

Youth Culture Lesson
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Tebowed

NFL Quarterback Praised, Criticized for Showcasing Faith

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Posted: Nov. 28, 2011

What Happened:

In the National Football League, there's no player more compelling than Denver Broncos' Tim Tebow. His fans are enthralled by his penchant for amazing last-minute victories. His critics point to his horrible stats. However, there's another thing that makes the quarterback so interesting: his faith.

Tebow is an outspoken Christian who regularly goes on mission trips and used to write Bible verses on his eye black. His penchant for praying on bended knee started the Internet fad of Tebowing. "It's like planking, but dumber," read a headline on a Yahoo sports site.

Tebow is far from the first NFL player who's been outspoken about his faith, but it's doubtful anyone has generated so much controversy. A player for the Detroit Lions bowed his head in mock prayer after sacking Tebow during a humiliating loss. Fans and critics are wearing Tebow's No. 15 jersey—with the name "Jesus" printed along the top. Some people think Tebow's showy demonstrations of his faith go too far.

"I think that when he accepts the fact that we know that he loves Jesus Christ, then I think I'll like him a little better," former NFL quarterback Jake Plummer told ESPN. "I don't hate him because of that. I just would rather not have to hear that every single time he takes a good snap or makes a good handoff."

Tebow, who recently announced his intention to open a children's hospital in the Philippines, has no plans to tone down his expressions of faith.

"If you're married and you have a wife and you really love your wife, is it good enough to only say to your wife, 'I love you,' the day you get married?" he said on ESPN. "Or should you tell her every single day when you wake up and every opportunity?"

"That's how I feel about my relationship with Jesus Christ; that is the most important thing in my life. So any time I get an opportunity to tell Him I love Him or am given an opportunity to shout Him out on national TV, I'm gonna take that opportunity. So I look at it as a relationship I have with Him that I want to give Him the honor and glory anytime I have the opportunity. Then right after I give Him the honor and glory, I always try to give my teammates the honor and glory."

Talk About It:

Some people believe a person's faith should be a very private thing. Others think being outspoken about our beliefs can be a great way to honor God and lead others to Christ. When you see athletes score after winning a touchdown or singers thank God after winning an award, how do you react? Does it make you happy? Does it rub you the wrong way? Does it depend on what you know about the person and how sincere about his or her beliefs seem to be?

You probably know people who don't share your Christian beliefs. They might belong to a different religion or perhaps don't have a religion at all. In trying to be sensitive to their faith, would you alter how you show yours? In other words, would you be less likely to pray around them, or say, "Praise God"? More likely?

Is it possible to be too outspoken about your faith? Do you think street preachers with bullhorns can help people find Christ? What's the most effective way to represent Christianity in everyday life?

What the Bible Says:

"Stand up and praise the Lord your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be Your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise" (Neh. 9:5).

"Sing to the Lord, praise His name; proclaim His salvation day after day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among all peoples" (Ps. 96:2).

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matt. 6:5-7).

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward" (Col. 3:23-24).