

## **THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION**

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**1 Corinthians 12**

It's a big decision. Brett Favre ... should he stay or should he go? Early in the week Favre was frustrated and said he wanted out of Green Bay.

Apparently his agent called Ted Thompson and said Brett wanted to be traded and oh, my goodness, that nearly sent people into hysterics. Not me. (HA!) Favre was upset about the draft and upset that he doesn't get to play with Randy Moss. But then he saw the light and decided Green Bay is a great team to play for and of course he wants to stay on as the greatest quarterback ever. So, it was a big decision ... or at least early in the week we were told it was a big decision. Well, Favre's at mini-camp this weekend – that's a good sign – and he seems ready to play and happy about the decision he's made.

You're making a decision today to be a part of a faith team, a church community. You're making a decision today to say "I want to play." You're making a decision today that says, "Put me in, I'm ready."

Today is NOT the SuperBowl. It's not even the playoffs. Today is the season opener. Friday night was just a scrimmage, today's it's a real game day. You're making a big decision today. But you're ready. You're ready to stand up and play.

Eight months ago you were drafted. Seven months ago you started training. Lots of strengthening and conditioning; conditioning through strenuous

exercises: prayer, worship, fellowship, study. Training has included learning plays, running plays, watching film clips, learning how the other teams play. You have the best coaches (*mentors*) in the league sitting behind you right now. They support 100%. Not only have they provided you with training to prepare you for today, they have helped you hone your skills, grow your gifts, build up the team. God has given your mentors the gift of coaching. That's a huge task, but they have followed through with commitment and grace.

You've got the best Director of Operations sitting right here (*Scott*). He's the best one in the league. He and his staff will watch your back, they will provide encouragement, they will help you understand what's ahead in your future – more training, more strengthening and conditioning, more game days. That's a part of standing up and saying you want to play ... you need to take it seriously. Training and conditioning are a part of the package. It's a part of the decision of wanting to play. God has given Scott and Ruth and the church staff, your Sunday school teachers, your mission trip chaperones, and your Sr High LOGOS leaders the gift of organizing ministry so that you have the opportunity to grow in faith.

During the last seven months, you have been given all the tools you need to start in the game today. You've been given equipment, play books, positions on the field; you've been given the education. Training has provided you with a sense of what makes up a team so that you can work really well together, and you do work really well together.

You have an absolutely beautiful facility (*sanctuary*) to play in: good seating, good lighting, open space, good field conditions, an excellent grounds-keeping staff. You have, as a part of this team, an all-star choir ... this is the best choir in the league, by leaps and bounds. As a part of the facility you have great practice fields (*the rest of the church*) – fellowship hall, classrooms, a library, a chapel. God has given us the gift of this church home, your church home, a place where you can find friendship, community, and sanctuary.

You have been provided with something else ... something pretty important. Every team needs support and encouragement. Every team needs a fan base ... fans that come to watch you play. If you don't have fans to help support the team, you don't have much. Your fans (*congregation*) have packed this facility. They have arrived for the season opener. They've been behind the scenes during training season, watching and waiting and hoping and praying, and now its game day. They've come to see your stuff ... they've come to watch you play. You are by far their favorite team. God has given you the gift of encouragement through faithful family members and friends.

So, what's my role? I am your cheerleader. I yell the loudest. I have cheered you on from day one because I knew, I knew in my heart, that you'd be ready for today. I've been practicing my cheerleading moves during your training season so that I, too, could be ready for today. Even after today, I'll continue to be your cheerleader. Through good times and bad, I'll be your cheerleader. Even on those yucky days when you're tired and you don't feel like playing, I'll keep cheering. Even if you lose a game, and you'll lose a

few, you'll still be winners to me. I'll cheer for you, because that's my role. That's the gift God has given me.

Today is NOT the SuperBowl. It's not even the playoffs. Today is the season opener. You're making a big decision today. But you're ready. You're suited up. You're ready to stand up and play. You're in the Jesus league now... and that is the biggest league you will ever play in.

But you're ready. You are an incredibly mature and focused team. You are articulate in your statements of faith and belief. You are not afraid to stand up for what you believe in and you've made the choice that this is exactly where you want to be today. And God has given you home field advantage!

Here's the truth: I know nothing about football. Absolutely nothing. But I know what I like. You all know I like the Green Bay Packers. I like the concept of "team" and what it means. Ministry is all about teamwork because we are centered on a ministry and a message that's very focused ... it's very hopeful, it's very life-giving, it's very real and it's very present. And it takes a team to make it happen. Church school, LOGOS, mission trips, Summer Stretch, confirmation class with adult mentors ... it's all about teamwork.

Pete Twedell, a legendary coach, who has been a part of the United Methodist "coaching" staff for many years, says it best: you're not alone. Pete says, "maybe you'll forget all that you've learned in confirmation, but remember this: you're not alone." That's his most celebrated coaching statement: you are not alone. Certainly one that rings true with all of us.

Thank God we are not alone. Let us truly thank God that we are not alone.  
We're all in this together.

This day marks the efforts of a team. Today marks the beginning of your journey, not the end. Let us be thankful for all the gifts God has given to you and to this church. You are a blessing to me and I'm very proud of you.  
Amen.