

GIVE ME THIS
MOUNTAIN

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

ALIVE MINISTRIES

STUDENT CONFERENCE

2009

MAKING IT TO THE FINALS 1

Petey: Man, can you believe that we finally made it?! We have graduated, my friends!

Sydnee: I am just not believing this! It seems like it took forever to get through high school! It's hard to believe that it's over now.

Alexis: I know what you mean, girl. I remember every volleyball practice like it was yesterday – it seemed like they would last forever.

Petey: Oh, volleyball isn't near as tough as basketball!

Tank: Give me a break, wennie-boy! The football team had to start two weeks before school, doing two-a-day practices in the hot summertime. You couldn't have lasted through that!

Sydnee: Well cry me a river! The band started the same time the football team did, and we had two practices a day out marching in the hot sun, too!

Alexis: Well, I guess none of us had it easy. But hey, we all got to go to finals this year!

Tank: Yeah, you're right. But to be honest, I wasn't so sure the football team would make it. It really all started back with I was in the ninth grade. I remember Coach Hudson calling all the football players together – from the junior high team, the JV team, and the high school team. He told us, 'Boys, the Wildcats are going to the state playoffs. The only question is this: Do you want it to be while you are playing on the team? And do you want it badly enough to do what it takes to get there?'

Of course everyone said they wanted to be on a championship team, and they would do what it takes. But many didn't stick to it as the season went on. The team didn't take practice seriously, they didn't learn the plays well..., and most of all they just didn't take what Coach said seriously. In fact, those first two years the team lost more games than we won.

But Coach didn't give up on his dream – or on us. By the third year, after we lost all those who wouldn't listen to what Coach said, things started shaping up. We studied the playbook all the time. We made all the practices and worked hard while we were there. We didn't win all the games last year, but we did win them all this year, and even made it to the state finals. Man! What a ride!

The Bible describes a group of people, called the Israelites, that God chose to make a winning team. He took them out of slavery, and promised them a very special land that would be their own. At first they said they wanted to be the winning team that God planned for them to be, but before long they were whining and complaining about all that God was putting them through along the way. Finally they refused to accept the challenge to be champions, so God punished them by making them wander around the desert for 40 years until all those that refused to listen to Him died. It would be the next generation of Israelites that obeyed God and became His champions.

Being a champion is only possible if you are willing to put in a lot of time and effort to be good at what you do. Do you want to be a Champion Christian? Do you want it enough to commit to the time and effort to read your Bible to find out what God want and then to live by it? Will you commit to praying regularly?

Is your youth group a Champion Christian group? Like a great football team, your group can commit to helping each other live up to the challenge of being a great team by being great individual players. Will you do that?

Think for a moment about what it would be like to be a champion, and be on a championship team. You can be that kind of player and team member for Christ if you commit to the work that is required. Will you make that commitment to God today?

MAKING IT TO THE FINALS 2

Alexis: “*My plan – your victory!*” You know, I’ve heard that so many times in the last three years that I feel like it’s tattooed on my brain for forever!

Syndee: ‘Lex, what in the world are you talking about?’

Alexis: Oh, that’s what Coach Davis tells the volleyball team over and over and over. But I guess he was right.

Petey: How’s that?

Alexis: Well, to be honest no one on the team is really an exceptionally good player – we’re all just pretty average, I guess. But Coach came up with some strategies that are just super. Even when we go up against the taller and better teams, if we stick with Coach’s plan, we normally pull off a win.

Syndee: “*My plan – your victory,*” huh? Oh, and isn’t there another saying that Coach tells you all the time?

Alexis: Oh yeah. Coach’s other saying is “*It ain’t okay ‘til Coach says it’s okay!*” It’s like he thinks he controls our lives or something.

Tank: Yeah, but seems like last year the team forgot that last rule. Cost you a tournament, didn’t it?

Petey: What?! I don’t remember anything about that.

Alexis: Yeah, you’re right ‘bout that, Tank. Petey, we were at the volleyball tournament up at Northwest last year. We were in the winner’s bracket and had a good chance of winning. We ended up not having a game that first evening. Coach had told us to take it easy and rest up for the next day, but we were too pumped up to rest. So, without asking him our team got up an outdoor game with Central – you know, our main rivals – just for fun. Well, the grass was damp and while we were playing Suzanne fell and dislocated her shoulder. She wasn’t able to play the rest of the tournament, and without Suzanne the team didn’t stand a

chance. And what really bites is Central won the tournament! Guess we should have listened to Coach on that one.

God told the Israelites that if they would courageously follow God’s plan that they would defeat all of their enemies. When the Israelites did that, they won. When they failed to do it, they lost.

God also told them not to make any treaties with the people of the land. However, there was a group of people that tricked the Israelites into making a treaty with them. Since the Israelites didn’t stop to get God’s okay on it, they fell for the trick and it became a problem for them in the future.

Just like God did with the Israelites, He makes a promise to you. You will be a winner in your Christian life if you listen to and courageously live by what He says in the Bible. There is no one that can defeat you if you will do that!

Like the Israelites, sometimes we are tempted by people that don’t care about what God says. If we learn from their mistake, and ask God before making our decisions, we aren’t as likely to fall for the tricks that others try to pull on us.

Take a moment to ask yourself these questions:

- Do I make time to regularly listen to what God says by going to church and listening to what the preacher and teachers explain from the Bible?
- Do I talk to God (through prayer) about all the important decisions I need to make?
- Have I made any compromises that I need to admit to God and ask His forgiveness?

MAKING IT TO THE FINALS 3

Syndee: Hey Petey, the basketball team came close to missing out on the state finals this year, didn't you?

Petey: Well, let say that there was some bumpy spots along the way. And it sure didn't help when Squirrel got kicked off the team in the middle of the season.

Alexis: I've always wondered..., why the name "Squirrel"?

Petey: Have you ever watched a squirrel darting around in the yard? That little creature goes here and there and slips through wherever he wants to, and no one could catch him if they tried. That's the way Squirrel was on the basketball court.

Tank: And man, that dude could go up for the dunk as fast as a squirrel can get to the top of a tree!

Syndee: So, what did Squirrel do that got him kicked off the team?

Petey: Aw, it was something really dumb. It was early in the season, and we were all pumped up for this game. Everyone told us we couldn't beat Eastside, but Coach told us that we could if we'd just do what he told us. See, Coach knows this team real well, and he designed a few new plays for us to use against them – you know, unexpected kind of stuff.

Well, we got to the game and started running Coach's plays. At first everyone thought we must be crazy, because no team had ever played these plays before. But we stuck with Coach's plan, and ended up winning the game! The whole team went wild with excitement – we couldn't believe that we'd pulled it off!

Then Squirrel did something really dumb. He got cocky, broke into Eastside's trophy case and stole some trophies and a jersey the team had retired from a kid that had gone on to play in the NBA a few years earlier. When the other school discovered what happened, they called Coach Hudson. He called us all into his office and said that no one would play another game until he found out who did it. Then he went around the room asking each

one of us if we did it. Squirrel was the last one, and since everyone else had an alibi he knew he might as well 'fess up. Coach kicked him off the team, and told him he could never play in the school's athletic program again.

You know, I miss Squirrel – miss him as a teammate and as a friend. But I can't blame Coach. Squirrel knew what he was doing was wrong; it cost our team a lot to replace the stuff he messed up. And it just made our team really look bad to the community and to the other teams we play.

The story of Squirrel is very much like the story of a man that was on the Israelite "team." The man's name was Achan, and he was one of the soldiers that fought against the city of Jericho. God gave the Israelites a special plan for attacking the city, and the army followed that plan and won the victory. But while caught up in the excitement of the victory, Achan took a few things he knew he shouldn't take. Because of that sin the army of Israel lost the next battle and thirty-six men were killed.

Later Joshua (the general of the army) found out that the loss was because of someone's sin. He called all the people together, and found out that Achan was the guilty one. When Achan explained what happened, he said, "I looked and saw the things, I desired them, I took them, and then I hid them among the stuff in my tent." Achan was then killed because of his sin and the problems it had caused!

What things does Satan tempt you to look at that you really know you shouldn't? Maybe you continue to look long enough that you start wanting them as your own. Is there something that Satan tempts you with that you have actually taken as if it belonged to you? And like Achan have you "hid" those things in your heart by making them part of your routine?

Maybe you need to ask God for forgiveness and for help before you end up paying a big price for your sin like Achan did.

MAKING IT TO THE FINALS 4

Syndee: It just isn't fair! You jocks have it easy! You practice as a team; you play as a team; and you go to finals as a team. But band members don't get that advantage!

Pete: What do you mean? The band practices together, marches together, and goes to competitions together. What do you mean that the band members don't get the same advantage?

Syndee: Yeah, those things are true, but the only way that I can make it to All-Region or All-State is to do it by myself. I have to practice by myself. Playing those same ol' songs over and over and over. And I have to audition by myself. It's not like the football team where if one person fumbles the ball a teammate can pick it up and make the play work – and the one that fumbles the ball still is a part of the winning team. If I “fumble” my notes in try-outs, I'm sunk! The only way I made it to All-State was because of my own individual commitment.

Tank: Okay, I see what you're saying. In a way it's nice to know that there are others on your side that will help if I mess up. But in a lot of ways team sports is an individual contest, too. My stats show what I do, and if I fumble that goes on my record whether my teammates recover it or not.

Alexis: Yeah, and when that college scout was at one of our last volleyball games, you better believe that I felt all alone. She wasn't there to evaluate the team – she was there to evaluate me! And if I was going to be offered a scholarship, it was only going to happen if I played a good game!

Pete: And here's another thing to think about: Our teams can limit whether each of us gets to go to state finals or not. It doesn't matter how much Tank or Alexis or I tried all by ourselves, none of us are good enough to individually take the whole team to the finals. But you are not limited by anyone other than yourself. It doesn't matter if the rest of the band is lazy, if half the woodwind section is out with the flu, or even if you have a lousy

band director. You can make it to the finals simply because you choose to do what it takes to get there.

Syndee: I guess I hadn't thought of it that way. It is nice to know that no one can keep me from winning except me!

Caleb had been a team member for nearly 50 years. He was a soldier in the Israelite army as they wandered around for the 40 years in the desert. He had been one of the special forces that had spied out the new territory. He had fought for the territory once the Israelites finally moved into the land God had promised them.

But the day came when Caleb stepped up to claim his own: “Give me this mountain range that Moses promised to me,” he requested of Joshua his general. Basically he was saying, God has promised me something special, and I'm ready to fight for it!

Just like Caleb, God has promised you something very special. It's not a life without problems, but rather a life that is greater than the problems – and sometimes it is even made better by the problems. The way to find out what God has promised to you is to get into His Book (the Bible) and see what it says.

Like Syndee in the story, this is a solo challenge – there isn't a person in this world that can keep you from winning if you stick with the job. Even if others fail, you can still claim and reach the promise that God has for you.

ARE YOU ON THE TEAM?

Hey, my name is pastor Don Burke, and I wrote the devotionals here. But before I can wrap this up I need to ask you a question: Are you on the team? You've read the stories of Sydnee, Alexis, Petey, and Tank. They were all winners, and got to be a part of "making it big" in their favorite activities. But there is another thing that they have in common, and without it they couldn't have been a part of something so special: They were all "on the team." None of them could have competed in the finals and become winners without belonging to the team.

In Christianity "being on the team" means accepting Jesus as your Savior. It cost a lot for Jesus to be able to make this offer to us – it literally cost Him His life. But now that the price has been paid, it is very simple for us to join His team. If you feel God stirring your heart to make this decision, all you have to do is:

1. Admit to yourself and to God that you've done things that the God says are wrong ("sin"), and you deserve to be punished because of that.
2. Repent, which means to be genuinely sorry for the wrong things you've done, and genuinely desire to turn away from them.
3. Ask God to forgive you.
4. Believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for you as a substitute for the punishment that you deserve.
5. Ask Jesus to save you.

If you've made the decision to accept Jesus as your Savior after reading these devotionals or attending the ALIVE conference this year, I would really love to hear from you. You can send me an email at PotosiPastor@gmail.com.