

4 Spiritual Lessons from the Mayweather-Pacquiao Fight

It is now 10 days since the so-called “fight of the century” between Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao, and while many questions remain after the fight, in particular concerning the condition of Pacquiao’s shoulder on fight night, the most important question has not been asked; namely, what are the spiritual lessons we can learn from this mega-rich fight?

1. God is not particularly concerned with the outcome of a sporting event. We commonly hear athletes thank God after a victory, saying that without Him they could not have won, and certainly, it’s good for them to be humble and give glory to the Lord.

There are also times when it appears that the Lord may have intervened in a game for the sake of a testimony, as in the case of born-again David Tyree’s “miraculous” catch when his New York Giants defeated the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl in 2008.

But it’s ludicrous to think that the Lord puts the same priorities on sporting events as we do, as if it really matters which team or person wins. And how many times do you see a spectacular play made by one player on a team, who then points upward to the Lord to say, “It’s all You, Lord!”, only to have the next play go against his team, with the opposing player pointing to the Lord?

Which side is God on? Perhaps neither?

Perhaps He doesn’t share our idolatrous obsession with sports, which is manifest in our divided hearts and in the millions of dollars spent on bets? Perhaps He’s more concerned with the lost being saved and with the sick being healed? Perhaps He’s more concerned with casualties in Syria and with the cry of a

martyr's family in Egypt than with the outcome of a boxing match?

2. Good generally doesn't triumph over evil in the boxing ring. As much as Pacquiao was painted as the good guy in this fight (from what I've heard from friends in the Philippines who know him personally, he's a genuine believer) and Mayweather was the bad guy (he does, in fact, have a sordid history, especially when it comes to domestic violence), the boxing ring is not the place to expect morality to triumph.

Putting aside the violence and danger of the sport and whether believers should be involved with it at all, the fact is that the better fighter normally wins, not the nicer guy.

This reminds me of the story about a Jewish rabbi and a Catholic priest watching a boxing match together. The rabbi noticed one of the boxers crossing himself before the bout began and asked the priest, "What does that mean?"

The priest replied, "It doesn't mean anything if he can't punch."

Years ago, when Evander Holyfield, a professing Christian, defeated Mike Tyson, who had briefly been a professing Muslim and who was certainly the "bad guy" in the fight, I heard believers saying, "Christianity triumphed over Islam."

What nonsense.

And what happens when the Muslim boxer defeats the Christian boxer? What does that prove?

Thinking like this is ludicrous.

3. God's greatest goal is the forming of the character of Christ in our lives.

I remember watching Tim Tebow play for the first time toward the end of his illustrious college career. He had won

everything you could win the previous year and was coming back for one more year. This was going to be his last (or one of his last) games.

That day, the scripture verse he highlighted (in anti-glare black, under his eyes) was one that made reference to trials and adversity, and I said to myself, "I think he's going to lose today, but he will grow much more in character through it."

That's exactly what happened, and while our superficial, always-win theology doesn't have a place for losing, it is often through defeat and adversity that we grow the most.

That is much more important to the Lord than the outcome of the event, and as I heard the results of the Mayweather-Pacquiao fight while ministering overseas, I asked myself the question, "What does the Lord want to do in Manny's life through this loss? How can he become more like Jesus through it?"

My hope is that 20 years from now, Manny will be able to say, "That was one of the important lessons of my career, and it helped me to grow in the Lord."

4. Overconfidence kills.

Pacquiao is known to be a very gracious and humble fighter, not trash talking about his opponents and not given to boastful pronouncements.

Yet before this fight, he stated that he thought he would knock Mayweather out (a near impossible task), and then, just a few days before the fight, he told his devoted Filipino followers that God was with him and he knew he would win.

When I read that quote, I again wondered to myself, "Could it be that he has a false sense of confidence and that he will be humbled by the end of the night? Is there a spiritual lesson

for him here?"

It's one thing when we have a word from heaven; it's another thing when we're presumptuous.

Perhaps this was Pacquiao's time to learn this painful lesson, one which many of us have had to learn over the years?

In no way am I sitting in judgment of Pacquiao or Mayweather, who stand before God, not you or me, and in no way am I seeking to demean Manny's testimony, which has blessed many, or his legendary generosity, which has helped a multitude of poor Filipinos.

I'm simply making some spiritual application after one of the biggest sporting events in modern times. Perhaps there are lessons for each of us too?

Michael Brown *is the author of 25 books, including Can You Be Gay and Christian? and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show The Line of Fire. He is also president of FIRE School of Ministry and director of the Coalition of Conscience.*