

"The Handoff"

By Gerald Cumby



Hebrews 12:1: *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."*

All of us have had to receive a hand-off from someone else many times in our life; or we have had to hand off something to someone. The "hand off" has played a major part in people's life since the beginning of time.

Let's look at the definition.

Hand off (verb); handed off;

1. : to transfer (something) to another's possession.
 2. : to pass or delegate (a task or responsibility) to another.
- handoff (noun)

√ **In life, what are some experiences we have had as to either being the recipient of a "hand off"...or be the one to give/pass off (hand off) to someone or something?**

Every day, we exchange thoughts, gifts, responsibilities with/to other people/organizations. We hand off or "hand over" things/thoughts or responsibilities to another person or a machine.

We go to sports:

- **The Football Relay** = The football relay was a competitive team sport played in elementary and Junior High. The relay team had four (4) participants in trying to win the event. Usually each participant would run carrying a football (usually 50 yards) and then hand the ball off to the next runner on the team going the opposite way. The hand off was very important in that one drop or missed exchange meant a loss (in most cases).
- **Football** = We usually think of the quarterback handing the ball off to the running back when we talk about the hand off. However, the first hand off would be the exchange between the center and the quarterback or the one receiving the ball.
- **Basketball** – first thought: the guard handing off the ball to the open man under the basket (assist). Same with the Hockey team members.
- **Baseball** = first thought: The starting pitcher handing the ball off to the relief pitcher. But, there are a lot of handing off in baseball; i.e. the second baseman handing of the ball to the shortstop for the double play.
- **Track** = The relay team members hand off the baton to the next runner. The pole-vaulter lets go of the pole to someone who catches it before it hits the ground. If the pole knocks the bar off, it is a miss.

But, even more than sports:

- We hand off responsibilities to our workers, our team of nurses (one shift to another shift); details on each patient...
- The manager of people, owner of a company, hands off the responsibilities to his counterpart when he retires. Sometimes that is very hard to do.
- Responsibilities of the family handing off spouse/children to the doctor (major operation); dentist.
- Handing off our children to the teachers (kindergarten/ 1st Grade).
- Handing off our daughters to the love of her life.
- Handing off our young sons and daughters as they go to war.
- Handing off the souls of our loved ones to the Lord.
- As a Christian, handing off the love of your life to the One who promises us the joys of heaven (no more pain, no crying, no worrying....forever!)

Running the Race to Achieve Ultimate Victory

Whether it is sports or life in general, we must be willing to accept our responsibilities as we receive the object or responsibilities in the game of life.

Analogies and Metaphors Used by Paul concerning running the race of life:

- *"Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours". 1 Corinthians 9:24 AMP*
- *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of [a]the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places, Ephesians 6:12 NKJV*
 - The word "wrestle" is "pale" - NOT Pale....but "pah-lay" from the root word palestrum. This is specific meaning to the churches in those major cities where Paul planted churches. The Palestra was a multi-level combat sports arena in the ancient Greek culture where all kinds of wrestling and physical contact sports occurred. Paul used that actual example to illustrate to the Ephesians (and us) that we face a level of demonic structure in the principalities of hell which is totally unfathomable!
 - Athletes throughout Greece would converge on the Isthmian Games every two years during the spring. (Olympics every 4 years...in Athens, Greece)
 - The athletes would compete in footraces, wrestling, boxing, throwing the discus and javelin, the long jump, chariot racing, poetry reading and singing. (You did not know singing was considered an athletic event, did you?).
 - According to several inscriptions that are contemporary to Paul, women competed in these games as well. The inscriptions mention women winning the 200-meter dash as well as the war-chariot races.
 - Since there were no permanent accommodations at the site, the people stayed in tents in the surrounding fields. Fixing or selling tents would have given Paul and his new found colleagues, Aquila and Priscilla, ample employment as well as opportunities to share the gospel with those attending the Games (Acts 18:3). Joining him also were two of his disciples, Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).

- Paul states, *"If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules,"* 2 Tim. 2:5.
Most likely Paul had in mind the oaths that the athletes took in the underground cave of the Palaimon. Here, the athletes swore that they would follow the rules in their training as well as not cheat in order to win the Isthmian crown.
- "Don't you realize that the runners in the Stadium, all of them run, but only one gets the medal? You are to run in such a way as to win. Everyone who is in athletic training exercises self-control (but they do it to win a medal that will fade away...!); so I am running in such a way as not to be without purpose. When I box, I do it in such a way as not to land my blows on empty air – instead I let my body know who is boss, and I make it my slave..." (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).
The point here is that the Corinthians must be serious about their mission, as serious as athletes are about their training (and as Paul is about his preaching).
- *"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,"* 2 Timothy 2:3 (NKJV).
- *"Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it,"* Revelation 2:17.
- **In 1996 Olympic games, there was a sports shoe company that advertised the slogan, "You don't win the silver medal, you lose the gold."**
 - Nike received so many complaints about that sign and thinking that they had to remove the sign and take a direct hit from the media.
 - In Paul's day, winning was everything. Forget the "losers"...they received nothing but criticism and bad looks from family and friends.
 - Well, today parents and coaches are giving out medals and trophies for participating. Do you feel this is good for our kids?

SUMMARY

The greatest and most important hand-off ever made was the one where God, the Father, handed off His special Son to a world of chaos and disorder. He literally knew the outcome of His Son's life and did it for you and me. I thank God for that hand-off. I, as a father, could not have done it. No way! *"For God so loved the world*

that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

- We, as Christians, should put every effort to win the prize of the high-calling of God. God expects it from us. We should expect nothing less from ourselves.
- Practice doesn't make perfect; but, it helps us to understand that God expects us to honor him by living life with a "Spirit of Excellence" in all of our endeavors.
- We are to be all we can be for Christ.
- We are to go out of this world and into the next with joy in our hearts and our families proud of the accomplishments of their dad, mom, grandparents.

