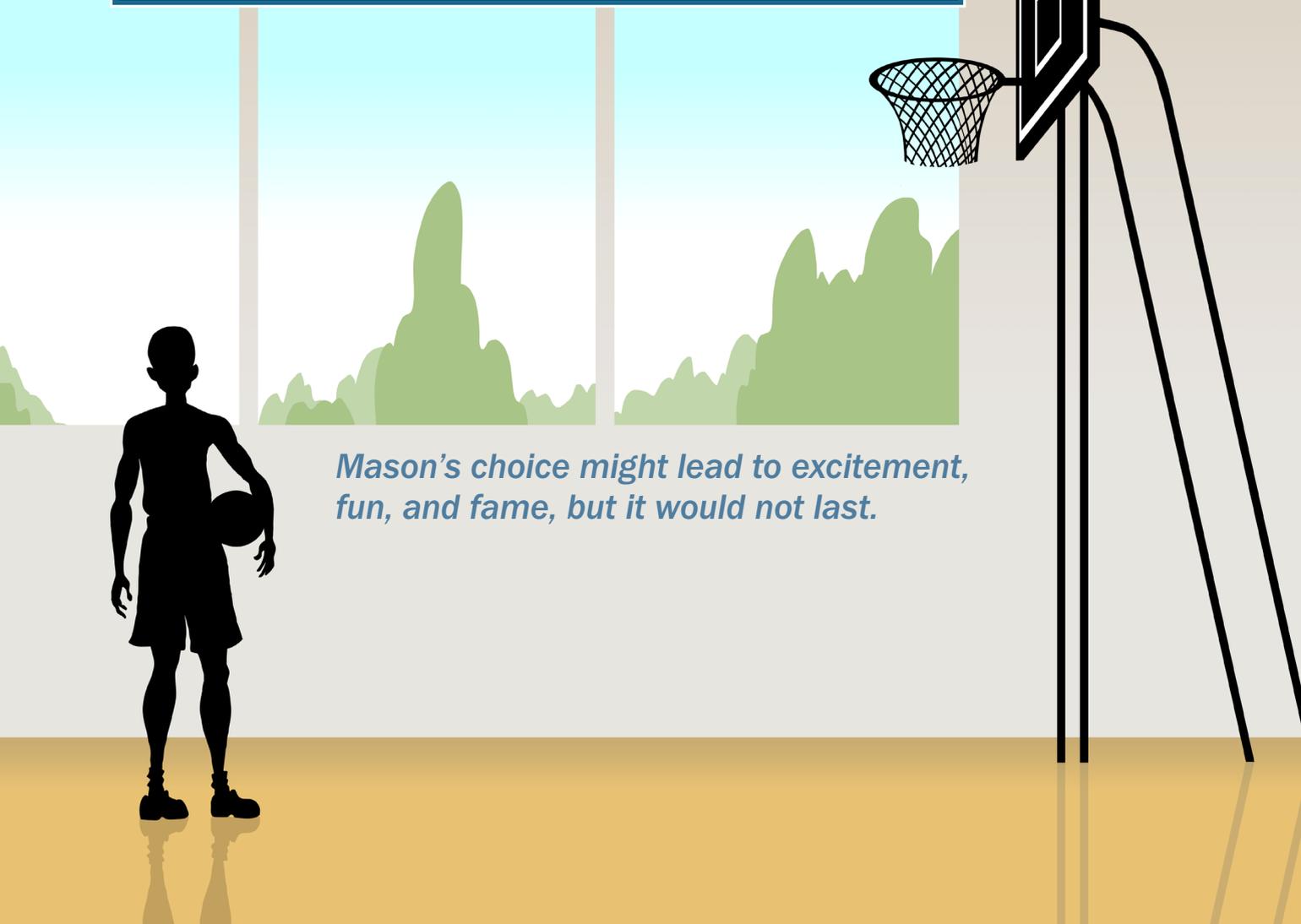


THEN WHAT?

LESSON 36 → Romans 12:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:15-22; 1 John 2:15-17



Mason's choice might lead to excitement, fun, and fame, but it would not last.

“**H**ey, congratulations, Mason! Looks like you’ve got it made; city team coming up, then state. Before you know it, you’ll be a pro, a national celebrity!” Robbie laughed and gave his friend a good-natured shove.

“Wait a minute, I’m not even on the city team yet!” Mason protested laughingly.

“Oh, you’re as good as on,” Robbie responded.

“You’re a sure thing for the power forward spot—you could paper your room with your award certificates!

“You’ll be on the list when the announcements are made for the city team Saturday night, we all know it. See ya then,” Robbie called over his shoulder as he left his friend.

Grabbing his basketball, Mason left the gym. As he headed home a little later, his mind went to the upcoming event Robbie had mentioned. Once again, as he had done so many times in the past weeks, he considered the direction his life was taking. For a number of years he had been sure of where he was headed: high school sports, college sports, and then, hopefully, the pros.



NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SERVING JESUS.

Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. — Ephesians 5:11

Now he wasn't so sure, but by Saturday night he had to be prepared to accept or reject the possible offer that would establish his future direction.

He couldn't deny the excitement he felt as he thought of what an acceptance would mean. More competitions and playoffs, travel, new friends, but also many hours away from home. That meant being away from church and church-related activities too.

Mason thought back to a year ago when he had first become a Christian. What changes God had made in his life and how happy he had been! His parents weren't Christians, but they had been relieved he was no longer into drugs. Even before he was saved he had kept drinking, smoking, and drug use to a minimum because of sports, but they had been getting more of a hold on him than he liked to admit. Then all that was gone in a moment of time. What surprised him was that he really loved going to church. He looked forward to the young people's fellowship times and started to practice with the youth choir.

That first church camp meeting had been great. In fact, he couldn't remember ever having as good a summer as that first one as a Christian. When he had gone back to school for his senior year he faced a lot of decisions. He wanted to take a

definite stand as a Christian and keep God first in his life. One Scripture used as a text in a youth meeting was, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The young minister had said, "This means that if we are true Christians, the things we do, the company we keep, our conversation, and even our dress will honor God. There will be choices to make; the lines will have to be drawn. God delivers us from sin, but the devil is always there to lure us back, usually by something that he convinces us is not really sin. He will say, 'You don't need to be that strict . . . it's really okay . . . everybody's doing it . . .' But if it won't lead you into a closer walk with God, if it won't strengthen you spiritually, it may lead you away from God. Beware!"

The first part of his senior year, Mason's friends were amazed at the changes in him, especially that he hadn't turned out for basketball. But they learned to accept the new Mason. Now and then he would watch the team practice and sometimes the coach would even invite Mason to join in some of the drills. Looking back now, he could see that had been the beginning. Before he knew it, he had become more and more involved.

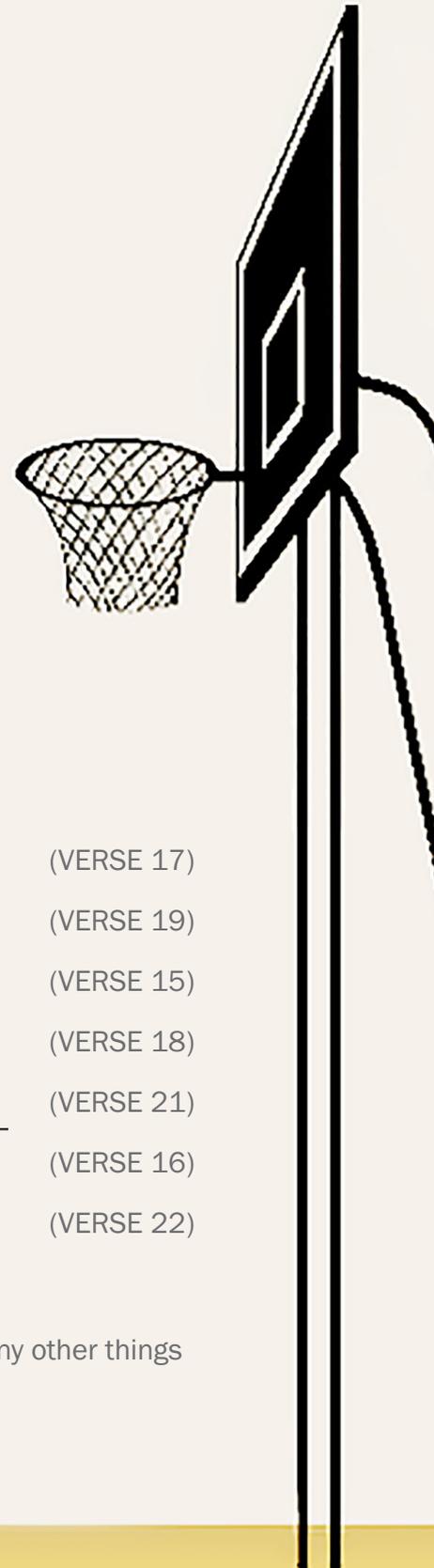
Midseason, one of the best players on the team sprained his foot, and Mason was urged to fill in for him. He remembered how he felt the first time he had to miss choir practice because of the game. Eventually, he was missing church more and more. In fact, sometimes two and three weeks would go by, and he wouldn't make church or Sunday school at all. Even his parents wondered about it.

As Mason walked on, his thoughts became more of a silent prayer. "God, I don't want to let go of what You've given me. I'm already afraid sports have taken too much of my time, and have crowded out more important things. I don't want anything in this world to come ahead of my love for You. Help me, Lord, to make the decision now that will be the right one . . ."

Mason's pace quickened as he neared home. It seemed like a load had lifted from his shoulders. The unrest and indecision were gone. He'd have some explanations to make to the coach, but there would be others to receive the sought-for positions and the acclaim. Down in his heart, Mason was convinced he had chosen something better—the approval of God.

ON GUARD

Unscramble the words below and write them in the acrostic puzzle. As you decipher each word, read the reference verse (they are all from 1 Thessalonians 5) to see what things you should do to maintain your Christian life. When you finish, there will be a special word in the vertical stack of boxes.



APRY					(VERSE 17)
TRISIP					(VERSE 19)
DOGO					(VERSE 15)
KANTSH					(VERSE 18)
VOREP					(VERSE 21)
CEOIJER					(VERSE 16)
SATBAIN					(VERSE 22)

Read through the complete Bible text for this lesson and write down any other things you can do to keep your life in order.