

QUESTION:

Is it sinful for a Christian to watch or take part in sports such as football (e.g., Simba vs. Yanga), basketball, or other similar activities?

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE:

To answer this question wisely, we must begin with the condition of the heart. In Mark 7:20-23, Jesus gives us insight into what truly defiles a person:

What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.

(Mark 7:20-23, NKJV)

In light of this, participation in or viewing of sports is not

automatically sinful. However, if it stirs up pride, anger, rivalry, insults, or idolatry, then it can become spiritually harmful and, in effect, sinful.

THE SPIRIT OF COMPETITION:

Many sports thrive on competition and rivalry. The danger lies not in the activity itself but in the spirit behind it. When competition leads to envy, strife, or pride, it ceases to glorify God.

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

(Philippians 2:3, NKJV)

The Apostle Paul consistently warns against fleshly behaviors that are common in ungodly rivalries:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication... hatreds, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies...

(Galatians 5:19-20, NKJV)

Even friendly competition can become a stumbling block when it draws out the works of the flesh, such as anger, cursing, boasting, or divisiveness. Paul warns us to:

Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.

(1 Corinthians 10:32, NKJV)

BEING A LIGHT IN THE WORLD:

As believers, we are called to live differently from the world:

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

(Philippians 2:14-15, NKJV)

If your involvement in sports leads to complaining, mockery, or bad behavior, ask yourself: Am I still shining as a light for Christ?

WOULD JESUS BE A FAN?

We must examine every area of life through the lens of Christlikeness. Would Jesus, who came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), spend hours debating football scores, mocking referees, or getting emotionally entangled in sports?

Our highest goal is not entertainment, but to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just

as He walked.

(1 John 2:6, NKJV)

We are Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). Would people be drawn to Christ through the way we behave during a game?

IDOLATRY OF TIME AND ATTENTION:

Another danger lies in how much time and emotional energy sports consume. God is jealous of our affection and devotion (Exodus 34:14). If sports take more time than prayer, worship, or studying God's Word, they may have become an idol.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

(1 John 5:21, NKJV)

Paul instructs believers to redeem the time, making the most of every moment for God's purposes:

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

(Ephesians 5:15-16, NKJV)

Evaluate yourself honestly:

Do you spend hours watching sports, but only a few minutes in prayer?

Do you shout and cheer loudly at matches, yet remain quiet during worship?

Are you more emotionally moved by your team winning than by someone getting saved?

If so, you may be giving glory to the game rather than to God.

THE WITNESS OF YOUR LIFE.

As believers, everything we do should reflect Christ to others.

Paul says:

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

(1 Corinthians 10:31, NKJV)

Ask yourself: Has your behavior as a sports fan ever led someone to Christ? If not, consider whether your actions are aligned with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

IN CONCLUSION:

Sports in themselves are not inherently sinful. But when they:

incite pride, anger, or rivalry

distract you from God

become a source of ungodly behavior

consume your time and affection more than Christ

...then they become a spiritual danger and possibly a sin.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

(Matthew 22:37, NKJV)

If sports are drawing you away from this kind of wholehearted love for God, it's time to reconsider your involvement.

Final Encouragement:

We are not called to blend in with the world, but to stand out for Christ:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

(Romans 12:2, NKJV)

May the Lord give you wisdom and discernment as you seek to honor Him in every area of your life.

Be blessed.

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