

# *Get Out of the Stands*

by

Rocky Fleming

***“Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.” Titus 2:2 (ESV)***

I am blessed to be a friend and a fellow *laborer* with some *older* Christian men. According to some definitions, we might not be considered old, but it would be safe to say that we are *older* and we would be a clear example of whom Paul was referencing in his letter to Titus. After all, the new seventy is sixty, and so on. So don't start calling me old, but I am *older* for sure.

My co-laborer *older* friends are some real champions and heroes to me, for they are active, fruitful and still making a real impact on their world around them. There is no letting up with those guys. However, there is a serious issue with most men our age and here is what it is. By in large, I do not see *older* Christian men serving others, much less giving their time and effort to mentor and disciple younger men, which is highly needed in today's environment. Rather, I see these men mostly driven toward doing things that fulfill their own needs and wants and doing what makes them feel good, provided there is little inconvenience to them to get it. I'm not talking about someone who wouldn't know better, for I speak of many *older* Christian men who I have observed. Even if they attend church, a Bible study, or a men's group, I would have to say that most of these men have the clear markings of simply being a fan of somebody's work for Christ, but they are not players in being part of His mission. They show up. They give their support. They write a check every now and then, but that's about all they do. They check off a "to do" list another good thing they joined and they feel they are doing their part. But there is something missing in these guys and until they find it they will always sit in the stands as most fans do, and they will squander the great opportunity that this time of life affords them for making disciples for Christ.

I have attended several men's groups who have a large senior crowd of men in them. They are active attendees, and because of this, the organizers are satisfied that they are doing a good thing in helping the *older* guys be part of something ... that they are helping them grow and be better men. But, these organizers need to take a closer look at their men and they will see that they are lifeless, dull, under challenged and under utilized. I think the diagnosis for this condition would point to *spiritual anemia* in these men's lives, and as with most anemic patients, a change is required. To help the anemic person, a change in diet and a strong supplement may be required. Then when health returns, vitality returns. Involvement returns. Passion returns. Passion for living returns. So what is missing in these men and what do they need to do to change this spiritual anemic condition? Let's make a diagnosis.

How do we diagnose the spiritual condition we are looking at in these men? We do it by observation. Just as a medical doctor would look at symptoms to determine an illness, it is my strong opinion that symptoms of spiritual lethargy and complacency in a Christian show a lack of purpose in a life. When we lack purpose as followers of Christ, we will then have little passion for those things Christ has passion for. You see,

*passion follows purpose*, and our passion or a lack of it would be symptomatic as to whether we know our purpose or not. The *older* men I speak of who show signs of being only a fan of other people's work do not know their purpose, and as a result, they just go through the motions of filling an empty day with a few good things. They are not really pouring their life fully into anything of real value or anyone in need. They have no passion, and it shows. Passion makes us alive and energized for doing something. But it starts with seeing and embracing a purpose that is greater than our self. Once we begin to see this and seek to know our purpose that God has for us, we then begin treating our anemic, spiritual condition, and passion will follow. Did you get that guys? We must embrace a purpose that is greater than our self.

All the *older* men whom I admire and who are not wasting their life have found their purpose. But they didn't find their purpose by seeking purpose for that sake alone, but rather by seeking Christ who then revealed His purpose for them. His purpose became their purpose. This is where we begin to see the dynamic cause and effect rule of how abiding in Christ shows us our purpose and this purpose once pursued then ignites our passion. When we live in our passion, we will not come remotely close to lethargy and complacency unless our problem is a physical condition. Even in that circumstance, we summon up a strength and energy to help us endure and still run the race, for there is strength deep within a man that can be found in the most negative situations when our purpose is greater than our self. The answer for the men I have observed who have little passion for the things of God begins with their leaders doing less spoon-feeding of these men and instead giving to them a clear challenge that in order for them to grow and find the passion they are looking for, they need to become a self-feeders. Stop making it easy for these *older* men to simply come and sit and applaud you and only support your ministry financially. They need more involvement than that. Instead, get them involved by taking them into close proximity with Christ. Show them how true discipleship works and how a true disciple is formed, and then you will see men who will not be content with being a fan. They will come out of the stands and get on the field with you and co-labor with you. Then the real game will start for both of you, and your ministry will launch to new heights as your men team up in making disciples for Christ.

If you are just a "fan" and you are resisting the kind of leadership I am encouraging even though you have people trying to help you, you will eventually get your wish to be left alone, for they will get tired of chasing an *older* man to help him grow in Christ. Other people and their needs will get their attention, and justifiably so. You will then one day find your limited involvement will put you out of the mainstream of life and you will open your eyes and realize that life has passed you by ... and you are alone. You will ask yourself how did it go so fast and then you will look back to see those things that really mattered and that which you gave your life to. Unfortunately, you will not see many things you did that really mattered, and the waste of your life will then become very apparent to you. That's some pretty bad news isn't it? But there is something worse if you think just being a fan cuts it for Jesus. When you leave your comfortable, uninvolved life, you will then have to stand before the King of Kings who then asks you the question, "How did you run your race for ME?" How will you answer Him?

Right now is when you can change things and hear instead, "Well done my good and faithful servant, for I watched you run your race and you did good!" Right now you can do something about your condition and become a player instead of just a fan. But you've got to get out of the stands and get on the race track for this to happen. You've got to find your purpose and passion to compete for Christ. We need *older* men who know how to help younger men. They are waiting for you and someone is watching you to see what you will

do about it. So come on and get out of the stands. We all need you. Read what the Apostle Paul said about it. Maybe that will convince you.

*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9:24 (ESV)*