

Steelers are Super Bowl Champs - Again!!!
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Steelers.com

The Steelers made history when they defeated the Arizona Cardinals 27-23 in Super Bowl XLIII to win their sixth Super Bowl, the first team in NFL history to accomplish that.

Some last minute heroics by quarterback Ben Roethlisberger and Super Bowl MVP Santonio Holmes secured the win, when he scored the go ahead touchdown with just 35 seconds left on the clock.

The Steelers were in control for the majority of the game, but the Cardinals fought back to take a late lead. That's when Roethlisberger and Holmes hooked up for the game-winning drive.

Mike Tomlin – Head Coach, Pittsburgh Steelers

“We care less how others may judge portions of our football team or portions of our football game and are more concerned about the final outcome, which is having one more point than our opponent... The perspective that I share – what it is I do is what I do, it's not who I am. I try to share that with the young people I work with. I think it helps you deal with it all, not only successes but failures. This game and life itself is full of challenges. We met the challenges that were laid before us in terms of the '08 season. It's awesome, it's great, appreciate it, but if you are a legitimate competitor, at the appropriate time you will ready yourself for the challenges that lie ahead in '09 and '10, and what have you. That's the perspective that I have, and I don't ask my guys to do anything that I don't.”

What, you thought I'd talk about something else?! No chance – How about those **STEELERS!!!!**

Actually, watching the Super Bowl which was so intense and full of great action (especially the last 10 minutes) got me thinking about the “*Super Bowl*” that we're all in collectively and individually.

Collectively, we're part of something amazing that God is doing called New Life Fellowship – To establish in Saratoga a healthy spiritual community that teaches and models a vibrant faith in Jesus Christ, exhibits grace, and

experiences relationships!

“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”
(Hebrews 10:24-25, NLT)

Some of us hesitate to commit ourselves to developing an intentional plan of growth that requires accountability or relationship with others because we believe spiritual growth is a personal and private matter. We choose to believe each person develops in his or her own way at his or her own rate. But this is an aberration from the truth. The idolatry of individualism has influenced even the way we think about spiritual growth. So much of the teaching on spiritual formation is self-centered and self-focused without any reference to our relationship to other Christians. This is completely unbiblical and ignores much of the New Testament. The truth is that Christians need relationships to grow. We don't grow in isolation from others. We develop in the context of fellowship.

Over and over again in the New Testament we find this basic truth: Believers need relationships with each other to grow!

“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another ...” (Hebrews 10:24-25, NIV)

God intends for us to grow up in a family!

Individually, God calls us to pursue growth in our walk with Him. And the truth is that growth in the human soul requires a **commitment** to grow. A person must want to grow, decide to grow, and make an effort to grow.

Therefore, spiritual growth begins with a decision. It doesn't have to be a complex decision, but it does have to be sincere. When Jesus' followers decided to choose his way, they didn't understand all the implications of their decision. They simply expressed a desire to follow him, and that was the beginning of an exciting journey of the soul. Jesus took that simple but sincere decision and built on it.

Paul offers insight into spiritual growth while speaking to people who already believe:

“... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God

*who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose”
(Philippians 2:12-13, NIV)*

Notice that it says “*work out*” – not “*work on*” – your salvation. There is nothing you can do to save yourself spiritually; Christ took care of that by his life, death, and resurrection. The important thing to note is that God has a part in our growth – but so do we. We must make an intentional effort to grow.

Or, to put it another way, we all have a responsibility to train ourselves to be godly, to strive for victory in our walk with Christ, our faith, our perseverance, etc...

Here’s some more food for thought...

“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:7-14, NIV)

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Hebrews 12:1-3, NIV)

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8, NIV)

Be Strong, Be Courageous, Be Fearless – and remember...

Christ IS All!

Pastor Mark