

Super Bowl triumphs

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

The big showdown happens this Sunday at 3:30 p.m. California time — two armies line up to battle. It is an annual ritual that has been happening this time of year for longer than I have been alive, and we will have it on the big screen at Calvary Chapel for anyone wanting to hang out after church to be part of it. We will join with armchair quarterbacks across the county, a chip loaded with dip in one hand and a cold drink in the other, call out the plays, coach from the couch, and experience the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat. It's a Super Bowl party and we are hosting one of the many that will take place this weekend. - But with all of the excitement surrounding our festivity, it seems we have to laugh at ourselves.

Let's be honest. It won't be life-changing — except for the actual participants on the real field in Indianapolis. At our event, some people will barely be interested. Most of the kids will go play outside. Some of our guests will find reasons to hang out talking in the kitchen. Others will only be there to watch the traditional debut of million-dollar commercials. And for many, it's not the love of the sport, but an opportunity to connect with friends. It's a social endeavor that creates a common basis for recreation. For the most part, lives aren't being saved, cancer isn't being cured, nobody is pulling someone out of a burning building, shelter isn't being provided to someone who is houseless, and food isn't being put into the mouth of a starving child. I wonder how many people would gather around wide-screen televisions to watch a show about these things.

It is interesting to observe that many churches are empty on Super Bowl Sunday each year because some guys think it's more important to view the pre-game chatter that takes place all morning long. Other congregations are completely unaffected. I suppose it depends on what matters most to us. Of course, it is difficult to think about football talk without reflecting on Tim Tebow; the controversial Denver Broncos' quarterback who is both loved and hated for his devotion to Jesus Christ. His team isn't playing in this year's Super Bowl so he is using some of this free time to build an orphanage in the Philippines. I love it.

Jesus calls his followers to do things that matter: to make a difference. As the savior of the world, he knew something about this. It would involve humbling ourselves to serve others. Truth and grace are essential components of this — which are uniquely bestowed from Jesus himself (John 1). Getting a brown ball across a line may not matter much in the grand scheme of things. But if you invite someone who needs a friend, or a father figure, to sit alongside you, it might change his world. Maybe the battle isn't on the field as much as in our minds — and the end zone is making good choices.

The New York Giants and the New England Patriots face off this weekend. But every day there is a spiritual battle over the souls of humanity. Love motivated God to send his only begotten son into this world: that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). And this, my friends, is not a game!

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.

Ojai Valley News



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am

Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday

Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View