

## MONDAY MANNA

13 June 2016

### WORKING, PLAYING THROUGH THE 'FOURTH QUARTER'

By Jim Mathis

In watching sports, whether football, baseball, basketball, hockey, soccer, or even auto racing, one thing becomes obvious: You have to play all four quarters, periods, innings or halves, whatever they are called. It is good to be leading your opponent in the first portion of the contest, but you still have to play the entire game. More often than not, the last minutes of a game – or in baseball, the final inning – are important. Sometimes the final seconds, or the last at-bat, determine the outcome.

I am now in my 60's. Any way you look at it, I have entered the fourth quarter of my life, certainly the fourth quarter of my 60-plus years. Anything beyond 80 years is probably "overtime." Even though I have lived a productive life, running out the clock or calling timeout at this stage just does not seem very sportsmanlike, even if I feel I had mounted a sizable lead going entering this last quarter.

Many people my age, however, have already started eyeing the time clock, figuring they can coast to the finish line. That is, if they have not already given up or headed for the showers. The interesting thing for me is I feel as good as I ever have. I am not tired, feel more creative, and definitely know a lot more than I once did. Realistically it may be time to revise my game plan, make better choices, or start to play as if the outcome of the game is on the line. But to run out the clock, maybe find a cosy rocking chair somewhere or hone my skills at shuffleboard? I do not think so.

In the Bible, the apostle Paul used the analogy of life being like running a race, emphasising the idea that in competing, we must run all the way to the end. In I Corinthians 9:24 he said, *"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize."*

The writer of the book of Hebrews made a very similar point: *"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"* (Hebrews 12:1).

Many of us seem to have embraced the idea that at some point in life we can shift into neutral, coast, and still "win the race." This is a relatively new concept, dating from the start of the Industrial Age. It probably developed from the idea that 65-year-olds were not capable of going down in the mines, operating heavy machinery, or continuing to do strenuous activity better suited to younger bodies. Or perhaps it was just a "benefit" introduced by the unions to give younger folks an opportunity to assume the jobs of older people. Today, with the advancements of technology, ideas like these are outdated unless there is some significant disability or physical limitations interfere with the ability to work.

As for me, I intend to play and run hard until the last second on the clock, the final whistle, Gabriel's trumpet, or whatever it is that stops the game for me. After all, we owe it to the coach, our team, and ourselves – ultimately, to God who put us here on earth. That is why we were put here, to persevere and play the game until the end.

---

**Postal Address:**

PO Box 8168,  
Woolloongabba, QLD, 4102

**ABN:** 42 005 622 515

**Office Address:**

Suite CBMC,  
Sung Do Lawyers,  
12 Annerley Road,  
Woolloongabba, QLD 4102

**Email:**

admin@cbmcaustralia.com.au

**Phone:**

07 3172 9365

## Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What is your thinking about retirement? Are you looking forward to it and making plans for when that time comes? If so, what have you concluded – at least to this point?
2. Even if you are a younger person, many years away from any possibility of retiring from full-time employment, it can be meaningful to consider how we intend to use our time, energy and skills while we are “in the game.” What are your thoughts about this?
3. Do you agree with the comparison of competing to the very end of a sporting event with the challenge of persevering through the rigors of everyday life and work? Why or why not?
4. The verse from the book of Hebrews speaks about “everything that hinders and entangles”? What might be some of those things for you? How can you overcome such obstacles? Or is it even worth trying to do so?

### NOTE:

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions of the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

- Luke 21:14-19;
- John 19:30;
- Romans 5:3-5;
- 2 Timothy 4:6-8;
- James 1:2-4

*Jim Mathis is the owner of a photography studio in Overland Park, Kansas, specialising in executive, commercial and theatrical portraits, and operates a school of photography. He formerly was a coffee shop manager and executive director of CBMC in Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri.*