

## **JACKIE ROBINSON, JASON COLLINS AND JESUS: LEGACY LESSONS**

### **A JOURNEY THROUGH A JUNGLE**

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Life is filled with twist and turns, choices and consequences, difficulties and sometimes even demonic opposition. For many, life is like a journey in a jungle, where there is danger and darkness lurking around the corner; the unknown and unimaginable; temptation and potential torment. Test, temptations, obstacles, hurdles, demons, distractions, disappointment and difficulties will inevitably cross our path.

Jason Collins is not alone in terms of struggling with inner conflict or living with a secret. Our secret may not be his secret. But many of us deal daily with “many a conflict, many doubts.” Battles within and fears without. Bursting on the scene of world history last week was a relatively obscure professional basketball player, unknown to the public at large. He is now internationally famous and will forever be recorded in history as the first professional male athlete of a major sport to step up to the plate and say: “I am gay.”

We now know Jason’s secret and struggle based on his own admission from his teenage years through today. We now know how Jason dealt with his secret.

Let me ask you two questions: (1) What is the secret, challenge, test or demonic opposition that you face? (2) How will you ultimately resolve or make peace with the challenge and test that’s in your path? How you deal with your demon will determine your destiny. It will also impact the destiny of others. Our ability to defeat our demons and to conquer our distractions will result in our legacy.

Jackie Robinson, Jason Collins and Jesus each faced demonic opposition and responded in different ways. We can learn lessons from each of them. Again, how you handle your demon will determine your destiny. Let’s examine these men; the demons they faced, and the legacies they left. What lessons can we learn from their demonic encounters?

#### **I. THE DIFFICULTY AND DEMON THAT JACKIE ROBINSON FACED WAS RACISM.**

The Bible is clear that God gives every man ever born gifts and talents. Jackie Robinson was a product of a broken home. His dad abandoned the family at an early age. Yet, he did not let that become a distraction and a detour from him developing and maximizing his athletic gifts. Robinson was graced with tremendous athletic talents. He earned an athletic scholarship to

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May 5, 2013

UCLA after having a two-year successful stint at Pasadena Junior College. Robinson became the first athlete at UCLA to win varsity letters in four sports: Baseball, basketball, football and track.

However, while at Pasadena Junior College, he was arrested for vocally disputing the detention of a Black friend by the police. He faced the demon of racism in the military. He served in a segregated Army in 1942 and was initially denied admission to Officers Candidate School in spite of a race-neutral policy change for the school adopted in July 1941. On July 6, 1944 Robinson was ordered to the back of the bus on an Army-commissioned unsegregated bus line. He refused. He was then charged with public drunkenness (although he did not drink) and was court martialed. He was later exonerated. He faced repeated acts of racism throughout his major league baseball career.

How did he overcome this demon? John the writer reported that brothers and sisters in the kingdom of God (Revelation 1:9) can overcome demonic assaults by “the blood of the Lamb...by the word of their testimony...and by not loving “their lives to the death” (Revelation 12:11).

Jackie Robinson was a man who had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jackie Robinson was a man who often used his weekends in the military to visit Rev. Karl Downs, President of Sam Huston College—now Huston-Tillotson University—in Austin, TX, while stationed in Ft. Hood in Killeen. Jackie read his Bible and would allow the Bible to read him. The “word of their testimony” means to apply Scripture to the demon you are facing. “The Blood of the Lamb” means to plead the blood, praise God for the blood and to declare victory over a situation because of the blood. Jackie attended church regularly and participated in the Lord’s Supper service. That is one way to defeat demons that are attacking you. Jackie sang the great hymns of the church about the blood of Jesus. That is another way to go on offense against the demons that are out to destroy you. Jackie based his salvation and his right standing with God on the blood of Jesus.

If you want power over the enemy and to defeat demons that seek to destroy you, I dare you to plead the blood, praise God for the blood, sing about the blood, and apply the blood over your heart, home and health by faith. The Bible says that you can overcome by the blood.

Throughout his career Jackie had to restrain himself from not responding to racism with racism; and he was able to do so, because of the character of Christ in his life, because of his faith in the blood. I Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Robinson had a reputation at Pasadena Junior College and the military for combativeness in the face of racial antagonism. By the time he got

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May 5, 2013

to the Brooklyn dodgers, though tempted, he'd learned to defeat this demon by not fighting back and trusting the Lord for victory.

Jackie met Rev. Karl Downs when his family moved to Pasadena. Rev. Downs was serving as pastor at the Scott United Methodist Church. Rev. Downs served as a life-long mentor to Jackie Robinson. Jackie's father was not at his wedding, but Rev. Downs was there. Jackie overcame the demon of racism and developed into manhood and maturity by looking to Jesus as an example and receiving mentorship from Rev. Downs.

The legacy of Jackie Robinson teaches us how to combat the demon of racism by looking to Jesus as our example and exercising our gifts with excellence.

## **II. THE DIFFICULTY AND DEMON THAT JASON COLLINS FACE(D) IS HOMOSEXUALITY.**

Jason Collins is a man I respect for being a law-abiding citizen, a great son to his parents and brother to his twin. Collins has been an excellent role model as a citizen, student and athlete. Earning a degree from Stanford is no small feat. I sincerely celebrate and appreciate his life successes. Jason has been blessed to play 12 consecutive years in the NBA. Collins says he is a Christian; he grew up in a Christian home and taught Sunday School alongside his parents. I believe a person can be a Christian and struggle with the sin of homosexuality. Completely yielding to it and accepting homosexuality as a lifestyle is another question, though.

I want to address Jason directly for a second. Jason, God loves you. We love you. We admire your family. But Jason, you are no Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson fought and conquered the demon that tried to overtake him. You have succumbed or surrendered to the demon that was after you. Jackie Robinson didn't wait until he was 34 to tell us that he was Black. Jason, you waited until you were 34 to tell us that you are gay. There is no biblical, biological or scientific evidence to support that anyone is born gay. Romans 1:26-27 clearly indicates that homosexuality is a choice.

The real hero of the Jason Collins story is [Chris Broussard](#). The following is what he had to say about this matter, and that sums it up:

“When asked if he believes that Jason Collins is a Christian, he said this: ‘Personally, I don't believe that you can live an openly homosexual lifestyle or an openly premarital sex between heterosexuals, if you're openly living that type of lifestyle, then the Bible

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says you know them by their fruits, it says that's a sin. If you're openly living in unrepentant sin, whatever it may be -- not just homosexuality, [but] adultery, fornication, premarital sex between heterosexuals, whatever it may be -- I believe that's walking in open rebellion to God and to Jesus Christ. So I would not characterize that person as a Christian because I don't think the Bible would characterize them as a Christian."

Just like Satan filled Ananias' heart to lie, although he was saved (Acts 5:3), and Ananias yielded his heart to Satan, I believe that Jason has yielded his heart to Satan and the temptation of homosexuality. If he comes to the point of repentance, he can be forgiven and restored, and I pray that he does. Because the blood of Jesus covers all sin, including homosexuality.

The heart of the problem as it relates to homosexuality and other sexual sins—is the problem of the heart. When our love for God is stronger than our lust for sin, we will be able to conquer our flesh. Yielding to our flesh and not fighting back is a cop out.

The legacy of Jason Collins is to teach Christians how not to deal with the demon of homosexuality by yielding to it and openly accepting and affirming it. There is nothing Christian about yielding to homosexuality and affirming it.

### **III. THE DEMONS THAT JESUS FACED WERE DEMONS OF DISTRACTION. MOST OF US FACE DEMONS OF DISTRACTION.**

Satan was constantly trying to get Jesus off His game. In the wilderness the devil tempted Jesus while on a forty day fast with the lust of the flesh (bread), the pride of life (athletic prowess) (Matthew 4:6-7), and the lust of the eyes (Matthew 4:8-11). Satan used Peter to try and distract Jesus from the cross (Matthew 16:21-23). Jesus overcame the distractions of the enemy by focusing on prayer (Matthew 26:36-46). We too can conquer the demons that we face through the Word of God, the Blood of the Lamb, self-denial, and the power of prayer. Jesus faced demons attempting to distract him from the will of God and dying on the cross.

The legacy of Jesus teaches us how to maintain our focus on the will of God and not to be distracted or detoured from God's plan for our lives.