

Genesis 3



When we lose control of our own lives, we seek to control and dominate the lives of those around us. This is the “hidden” lesson competitive sports teaches.

*When we refuse to deny
ourselves for the good of
others, we naturally
indulge ourselves to the
harm of others.*

*When our hearts
are not connected
TO Christ, desire
for self will always
rise to the
crucifixion **OF**
Christ in our life.*





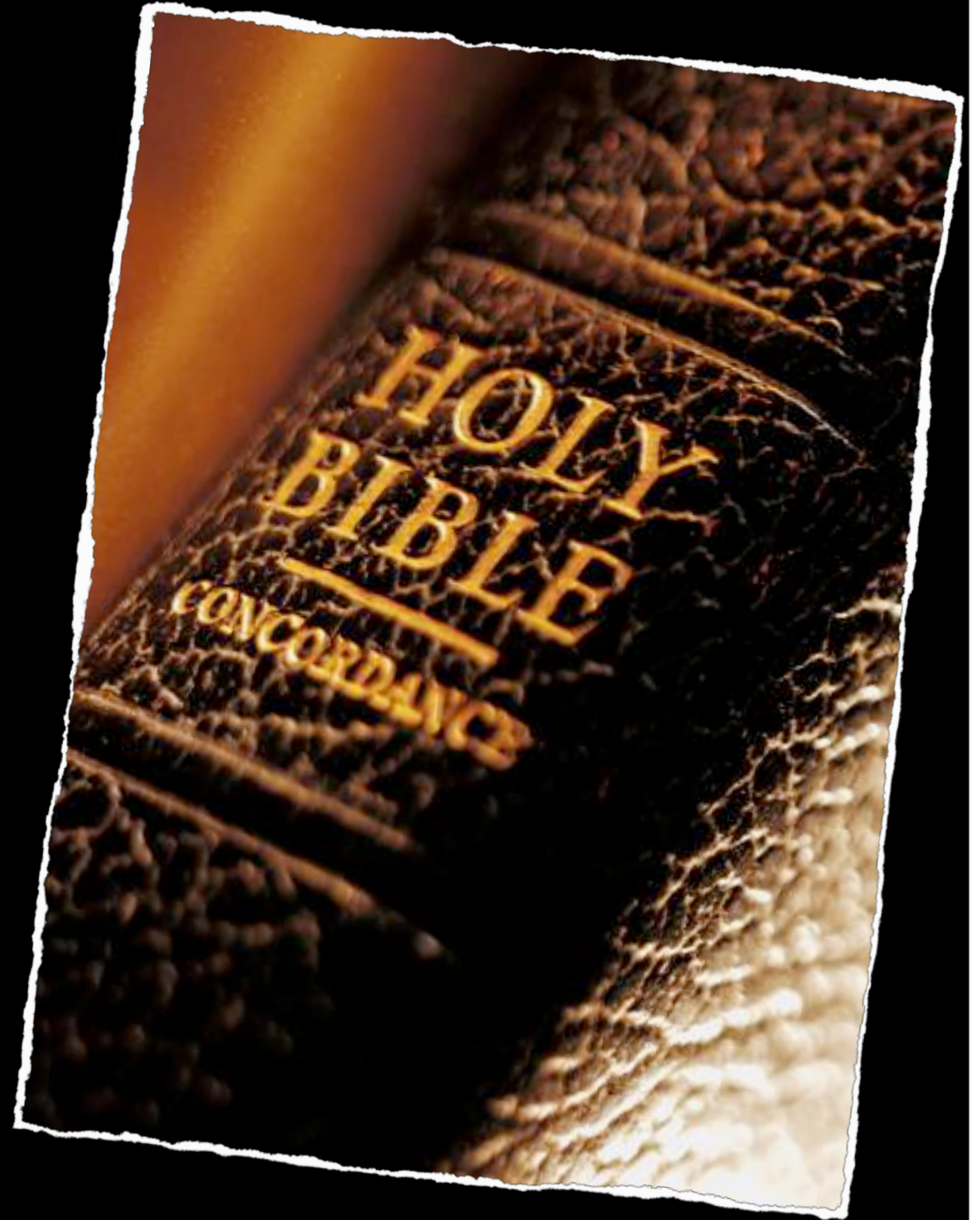
“The natural mind leans toward pleasure and self-gratification. It is Satan's policy to manufacture an abundance of this. He seeks to fill the minds of men with a desire for worldly amusement, that they may have no time to ask themselves the question. How is it with my soul? The love of pleasure is infectious. Given up to this, the mind hurries from one point to another, ever seeking for some amusement. Obedience to the law of God counteracts this inclination, and builds barriers against ungodliness.”

-- Review and Herald, Vol. 63, No. 21, 1886.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a knife. The knife's blade is visible, showing a small amount of red liquid (blood) on its edge. The person's arm and hand are in focus, with a white sleeve visible. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of purple and pink hues, decorated with numerous small, bright, star-like sparkles. Overlaid on the bottom right of the image is the text "GREAT CONTROVERSY!" in a bold, yellow, serif font with a slight drop shadow.

**GREAT
CONTROVERSY!**

James 3:13-18



***Competition has crept
into the church in more
than just worldly ways!***

Luke 22:24-29



Scripture:

The Apostle Paul was very concerned about rivalry and strife in the church:

2 Corinthians 12:20 NASB - **For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish... that perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances**



Scripture: Galatians 5:16-26 NASB

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh... Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

What is God's highest aim for me?

*When God looks
into your life,
what does He
want to see?*



What should I do instead?

2 Timothy 1:8-9



***If anything should
inspire enthusiasm,
let it be the cross of
Christ and what He
has done for us.***



***GOD HAS INVESTED HIS ENTIRE EXISTENCE TO SAVE YOU
AND RESTORE YOU TO THE IMAGE OF GOD.***

***IF GOD IS DOING THIS, WHY
WOULDN'T WE ALSO DO THE SAME?***

***WHY WOULD WE EVEN THINK TO DO ANYTHING THAT
WOULD DAMAGE THIS???***

Titus 2:11-14

























POSTED AT













If Church members
were this faithful







