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Striving for Perfection in the New Year

A Commentary by Jason Curry



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As a defensive end in high school, I loved to sack the quarterback, to tackle running backs and to look for the chance to make an interception. I made a number of tackles at my position on a weekly basis, and, after a while, I began to attract the attention and recognition of the coaching staff. Initially, all of the coaches were pleased with my performance. I was striving for perfection as an athlete, and I was happy to know that they were pleased with my athletic efforts. However, toward the end of one of the football seasons, one coach pulled me to the side and said: "You are making too many tackles. You're not playing your position." I was initially shocked by his observation. I wanted to say: "I make a lot of tackles because several of my teammates can't make a tackle, yet you keep them on the field." Instead of con-

tinuing to strive for excellence, I made fewer tackles, and the other teams began to score. I lowered my standards in order to assist the coach in feeling secure about his coaching decisions. To my surprise, I was taken out of the game during the last game of the season. When I returned to the sideline and asked my coach why I was being replaced by my second-string teammate, he said: "You are letting the runners, run by. You not are making enough tackles."

Even since that moment, I promised myself that I would never lower my standards on the football field. I would rather be taken out of a game for making too many tackles, than be taken out for performing less than my best.

In Matthew 5:48, Jesus says: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

As our creator, God knows that we have flaws as human beings. However, Jesus is encouraging us to strive for perfection. When we lower our moral standards in order to entertain or embrace principles that are not of God, we quickly find ourselves on a slippery slope, and we become unable to see, embrace or embody the Christian principles that God has placed before us. For example, if we do not strive to love our enemies as Jesus commands (Matthew 5:44), we may eventually hate them, and that hate will eventually destroy us. Yes, one curse word can ultimately lead to ten. A few instances of not giving thanks may eventually lead to an ungrateful heart. The words, the life and the ministry of Jesus the Christ continue to set the high standards for Christian living. We are not perfect, but let us continue to strive for perfection in the New Year through Jesus Christ.