

Berean Academy: Philosophy of Athletics

At Berean Academy you will find a student body, staff and faculty, parents and surrounding community that love their sports. And for good reason; athletics is an artifact of human culture, a byproduct of human beings imaging their Creator as creative beings! We believe the “Cultural Mandate” in Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:15 puts culture in a positive light, being one of the purposes for mankind and commands from God to multiply and spread, rule over, and care for God’s creation. This universe was left to be explored, understood, and formed by us, which become creative expressions of love and service towards God, each other, and nature. *It is our goal and prayer that our students – as scholars, citizens, and disciples – are prepared to be sent into the culture as Christ’s hands and feet, enjoying their gifts within work and play to love and serve God and others. This includes athletics!*

Sadly, like everything else in culture, a wonderful human expression such as athletics is ruined by sinful human nature. Instead of promoting the flourishing of mankind, selfishness spoils God’s original life-giving intent. Athletics is used to become an object of worship (idol), a means of self-fulfillment, and a way to mistreat others.

Therefore, the Christian’s response to this sin problem and its effects is to bring renewal to athletics, as in all areas of life. As Christians we stress “all areas of life” because we believe the Bible teaches that all of life is worship, all of life is sacred, all of life is under the lordship of Christ. So whether it is within the sphere of academics, the arts, athletics, or any other extra-curricular activity, Berean is intentional in applying a biblical worldview to critically evaluate all things for the service of Christ and the edification of others all for the glory of God.

In light of this, Berean Academy seeks to encourage our players, coaches, and fans to reclaim athletics for the service of Christ and the edification of others by adhering to the following principles within our sports programs:

1. Pursuit of Excellence

God has created each person with skills and talents, and at Berean Academy we are committed to coming alongside students to help them discover and nurture these gifts within all areas of academia and life. As faithful stewards it is our responsibility as thankful recipients to maximize these gifts. If all things are to be done to the glory of God, nothing less than the pursuit of excellence with our skills and talents is a worthy act of worship to God. Just as working hard in the classroom is of utmost importance, a good work ethic in athletics is highly emphasized. So not only is the end goal of an excellent season record and a state championship a valid pursuit, but how we pursue that goal is also of great value.

So how does this affect our views on winning and losing? We define winning not simply with *what the score is* at the end of the game, but *how we played the game* and whether we maximized our skills, motives, attitudes, and abilities – playing to the best of our ability for God's glory. Based on this understanding of “winning” and our desire to be in the likeness of and ambassadors for Christ, it naturally calls for teams and individuals to display appropriate demonstrations of honor, humility, and grace in both winning and losing.

- Colossians 3:23-24 “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”
- 1 Corinthians 10:31 “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.
- Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.
- Matthew 25:14-30 “Well done good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness.” v. 21
- Proverbs 4:13 “A sluggard’s appetite is never filled, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.”
- Proverbs 14:23 “All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.”

2. Individual Character Development and Discipleship

Athletics has an ethical component just as everything else in life; this standard is commonly called sportsmanship. Sportsmanship promotes four main character qualities: integrity, fairness, responsibility, and respect. Berean Academy views these character traits as in alignment with the Christian life we are called to pursue. Therefore, it would be helpful to hear what Kirk O. Hanson and Matt Savage have to say about sportsmanship:

“A more ethical approach to athletics is sportsmanship. Under a sportsmanship model, healthy competition is seen as a means of cultivating personal honor, virtue, and character. It contributes to a community of respect and trust between competitors and in society... the sportsmanship model is built on the idea that sport both demonstrates and encourages character development, which then influences the moral character of the broader community. How we each compete in sports can have an effect on our personal moral and ethical behavior outside of the competition.” - Kirk O. Hanson and Matt Savage, “What Role Does Ethics Play in Sports?”

Because sportsmanship emphasizes the relationship between how we act within sports and outside of sports, Berean Academy values athletics as an avenue where students can develop a mature character and lifestyle modeled after Christ that can be lived out daily for the rest of their lives. Athletics challenges students to reflect godly character through faith taking action within the context of physical and mental challenges and interpersonal relationships. In other words, sports at Berean Academy function as another discipleship training ground for our students, who find themselves in a scheduled routine of representing the truth of the gospel to a watching world through how they play and conduct themselves.

- James 1:19-20 “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves... But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”

- Philippians 4:8-9 “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”
- Galatians 5:16 “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”
- Hebrews 13:18 “Pray for us, for we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.”

3. Community and Teamwork

We are created as individuals to be in fellowship with other individuals as relational human beings. Community is a creational design we see in Genesis that is naturally experienced within team sports. Here at Berean Academy, we see athletics as an avenue to strengthen fellowship between students while they learn skills about teamwork. The immediate benefits of team athletics allow students to form closer relationships with their peers and coaches, which provides support for life in the present. Long term benefits include life lessons such as seeing oneself as part of a whole, effective communication, sacrificial service, and giving encouragement all contribute to the student becoming a mature member of the family, their future workplace, the body of Christ, their city, nation, and world. Within these arenas of high intensity and competition, we seek to utilize God’s design of community to work, fashion, and hammer out the shaping of young lives for the present and future. In this way, sports can be the grounds for creating a community that is life-giving for its participants.

- Genesis 1:28; 2:18 “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him.” v. 2:18
- Ecclesiastes 9-12 “A cord of three strands is not easily broken.” v. 12b
- Proverbs 27:17 “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”
- Psalm 133:1 “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14 “And we urge you, brother, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

In agreement with its mission statement below, Berean Academy wishes to provide an athletic program that promotes a Christ-centered lifestyle based on the Word of God, pursues excellence in all its endeavors, instructs with a Christian worldview, and prepares its student-athletes in a holistic manner to take their places in the home, church, vocations, and country. We are committed to the *motive* and *manner* in which we carry out athletics: *for God’s glory in loving service to others*. Just like anything and everything else in life, we want our athletics to make God “look good,” to be in awe of God as a result of reflecting his image and his design; and in this endeavor, we will love our neighbor as ourselves while transforming culture around us, manifesting God’s kingdom on earth.

Berean Academy Mission Statement

Berean Academy provides a program of education which promotes a Christ-centered lifestyle, upholds a standard of scholastic excellence, promotes the principles established in the Word of God, furnishes instruction in a Christian worldview, and prepares students to take their places in the home, in the church, in their vocations, and in their country.