

Every Wrestler is Valuable!

By Olympic Champion Ben Peterson

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As a young boy and as a man I have wondered about my value. Was I valuable to others? Was I valuable to God? What makes me valuable? The answer to these questions was vital to my motivation as a wrestler and can be for you also.

So why are each of us, young and older wrestlers, of value? And, why ask such a question in a wrestling magazine? I ask because we all wonder about this some time or another. And if we understand this right, we can gain incredible motivation.

Recently, I was reminded of the story of the Twenty Dollar Bill:

A speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill. In the room of 200, he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill?" Hands started going up. He said, "I am going to give this \$20 to one of you, but first let me do this." He proceeded to crumple up the bill. He then asked, "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air. "Well," he replied, "what if I do this?" He dropped in on the ground and with his shoe started to grind it into the floor. He picked it up, now all crumpled and dirty. "Now who wants it?" Still the hands went into the air. "My friends, you have learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It is still worth \$20. Many times in life we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, we will never lose our value in God's eyes. Dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, we are still priceless. Don't ever forget it - You are special to Him!"

In a similar fashion our parents, coaches, teachers and others know we are of value. They invest much in us to help us reach our full potential. They give us their time, their knowledge, their wealth, their experiences, their name and much more. All of this can help us look and feel really good at times.

But our real value comes because of the creation we are. We are each incredibly made with ability to learn and adjust. We continually keep learning and adjusting and therefore strengthening our minds and bodies. God invested incredibly in us. I often say He knew we would want to wrestle. Just look at the way we are made. Though mothers think their son's arms will be torn off, it never happens. God is smart enough to keep us from that dilemma. Geneses 1:27 says "God made man in His own image". How cool is that? No matter what happens to us we still reflect His image. No matter how many times we fall, are battered and marred we know we are still a reflection of Him.

I did not have to win all my matches to be a member of the Cumberland High School wrestling team. Matter of fact, I lost all 7 by pin my freshman year. But I was a student of that school and I wore red & white and the Cumberland Beaver mascot with pride. By the end of 4 years I was better able to honor my school.

The cardinal and gold of Iowa State University made a grand place to train and compete. Four more years of labor were worth it, in order to stand on the NCAA Victory Stand with that team. I was driven because it was an honor to be there.

In the 1972 and 1976 Olympic Games I did not have to win to be an American. No, I was born an American. And it was my great honor to represent all that this Nation and its people stand for. That thought motivates me to this day!

Young wrestlers, you may be like I was, getting pinned! But learn from those losses and fight back to do better next match and next season. At times you may only be able to stay off your back and save your team a point or two or avoid the embarrassment of a forfeit. But you are part of the team and you are of value to your team. Do your best, cheer your teammates on and then prepare for future opportunities.

One of the saddest things to me is hearing of someone taking their life. They have succumbed to Satan's lie that they have no worth. As one broken hearted Dad said. "My son chose a permanent solution for a temporary problem." Such pain and emptiness comes when we look at our failures and our dilemmas, but not when we truly see our value. At times we may be scared and very discouraged, but that does not eliminate our value.

My value is first found in God's stamp on me. He made me valuable before I did anything. He sent His Son to die for me while I was in sin (Romans 5:8). Understanding this gives me great motivation to perform. Representing the God of the Universe is a thrilling thing. We do not need to perform to a certain level to get God's approval. We have value even if no one is cheering or even watching. My, does this perspective reduce the pressure. I don't have to perform to prove my value and if I fail to perform I do not lose value. But, instead I get to represent something significant!

Personally, I seek to avoid the mistake of thinking I will gain value by just achieving something. Instead I seek to achieve and obtain various things because of the honor it can bring to God and to others and the help it can be to others. Please join me. It is a great way to live and be motivated!

You can find other articles by Ben at the following web sites: www.campofchamps.org & www.TheCompetitor.org
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