



A WINNER!

LESSON 53 → 1 Peter 5:5-6; Luke 14:7-11; Proverbs 29:23

How far would Tylonn's confidence in his own abilities take him?

Tylonn Wood had one fault. He thought he was a little better than anyone else. His skill in sports made him a natural leader, but he was always bragging about what he could do. Tylonn knew from Sunday school that the Bible says in James 4:6, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." But he always did so well it was hard for him not to feel like he was a little better than the rest.

One day some of his friends got together and talked this over. "Tylonn thinks he's so good," said Brayden. "I think it's time we taught him a few things. What do you say?"

"Yeah!" they all shouted.

"He needs a good dunk in the river," cried TJ.

"Aw, c'mon you guys, get serious," Brayden interrupted. "I've got a better idea! Why don't we try to beat him in the Big Mac football contest? I'm going to start working every night on my punting. TJ, you've got a good arm—you can pass a mile. Why don't we all do some extra practicing. Wesley, you get busy on your place kicks. I'm sure you could win. Last time you kicked only three yards less than he did. That will show him he isn't so great. What do you think?"

"Sounds good to me," said TJ. The others agreed.

During the days that followed the boys spent as much time as they could, practicing on their own events. Finally the day of the Big Mac contest arrived. All the boys were excited. They knew that each winner got

a Big Mac trophy, plus a free hamburger and milkshake.

Early that morning, Tylonn called Brayden and told him he would stop by about 9:00. "The contest starts at 10:00," he said, "and we don't want to be late!"

"Okay, I'll see you at 9:00." After Tylonn hung up the phone, he ran to his room and started to look for his cleats and his kicking tee.

These contests are going to be easy, he thought. I don't think I even need to bother warming up. His mind traveled over the events that were to take place that day. He imagined himself passing and kicking the ball farther than everyone else. He visualized himself on the winner's platform. How proud he was going to be!



JESUS, HELP ME TO WALK HUMBLY.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.
— James 4:10

He slid down the bannister and ran through the kitchen. Grabbing a banana, he called to his mom, “Don’t need a lunch today. I’ll probably have two or three hamburgers after the contest. See ye later.” As the boys got to the park they split up to enter their names for the different events. Soon they were all back together again. “Did you sign up yet, Tylonn?” asked Brayden.

“Yeah, I’m gonna try for all three.”

“Good luck!” said Brayden, as he winked at the others. Just then they heard the whistle. “Time for the place-kicking event to begin!” the voice blared over the loudspeaker. “Tylonn Wood will kick first.” There sure are a lot of guys here today, Tylonn thought to himself, as he moved out to the thirty-yard line to place the ball carefully on the kicking tee. But that doesn’t bother me, I’m sure I won’t have any trouble winning.

Tylonn had not counted on what happened next.

As he was approaching the ball to make his first place-kick attempt he missed seeing a narrow but deep hole in the turf. His foot caught, twisting his ankle, and down he went. Pain shot through his ankle. “Oh, my ankle!” cried Tylonn. “I think I sprained my ankle. Maybe I broke it.” Quickly,



some of the officials came and carried him to a bench on the sidelines where they examined his ankle. “Someone call his folks,” said one of the men. “I’ll stay here with Tylonn. Tell the next contestant to go ahead and kick.”

Tylonn was sick. His ankle hurt terribly, and was starting to swell already. Now he wasn’t going to be able to compete at all! Why did this have to happen now?

Before long, Tylonn’s folks came and got him. Later that day, Brayden, TJ, and Wesley stopped by Tylonn’s house to see how he was. “How’s your ankle? Did you break it?” asked TJ.

“No,” said Tylonn, “it’s just a bad sprain. How were the contests?”

“Well,” Brayden began, “TJ got first place in the passing event and Wesley won in the place-kicking.”

“You’re kidding!” said Tylonn. “How far did you kick?”

“Forty-two yards,” said Wesley, “eight more than anyone else. Isn’t that even more than you’ve ever done, Tylonn?”

“Boy, I’ll say,” said Tylonn. “Well, how about you Brayden? Did you win the punting contest?”

“No, but I came in second.”

“Wow, that’s really good, you guys. Know what? Since I’ve been lying here today, I’ve been doing some thinking. I believe God let this happen to teach me a lesson. Maybe I’m not as good as I’d like to think. God has been showing me that He hasn’t been very happy with all the pride I’ve had.”

“You know something Tylonn, we were going to teach you a lesson today. We’ve been practicing the last few Saturdays so we could beat you. Maybe God wasn’t happy with our attitude either! I think this has taught us all a lesson,” said Brayden.

“Well, I’m going to ask the Lord to help me be better from now on,” said Tylonn. “You guys let me know if my head starts getting too big for my hat.”

“Okay Tylonn, we sure will. Maybe we can all help each other.”

“Thanks,” said Tylonn. “I’m sure glad you guys came over.”

