Defeat Effect

Julie is in a dilemma that she cannot find an easy way out of. It is not only affecting her athletically but it also, emotionally, she is a wreck. Her problem – the university basketball team she plays on is 3 and 12; yes, that means three wins and twelve losses. Last night, the team lost to an in-state rival that they had beaten the last two years. Julie feels almost guilty for her being depressed over this. It seems so minor given the problems that other girls she knows are facing.

Barb is her best friend from high school and now her roommate at the university. While waiting for the bus to head off to class, she blurts out, “Barb, I think I am going to quit the basketball team.”

For a moment, the two of them just stand there. Then, Barb responds, “What? You must be kidding. Basketball is your life. Do you mean at the end of the year?”

“No, just as soon as I can get up the nerve to tell Coach Jones,” she answers.

“I think we need to talk about this,” Barb continues. “This is a big time decision. You may be just upset about last night’s loss. Have you talked to your dad?”

Julie shrugs, “Are you kidding? His only daughter quitting the sport they both had committed all those years to. It would destroy him.”

After the shock wears off, Barb pleads hesitantly as they both get off the bus, “Let’s get together Thursday when you get back in town from your game. I want to talk this through with you. Promise me you will not do anything until after we talk.”

“OK,” she says, “but I don’t think that talking will make a difference.”

As Barb walks away from Julie, she really does understand her problem. Julie comes from an athletic family. She was a gifted athlete even as a small child. Her dad saw that in her and directed her to basketball because of both her athleticism and her likely size given the family genes. In elementary school, Julie not only played basketball but also was a very good softball player. It was in seventh grade when she fully committed herself to basketball. This dedication involved not only playing on elite teams but also attending camps and working with specialized coaching. By the time she was in high school, Julie was familiar with success. Her high school team was in the state tournament (middle size school bracket) both of her last two years. More importantly in terms of exposure to college scouts, Julie was a regular on the state-wide select team.
Following several years of not making it to the NCAA tournament, the nearby university signed Coach Jones. He had built a strong resume of turning around teams at smaller universities. It was widely expected that he would do the same at this university. As strong recruiter, he basically promised this result. In his first year, Coach Jones had made it a point of recruiting Julie as part of a group that would be pivotal in this turnaround. He personally assured her that she would have a good shot at being a starter by the end of her freshman year. Julie was so impressed with Coach Jones and his vision that she committed early.

Coach Jones kept his promise. In her freshman year, Julie was able to first come off the bench at mid-year and then started the last four games. The team record was 15-17 that year. The future looked bright as the team really came together late in the year. Despite this promising start to Julie’s career, the next two years did not bring the success that all had expected. The team ended up each of those years in the middle of the conference and did not make it to the post season tournament.

At the beginning of the current season, as a senior, Julie had felt she must take a leadership role on the team. Her relationship with Coach Jones was special in that she had been a top caliber player despite the team’s subpar performance. This past year, she was a second team all-conference player. Coach Jones encouraged her to use her leadership skills to lead the team to success in her last year. During the pre-season practices, it appeared that such success was possible. Julie was excited for the season to begin. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, those expectations have not materialized.

Barb is sympathetic with Julie’s situation. However, surely she knows that winning was not assured in all of athletics. If she quits for the wrong reason, how would that affect her as she moves on at the end of the year? In reality, this may be the opening Barb has been looking for to introduce Julie to the good news of the Christian faith. Despite her knowing that Barb’s faith is essential to how she looks at life, Julie has never inquired about its meaning. Barb realizes that she must first deal with how defeat in athletics is affecting Julie’s outlook. She decides to spend that evening searching the Bible for insight into how to take this unique situation and use it to bring in a new convert to Christ.

**ASSIGNMENT**
My Scriptural Research:

Group Scriptural Research:

Decisions / Recommendations:

Primary Scriptural References: