

# 7-Day **MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL**

## Bible Study

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*with UNPACKIN' it Ministries*

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Bible Study Tools



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# GREAT AT WALKS

Juan Soto is undoubtedly one of the best players in Major League Baseball today. Though he's only 25 years old, he's already won a World Series and a batting title, and has been named an All-Star three times.

Although Soto's talent is unquestioned and his stats are very impressive, interestingly, he's often the league leader in walks.

Walks are valuable because they show that Soto knows how to get on base and put his team in a position to score runs. So what does it take for Soto to be so effective at being walked?

He knows what pitches not to swing at.

He has the eye to know the difference between a hittable ball and one that's not worth it.

He's willing to stand there and let pitches that aren't the right ones go past him.

He's willing to wait for a better pitch or pass on pitches to get on base.

He's learned not to swing at everything that comes his way.



Juan Soto embraces “the walk” and shows a willingness not to swing at pitches out of the strike zone.

When it comes to our own lives, we also have “pitches” or opportunities that come our way, and we need to know which ones not to swing at.

We have to discern whether or not an opportunity is one that God is leading us to pursue or one that would be wiser to pass us by. Sometimes we have to be willing to wait for a better “pitch” and realize we can’t swing at everything that comes our way.

With all of life’s temptations thrown our way, we have to be willing to “walk” as we let the wrong pitches that are out of the strike zone “go by us.”

Just like Soto has an uncommon eye as a hitter, thankfully as followers of Jesus, we have an uncommon eye too. We have access to God’s wisdom and the ability to see the difference between a hittable ball and one we should avoid.

Ephesians 5:15-17 tells us to “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

Today, as we embrace our walk with Jesus, let’s use the uncommon eye we have to make wise decisions, pass on temptation, and wait for opportunities that are clearly in God’s will.

## Prayer

*Heavenly Father,*

*Thank you for helping me walk wisely. Help me know the difference between good opportunities and the best opportunities. I pray You’ll give me an eye to see situations I need to avoid and the power to resist temptation.*

*In Jesus’ name, I pray,*

*Amen.*







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Back in the 2022 offseason, an ESPN.com headline read, “Anthony Rizzo’s Offseason Training Regimen Includes Getting Hit By Pitches.”

In the article, writer Joe DeMartino mentioned an Instagram story that showed Rizzo getting purposely pelted in a batting cage by pitches similar to Adam Sandler in the movie, *Happy Gilmore*.

It makes sense that Rizzo would prepare his body in the offseason to take the inevitable pitches he’ll get hit by when they start flying at him even faster during the baseball sea-

son. That way, he’s ready to stand strong in the batter’s box and withstand the hits.

When it comes to our own lives, we know we’re going to be hit by a lot of “pitches” when it comes to trials, tribulations, challenges, and struggles.

Jesus tells us in John 16:33, “...Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows...”

Since we can anticipate more challenging “pitches” coming our way in future seasons, how are we training and preparing to be hit by the inevitable “pitches” of life?

We stand firm while getting hit by the storms of life when our faith is deeply rooted in Jesus and His ways. We train and develop a firm foundation by knowing, trusting, obeying, memorizing, meditating, and studying God's Word.

As Jesus says in Matthew 7:24-25, "Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock."

This preparation allows us to "stand in the batterer's box" and withstand being hit by pitches from the enemy. Although it's discouraging

to face the reality of our broken world with all of its suffering, we can remain prepared to handle what comes our way while finding hope and peace in Jesus.

He tells us in John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Today, let's rejoice in the victory we have in Jesus and also remember that "These troubles and sufferings of ours are, after all, quite small and won't last very long. Yet this short time of distress will result in God's richest blessing upon us forever and ever!" (2 Corinthians 4:17, TLB).

## Prayer

*Heavenly Father,*

*Thank You for Your power and strength that enables me to withstand the storms of life. Please help me train spiritually to handle the inevitable difficulties and temptations that are sure to come. I pray You'll help me stand firm as I continue to build a firm foundation on You and Your Word.*

*In Jesus' name, I pray,*

*Amen.*





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Through their first 36 games of the 2023 season, the Boston Red Sox had gone 21-15 and far exceeded everyone's expectations.

With 14 come-from-behind wins, their offense produced in different ways, and multiple players contributed. Masataka Yoshida and Justin Turner especially stood out during the team's strong start.

At that very time, however, Tom Verducci wrote in an article on SI.com arguing the way that Boston was winning wasn't sustainable.

Verducci expressed his concerns by writing, "Red Sox starters are 13–14 with a 5.89 ERA.

No team in today's game can hit enough to cover poor starting pitching. Not the Red Sox, especially when their offense relies on so many players still establishing themselves. For now, they have a hot hand."

Verducci's prediction proved to be correct, as Boston's bats would eventually cool, leading to the Red Sox finishing last in the AL East.

This can serve as a parallel for us when it comes to what's sustainable in life. Some of us try to "win" in life with our own strength, attempting to control things and juggling too much at a time. We hit the ball all over the field so to speak!

Although we get away with being busy and self-reliant with a “hot hand” for a while, eventually we discover the way we’re winning isn’t sustainable.

According to God’s Word, we need proper rest in our lives. Psalm 127:2 (TLB) explains, “It is senseless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, fearing you will starve to death; for God wants His loved ones to get their proper rest.”

The “all hitting, no pitching” approach to life doesn’t last long and we must drop our over-working and self-reliance as we realize we can’t keep doing things on our own.

Thankfully, we can live a fruitful life with eternal purpose and good balance when we

fix our eyes on Christ and fully rely on His strength.

Jesus says in John 15:5, “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing.”

In baseball, winning without strong starting pitching isn’t sustainable. Likewise, self-reliance and busyness aren’t sustainable for a meaningful life as we follow Jesus.

Today, let’s admit our weaknesses and confess our sins as we ask God for forgiveness and strength to move forward with His winning formula. As we abide in Jesus and rest in Him, we have everything we need to sustain a life of faith and obedience.

## Prayer

*Heavenly Father,*

*Please help me abide in Jesus because I know I can do nothing apart from Him. Forgive me for the ways I’ve operated and the wrong patterns in my life that aren’t sustainable. Please show me the best path forward as I choose faith and obedience.*

*In Jesus’ name, I pray,*

*Amen.*







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# BE RELENTLESS

No team in Major League Baseball got off to a hotter start in 2023 than the Tampa Bay Rays.

Behind an impressive display of offensive fireworks, the Rays eventually tied the MLB record for most consecutive wins to start a season, not losing until their 14th game.

Although it's not just about how you start the season, but how you finish, it's still fascinating that the record is 13-0. A team hadn't done that in a long time.

During the Rays' 13-game winning streak,

Josh Lowe said during a post-game interview, "This team is having a lot of fun right now; we're doing what we need to do every single night."

He further noted that the team had been "relentless" in their approach.

The word that seemed to define the Rays is "relentless," which can mean persistent, constant, steady, unceasing, single-minded, purposeful, and resolute. This is a powerful word, and when a team rallies around that kind of mindset, significant winning is a result.



In our own lives, being relentless is extremely valuable – especially when it comes to following Jesus. We must be persistent, devoted, and unceasing in prayer, along with constant in our joy and resolute in our hope in Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 tells us to “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Romans 12:10-12 challenges us to, “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

We can be encouraged to be purposeful, single-minded, and steady in our faith in the One

who relentlessly loves us, saves us, is always with us, and is merciful toward us.

Colossians 1:22-23 says, “Yet now He has reconciled you to Himself through the death of Christ in His physical body. As a result, He has brought you into His own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before Him without a single fault. But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don’t drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as God’s servant to proclaim it.”

Today, let’s be relentless as we pursue and follow Jesus, and stand firm in the truth of the Gospel.

## Prayer

*Heavenly Father*

*I desire to be relentless as I stand firm in Your love and truth. I need the Holy Spirit to strengthen, guide, and empower me to remain steady, persistent, and constant. Help me to pray without ceasing and rejoice always.*

*In Jesus’ name, I pray,*

*Amen.*





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In 2023, the Texas Rangers won the World Series for the first time in franchise history!

Following heartbreaking losses in the 2010 and 2011 World Series, the Rangers trended downhill, losing as many as 102 games in 2021 and showing little direction toward future success.

Even throughout the 2023 season, the team's ace pitcher, Jacob deGrom, missed most of the season due to injury after just six starts, and star Corey Seager missed over 40 games due to injury.

Texas also went down 3-2 against the defending champion Astros after a gut-wrenching game-five loss in the ALCS, but then convincingly won two games in Houston to advance to the Fall Classic.

Everything about the Texas franchise and its team was hopeless before they made it to the 2023 World Series, and yet, rejoicing won out in the end.

Born as sinful people before a Holy God, our lives are marked by hopelessness. To make matters worse, the testimony of Scripture

makes it clear that we can't dig ourselves out of our hopelessness as sinful people.

But the good news for us as followers of Jesus is that we're promised to go from hopelessness to rejoicing. Our lives don't have to end in the hopelessness of being a sinner and enemy of God.

Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:15, "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost."

The reality is that despite our hopelessness as enemies of God, He offers us hope in salvation.

Romans 10:9 says, "That if you confess with

your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

God, in His great love, desires to save sinners and has made hope available to us. He calls us to repent of our sins and place our faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ who died the death we deserved, and His righteousness covers us if we're in Him by faith.

Though we were once hopeless, we now rejoice! Though once enemies of God, now we're part of His kingdom forever!

So today, let's "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer" (Romans 12:12).

## Prayer

*Father,*

*Thank you that You are my hope in life. I rejoice because You have saved me.  
I rejoice because I am secure in You. Help me trust and believe this truth.  
In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*







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Spring training provides an excellent opportunity for Major League pitchers to perfect their arsenal of pitches each year.

Pitchers can intentionally work on the nuances of their craft without worrying as much about the results. By the time the regular season rolls around, they just want to see their fastball “pop” and their breaking ball have movement.

However, for pitchers to be successful once the regular season begins, there’s more involved than just executing pitches. They also have to know which pitches to throw in which situation.

Even though pitchers might have all of the technical skills required to thrive, failing to select the appropriate pitch limits their productivity.

Similarly, as followers of Jesus, we must know which “pitch” is best in each situation when it comes to ministering to others and giving the appropriate counsel to those in need. We can have the knowledge of the truth, but we must have wisdom and discernment to know which truth to apply to a given situation.

This sentiment is echoed in Ephesians 4:29: “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building



up, *as fits the occasion*, that it may give grace to those who hear” (emphasis added).

The first step in offering sound biblical counsel to those in need is knowing the Bible. We’ll have a difficult time sharing biblical truth with someone else if we don’t first know it ourselves. We have to understand the different “itches” so to speak.

But the second step is understanding which truth we should apply to the situation at hand. Is a person discouraged and disappointed? Perhaps it “fits the occasion” to share a Scripture that highlights the hope we have as believers.

Is a person acting selfishly? Maybe it “fits the occasion” to share a Scripture that allows them to see how God detests this kind of be-

havior, and how Jesus demonstrated the importance of living a life of humility and sacrificial service.

Sometimes we may even have to ask ourselves if the person we’re talking to is a believer. If not, the most appropriate thing we can share with that person is the Good News of salvation that’s offered through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

While looking to minister to those around us today, let’s take some time to properly assess the situation so we can be certain we’re responding in the best possible manner, and “throwing the right pitch at the right time.”

As Proverbs 15:23 says, “Everyone enjoys a fitting reply; it is wonderful to say the right thing at the right time!”

## Prayer

*Heavenly Father,*

*Please help me to intentionally grow in my biblical understanding, and show me how to best minister to others by sharing the appropriate truths at the right time. Thank you that Your Word is powerful and effective in bringing about real change.*

*In Jesus’ name, I pray,*

*Amen.*





# WHEN THE PRESSURE IS ON

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The 2023 Major League Baseball postseason wasn't very friendly to the top-finishing teams of the regular season standings. With a cumulative record of 1-13, these poor post-season performances serve as a friendly reminder that there's a big difference between playing well when the stakes are relatively low, and executing at a high level when the pressure is on.

Ultimately, the true test of a team's quality is determined by how they perform when the pressure is at its highest. Sometimes teams don't fix underlying flaws while they're winning during the regular season, but then when they face challenges during the post-

season, they respond poorly, revealing unresolved issues.

Similarly, the true test of how we're doing as followers of Jesus is best seen by how we respond "when the pressure is on." Do we rise to the occasion with faith or do challenging circumstances bring out sinful responses?

Pressure-packed situations don't have to lead to sinful thoughts and behaviors, but the reality is they may reveal underlying and unresolved issues or attitudes that have been previously dormant and not properly dealt with.

In Luke 6:45, Jesus says, "A good person pro-



duces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.”

In other words, the true reason we might respond with angry words during a tense conversation isn’t that the situation created the anger, but rather, we had harbored anger in our hearts the entire time. When the pressure’s on, it simply reveals what’s already going on inside us.

Proverbs 27:19 confirms this reality: “As water reflects the face, so one’s life reflects the heart.”

As we seek to live lives that honor God, it’s vitally important we pay attention to how we respond “when the pressure is on.” We may

not always like what we see, but God is graciously using challenging and difficult situations to help us see the sin He has seen all along.

Yet, it’s up to us to take responsibility for our failure, address the underlying flaws, receive God’s grace, and rely on His strength to respond correctly in difficult situations.

So today, let’s own up to how we respond “when the pressure is on.” Let’s be accountable for our sinful responses, acknowledging they are simply revealing issues that have existed in our hearts.

Having done so, let’s confess our sins and demonstrate true repentance by turning to God for the grace to live in obedience to His Word.

## Prayer

*Heavenly Father,*

*Thank you for using challenging situations to reveal what’s in my heart.*

*Please help me accurately assess the sin in my life so I might repent and look to You for grace to walk according to Your ways.*

*In Jesus’ name, I pray,*

*Amen.*

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