

Be Real Play Hurt
Everton Park
Hebrews 12:1-4
2 April 2017

Video: Big Hits in AFL

*Surprised to see an empty seat at the Super Bowl stadium, a diehard fan remarked about it to a woman sitting nearby. "It was my husband's," the woman explained, "But he died."
"I'm very sorry," said the man. "Yet I'm really surprised that another relative, or friend, didn't jump at the chance to take the seat reserved for him."
"Beats me," she said. "They all insisted on going to the funeral."*

The football season is up and running. League and Union have been running for nearly half a dozen weeks, and to my wife's delight, the AFL began last week. And sorry to those of you who think that there is a fourth form of football... but that season is nearly over.

And last week I spent some time in Sydney at the Australian Athletics Championships. One of the most impressive things to me about any sport, is how many players play or compete hurt. Roger Staubach, a Gridiron quarterback nicknamed Captain Comeback said ***"If you're not playing football hurt, you're not playing football."***

What is it about those who are successful in sport that drives them to compete, and even win, even when they are hurt? I think it drills down to one thing. They are driven by a passion, or by grit, to succeed! There is something within them that won't settle for not giving their best.

Real followers of Jesus can learn from successful sports people, even successful business people. They can learn the importance of playing the game of life with passion and grit. Grit and determination is a characteristic that real followers live by. They have such a confidence in who Jesus is, and what he has done for them, that they play the game of life with the mindset of already being a winner! And so they should. Jesus told us that he has come to give us an abundant life... life in all its fullness.

Question: What do you think the abundant life to which Jesus refers looks like?

The New Testament author to the Hebrews speaks about the grit of what it means to be a Real Follower. We heard it before in the NLT version, but I want you to hear it now in The Message paraphrase...

"Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!

In this all-out match against sin, others have suffered far worse than you, to say nothing of what Jesus went through—all that bloodshed! So don't feel sorry for yourselves."
Hebrews 12:1-4, The Message

Now I have to admit, that is pretty ‘in your face’. *No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever.*

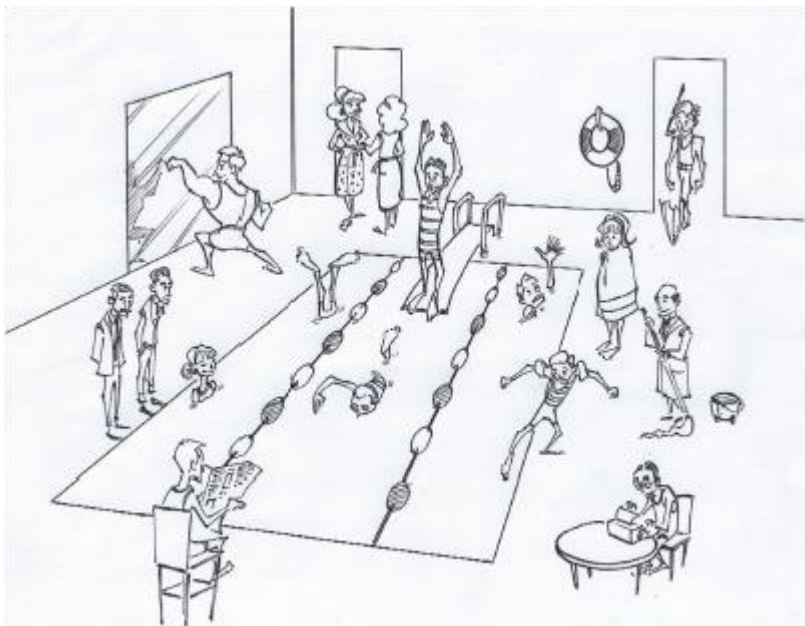
Real followers of Jesus have grit and determination that put up with “**anything along the way. Cross, shame, whatever**”... Know that there is a blessing in that... When we play through the pain, we grow **stronger**, and we become **bolder** in our confidence of receiving the promises of God.

That’s what the bible says. But here is the thing.

All of us have hurts. We hurt on so many levels. Frustrations. Disappointments. The feeling, at times, as though God lets you down; the feeling, at times, as though we let ourselves down, feelings that leave us with the message that we cannot manage the problems in this life alone.

But, and this is the point, **Real Followers Play Hurt**. Real followers get back in the game no matter what has happened to them. Because real followers know that the end result, that final win or accomplishment, well and truly outweighs the fear of disappointment.

So where are you, in this game called Life. Where are you in the match? Take a look at the picture on the screen. Are you in the middle of the (describe)



I don’t know where you are on the field (or off the field), but this morning, as we close out this series, Be Real, I want to share with you some reasons why real followers Play Hurt.

1. They play hurt, because they know their contribution matters

A young man woke up one morning and decided he didn’t want to go to school.

It was just about time for the morning bell to ring when a young woman came into the room and asked, “Why aren’t you getting ready for school?”

He said, "Cause I don't want to go."
She asked, "Do you have any reasons?"
He said, "Yes, I have three good reasons.

First it's boring.
Second, no one likes me.
And third, I just don't want to go."

The woman replied, "Well honey, I have three reasons why you should go.

First it's fun
Second, there are a few people there who like you.
And third, you're the principal!

The first thing that we need to remember is that even when we are hurt, even when we don't feel like we matter much, the reality is, we matter a lot to God.

In ancient times, the most valuable people in society were men. Women, children and slaves were often seen in a very low light. But notice what Jesus did...
...Jesus said that unless we enter the kingdom of God like a little child, we couldn't get in
...His first miracle was in response to a woman's request
...Jesus stopped the stoning of a woman caught in adultery (have you ever wondered where the man was) by saying whoever is without sin throw the first stone
...Jesus spoke to, and asked for help from a Gentile woman at a well, whose promiscuous lifestyle would have made her discarded by all in her society
...the first people to bear witness to Jesus' resurrection were women

In other words, Jesus raised the profile and value of those who were deemed lesser people.

The point is this. It doesn't matter what you have done. It doesn't matter how you see yourself; how unworthy or otherwise you think you are, who you are matters to God.

Second, **real followers play hurt because they know that life is bigger than themselves.**

People often look at young people as selfish and self-focussed. But research suggests that most young people want to make a difference. They want to change the world. So when given opportunity, and responsibility, they take greater risks, and often have greater impact, than us older people who have mortgages to pay and a social status to maintain.

In his letter to the Hebrews, the author tells us to keep our eye on the prize. The prize is not just something in the future. The prize is a life changing relationship with the Creator that influences our lives now; that leads us love others, to show justice and mercy to others, that gives us a peace which 'passes all human understanding'.

Finally, **real followers play hurt because they have been touched by the grace of God.**

I think that is the key thing.

When a woman rushed into a Pharisees home, a Pharisee who was entertaining his important guest, and began washing the guest's feet, the Pharisee mocked under his breathe...

“If this man was the prophet I thought he was, he would have known what kind of woman this is who is falling all over him.” (Luke 7:39, The Message)

Jesus told him a story about the forgiving of debts and concluded...

“I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.” (Luke 7:47, NLT)

Real followers have tasted God’s grace, and allow themselves to respond to it. They continually remember God’s love and acceptance of them. They remain focussed on the person and work of Jesus. They remember that throughout history, God has use broken, cracked pots, to change the world.

And God continues to do that through you. Real followers play hurt. Because we know that God uses our brokenness to show his love to others.