

Coaching Soccer

**with
Passion
and
Purpose**



Paul J. Banta

**“For Thee I
Coach and Not
For Me”**

Philippians 4:13

**“I can do all things through Christ who
strengthens me.”**

Book Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wonderful wife, Joy and my three sons Stephen, Nathan and Joel and their families. I love you all dearly. Thanks for being part of my life and the privilege of being your husband and father.

I also have to dedicate this book to all the players I've ever coached, and to many of my assistant coaches who gave part of their lives to me for their team. Thanks and God bless you guys for all your hard work, all the good times, the many wins and the honor of being part of your lives.

Acknowledgements

I would first of all like to say my deepest appreciation to God for giving me Jesus Christ as my Lord and my Savior and for His empowering.

I also want to thank God for giving me my wife, who for over 40 years has been the strength of my life through her wisdom and by her encouragement to pursue my passions. You have been both a silent and vocal power in my life. Your advice and prayers have been immeasurable.

So Joy thanks for keeping me anchored when I was in the storms of my life and for your persistence as my faithful wife and follower of Jesus Christ. Thanks for supporting me as I do ministry and pursue my passions to serve the Lord through soccer. I really could not have made it without you. You're a special blessing to me. Thanks for pouring yourself into me and the lives of our sons, their wives and our grand- children. Rewards await you in Heaven!

Coaching Soccer with Passion and Purpose

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Introduction

God created you for His a *purpose* and for you to have a *special passion* and to be passionate about using your life for Him once you find out what it is. That is His plan for you, because He is a passionate God with a purpose. He really loves you more than you can ever imagine and He wants you to see that His love for you is very real. He designed you to know Christ as your Lord Savior and to accomplish many great and mighty things that He has planned for you.

Ephesians 2:10 indicates to us that, "We are God's masterpiece and created in Christ Jesus to do the good works, which He has planned for you a long time ago."

If we are going to be doing this coaching thing know God designed you to move ahead with Him along side Him and under His authority. You need to get on with it and not wait. It's not going to be easy, because Satan does not want you to succeed in your commitment to growing your faith and understanding of how God wants you to coach for His purpose. Let's face it, Satan hates you, the Creator and His creation, so much that he'll go out of his way to entrap you and destroy you, your players and everyone in your sphere of influence. He's a bad dude with no good character traits. By you bringing together the passion for Christ and the passion that you have for the game, God will be enable you to significantly direct your players' lives to play soccer better and play the game of life better spiritually, while at the same time doing a work within you for His glory and your benefit.

"The maturing coach doesn't teach the game just so his players will do what he says or meet his needs. Rather, he makes an effort to teach the game to meet his players' needs, as Christ intended."

God loves it when we use our passion and abilities to please Him before

we please ourselves. All this serving a loving God can't happen unless we surrender 100% of our hearts to Him and then do it daily.

Surrendering yourself is the key to being able to give your all to Him for His purpose for coaching. Surrendering is not easy to accomplish. Surrender requires a new mindset, a changing of your thinking and the acting out processes for you to give up and stop giving into your personal selfishness and doing the *Me Thing* rather than the *Thee Thing*. Surrendering to God allows your heart to receive the power of God's love, grace and mercy which you in turn give to your players. Surrendering is the natural and obedient command from God as we do our coaching. If we say we're committed to serving God through His purpose for us, using our passion to coach soccer, we must be willing to surrender our heart and then get that heart surgery we need so much.

It's always been about Him and His purposes, which He planned for you and the passion He created in you to coach for Him and Him alone. What pleases God is that He has designed you with passion to coach and has been and will continue to develop this passion in you. God created you for His pleasure and will eventually succeed through you where you would normally fail on your own. He loves you that much. He receives tremendous pleasure to fulfill His purpose through you when you please Him.

If you're committed to using your passion and purpose to serve the Lord through your coaching and to being successful at it, integrity is going to be required by God. He is pleased with you when you use your faith to work for Him through soccer. Remember that you are a co-worker with God in your coaching. 1 Corinthians 3:9 says, "We are God's fellow workers; His workers in His field [soccer] and are God's building where the Holy Spirit dwells." God wants to put in the effort to help you, but we have to keep our faith as a priority to get the job done. In 2 Timothy 4:7 it says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course and I have kept the faith." We need to keep focused on having a strong

faith to get every job done. Remember that our faith without works is a bit useless.

We are His and He chose us to coach for Himself because He loves us. His requirement for us to coach is what He names us: Holy. Coaching is a holy calling by a holy God who expects us to be holy by thinking holy, planning holy, speaking holy and acting holy. Being holy is cutting off what is not pure in you life and concentrating on what is pure. 2 Corinthians 7:1 says, "Let's purify ourselves from anything that contaminates our body and spirit, perfecting our holiness out of reverence for God." Like anything else we do to get better at coaching to impact our players, but we need to be growing in holiness toward God and use it for the success of our players' spiritual growth.

Coaches live, for the most part, a good portion of their lives through their failures and successes either from their own and their players' efforts. We often wonder why we as coaches have to struggle so much to succeed. We struggle through periods of our lives with bad choices, wrong words, over-working, bad attitudes, inappropriate actions, weaknesses and temptations that play a significant role in our ability not to succeed. When we go through trials, we often make choices contrary to God's Word and His plans for us. The correct appropriation of our God given abilities is what God really wanted for us. We face situations daily where the evil one will try to rob us and our players from having succeeded significantly for Christ.

Coaching soccer takes a real commitment to hard work. Commitment takes more than the physical hard work and emotional energy to actually do the work off the field as well as on the field. A significant level of mature spiritual commitment is also needed and required. *If you're going to serve the Lord through your passion for the game, you need the extra time to commit to your spiritual concerns for yourself and your team.* Guess what? It's a hard battle. You can't go it alone. You'll find that your inner strength and peace will come

only through the power of the Holy Spirit. John 16:13 says, "The Holy Spirit (spirit of truth) will guide you into all truth." He will empower you.

As coaches our role is to protect the unity of your team, so your players are on the same page. *Just as God wants you to be in harmony with Him, He expects you to create that same atmosphere amongst your players so they'll respond as one on and off the field.* Unity is the essence of a team's behavior and play. Unity is the team together as one not only in the game of soccer but in the game of life. It's your responsibility to provide an atmosphere for developing healthy thinking, words said and actions done, "Ask yourself, can I be the encouraging leader for my players to live a more godly life both on and off the field through my examples and commitment."

Everyone has had some sort of success in their lives. It feels great being successful. It's supposed to. It gives us impetus, courage and a reason to be more successful. Why not? Success does create more success. Success is what we're to be about. We were not born into this world to be losers. That's not God's plan. Not to achieve success from our passions would be to reject God working in our lives. He simply wants us to be very successful. Imagine God not wanting us to not achieve success but rather have a lifetime of bad experiences from our efforts. As our efforts are successful we learn to use that success for significance for God.

As you read the following chapters of this book my prayer is that you will allow God to impact you and use His power to change your life and coaching methods. May He bless you big time!

Forward

My name is Paul Banta and I'm just a coach like you. I just happen to be the author of this book. My profession is not writing. I coach soccer and educate

coaches about this great game, to pursue soccer with great passion and sharing what I know to help others in the game. I just wanted to make that clear, so when you read these ten short chapters you'll know who it's coming from, rather than to think I'm some classy writer. So thanks for understanding, Coach. So I'm giving all the glory to the Lord and the empowering of the Holy Spirit who seems to have wanted to do something through me.

Oh yes, I also want you to know that I have been praying for you before you ever had this book in front of you and I'll be praying while your reading it and after. I'm trusting that somehow God is going to touch your life through this book as He did mine as I wrote it, so He will impact you to turn around and impact the lives of your players. If you're wondering how, you'll soon find out as I did. Just keep reading.

As a youth and teenager growing up in a Christian home I never really grasped or felt a deep desire for spiritual things. I put my energies into living life without a commitment to spiritual growth and I only felt the need to use my strength and learned to depend on my physical power, my goals and my accomplishments. This continued through my high school, college life, into several years of my marriage life and into my fatherhood. I was an okay husband and father but empty spiritually and really void of using Christian principles to enrich my manhood to be the man God intended me to be. Through personal choices and the influencing power that I allowed Satan to have over me, I became a failure as a real man. He's mean, bad, hates you with all his heart, mind and strength and pulls you away from God. He is powerful and wants nothing more than to destroy you, your reputation and your purpose. He hates you so much that he'll try anything to mess you up. He turns your passions into catastrophes for himself and your destruction. He has no love and is only evil. He's a deceiver and can't be trusted. He deceived me by making me believe I had to be perfect and work became one of my addictions. I worked [overtime] trying to be perfect at my job winning games and championships. I labeled

myself Christian like many do, but didn't think or live like one biblically. I was married to a wonderful Christian woman and had three great kids and to make peace in the house with them, I faked Christianity. I was a *big fence sitter*, who could never quite commit fully to Christ and His purposes.

Growing up I was always pursuing my dreams. I never believed in fairy tales or them coming true, but I did believe my dreams would come true by my plans and actions. I learned hard work from my teenage years and was taught to put my love for life into actions that achieved results. I thank my father and one of my mentors, Chester Banta, for allowing me to learn to be a young man of courage with strength. He did not take my dreams away from me, but rather encouraged me and supported me accomplishing them. I also thank him for not giving me or my two other brothers, Peter and Mark, the name Chester. I know [they're] grateful as well.

Most dreamers' minds are constantly at work, thinking, scheming, planning and believing the reality of what they know will come true. I believe dreamers have already been to places others dare not attempt to go. Only later on in my life would I realize and believe God had made me to pursue Him and serve Him with the pursuing of my dreams. I did not seriously realize this until I was over 50. Late, but nevertheless I'm at it for Him. A dear friend of mine and mentor, Jack Wellman, tells me from time to time you're never too old to learn. I'm in my sixties and Jack is in his eighties. I thank God for honoring me with giving me the ability to dream so I can do what He has called me to accomplish.

Growing up in the Catskill Mountains of New York State I dreamed I would catch more fish, trap more animals from my five my mink and muskrat trap line, climb and descend the highest local mountain faster, play sports better than my boyhood friends and peers. I pursued my dreams and passions beyond normal into the sometimes the abnormal. It always seemed to me that I had to live out my passion with some sort of intended purpose. It was a way of

having a life experience that was fun and the challenge was always exciting. Life was never boring, but rather filled with challenges to succeed. I pursued everything I liked and loved with vigor and much intensity, but I always felt this inner strength pushing me forward with abounding degrees of physical and mental efforts, giving me satisfaction for fulfilling my passions. It was the way for me to live, fulfilling my dreams for me.

One day in the month of December of 1983 you could say I sort of lost my life. I actual did not physically die, but it sure felt like it. I was called into a meeting at the college where I was working. I thought I was to receive a job promotion and new contract for my hard work and efforts winning matches and championships. Almost as the meeting start I was told I, "You're going to be fired." It was for *professional deportment*. Not wanting to act ignorant, I did not ask what that really meant. It didn't matter what I said or how I pleaded for my job, I was finished. At that moment my mind flashed over the fours years of how I had acted and the way I performed on the job knowing all the time that they weren't just looking for a coach, but they needed a real man who could do the entire job.

I began to feel ashamed of how others would look at me, especially my wife and kids, because I failed them. I drove home that night, but I didn't remember leaving the college, getting into my car, the drive home or entering the house. It was like I had no life in me for the 20 minutes it took me to finally get home. I can only remember telling my wife that I was fired and that I had failed [miserably] as a man, and that I was sorry. I can remember her arms around me, comforting me and loving me despite who I was. That night I committed my life to Christ and accepted Him as my Savior and Lord.

Although hurting from the disappointment I felt burdens had been lifted from my very being and that all my sin had been forgiven and forgotten by Christ. Life hasn't always been perfect since becoming a Christian, but one thing

for sure is that I have security in knowing I have God in me and a power which has changed my thinking and actions and a power that has been the source of inner strength. That power I found in a commitment to Jesus Christ.

This book is about a passionate God who has a plan for you, as He has for me, that is not only going to benefit you and bless you, but a holy designed plan that will fulfill your purpose on the earth using your passion for this great game of soccer. I'm a huge believer that without an effort my dreams and my faith are dead. The Bible say it the best, "Faith without works is dead." Our daily learning, thinking and actions must be focused on putting out for Christ, as this is the design God intended for us. The most important question we face as coaches is: Are you ready to win more matches for Christ or win these earthly matches for the world? Jesus calls you to impact others through your passions. You can do it my friend. Just get more committed than you have ever been. If it worked for me, a simple country boy, than it can work for you.

You're about to read chapter 1 of this book and you're going to read words that I hope will impact your life. As you read each chapter I'm praying you might be challenged to be open to questioning yourself and say, "Am I the person God wants me to be on and off the field? Am I pursuing my coaching and living with a growing faith with biblical principles, with all my actions and words empowered by God?" I want you to know and believe that God created you by no error, with no confusion, and for His purpose. His plan was to bring you into this world for you to have an exciting life serving Him. So, if you have to get your life in order to serve Him maybe this book can help give you some direction.

My prayer for you is that you'll be that person God planned you to be and *Coach Soccer with Passion and Purpose* to impact, strengthen, and grow your players to commit to be real men for Jesus Christ. God has given you the abilities to coach soccer. He wants you to be passionate about using the gift that He's given you. I pray that the Holy Spirit will impact your future desires and efforts. He impacted me, and I trust that He will impact you.

Created for the Purpose of Servanthood

Ephesians 2:10a says, "We are God's masterpiece created

in Christ Jesus to do the good works."

Chapter One

Created with Passion to Coach for a Purpose!

Contrary to what the world might tell you, God loves you passionately and you were planned, designed and shaped by God for His purposes and for the work He has planned for you while you're on the earth. Because God is about love, know you were created and have been molded to coach for Him with passion- not for man or yourself. God has made you to live and die for the Great Commission [Matthew 28:18-20] through a growing knowledge of Him and a growing knowledge of coaching and the game itself, so that, inspired by the authority of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and empowered by the Holy Spirit, you can personally grow in the game of life. But more significantly, impact your

players to be successful, both on and off the field. If you absolutely think this concept is not for you, then I suggest two things; First give this book away because you don't see that there is a chance that this could ever be possible for you and you're afraid to move in this direction; lastly, keep reading either out of curiosity or because you know that you have a purpose to fulfill through coaching and want to nurture it with God's help.

So you've decided to keep on reading. Good choice! Now go ahead through these pages, trusting in God, because He's about to change your life forever. He loves you and wants the very best to happen in and through your love for the game of soccer.

Now if you do not know Christ as your Lord and Savior and want to right now or in the days ahead, as you read this book, I would encourage you through faith that Christ died for you because He loves you personally. He wants you to coach for Him, but you can't do it without clearing up your playing position on His team. Here's what I suggest to do: Speak to God and say,

"Father God I know that you sent Your Son to die for me. I need Him in my life and I accept Him now as my Savior so I can do this coaching thing better than ever before. I'm going to make an effort with your help to coach for you. Teach me by what you say in the Bible about how to get on with this Christian walk and use my passion for soccer and my decision to follow you, God, to change not only my life, but the lives of my players. Empower me so I can be a committed Christian coach and a better person than I have ever been before in my life. Thanks, God, for your love for me and that I can depend on you to be there for me to guide and help me."

Listen to what God says to you in His holy Word: "We are God's masterpiece and He created you to know Christ Jesus and to do the good things

He has planned for you a long time ago" (Ephesians 2:10). Also, "I know what I am planning for you. I have a good plan for you, not a plan to hurt you, but a plan to give you hope and a great future, which you'll receive if you pray and seek me wholeheartedly" (Jeremiah 29:11-12). How about these verses? They have got to make you feel special and that God sees you helping Him coach soccer to impact others. The script has been written for you my friend!

As a coach, know you have a place specially designed for you to serve, a purpose created for you to pursue, a special role using your character and passions to impact others and function to fulfill in love for your God. He wants for you more than anything else, after knowing Christ Jesus as your Lord and Savior, to do what He purposed you for. He wants you to personally experience great significance and worth in your life as you coach for Him. To put it simply, He wants you to fulfill His plan for your life and reward you for your effort to help Him coaching players for whom He also has a purpose. You're the person He chose and there's nobody else who can take your place.

Having made this decision, my prayer and hope for you as a fellow coach is that God will create in His time, a new coach inside you with a stronger commitment to coaching and a growing passion to get to know God daily through reading His Bible and speaking to Him as much as possible about anything and everything. He is your friend, and the more time you spend with Him the better you'll get to know Him. If it can happen like this to you and me, then it can happen to the players God has given you to train and coach.

Now that you plan to make some changes in your life and coaching, think about what they could be or what has been holding you back from being the coach God intended you to be. Is it bad habits you developed in your playing days? Is it a negative influence from your past and parent who pushed you too hard or a coach who gave you the wrong view of soccer? Are you realizing you have this passion for the game, but that you're just not

coaching successfully and want to get better at it? Do you find your coaching methods, motives, words and your actions are not really working? Do you work with your players and others in ways that simply won't cut it now, when it comes to being the coach you really dream and desire to be? Just what's stopping you from doing it for Him in the way He wants?

So let's move forward to what it's going to take to move you and put your coaching on the map to be significant for God with your passion and His purpose. Hopefully, you're about to get some directional changes you need to experience the purpose God intended for your life, the passion for which He made and designed you for saying the right words and doing the right actions. Are you ready to start moving in a different direction?

Coaching soccer starts with passion for the game. That's true for Christian and non-Christian coaches alike. The difference between the two is that Christ must have pre-eminence in the life of the Christian coach. In other words, you must believe Him, trust Him, and expect Him to use you to serve Him by your efforts for Him. In short, the Christian soccer coach must have a passion not just for the game but for Christ. By bringing together the passion for Christ and the passion that you have for the game, God will be able to use you significantly to direct your players' lives to play soccer better and play the game of life better spiritually. This makes all the difference, not only on this earth but for eternity, and not only for you but for your players, and for all the others whose lives your players will touch on their journey.

Your role for God is to make a difference in others by serving them through soccer. You are not just to take from this world; you are to give something back by serving others. By doing this, you will be doing exactly what God set you apart and appointed you for. God has for you a very special job with holy outcomes. As 2 Timothy 1:9 says, "God saved you and called you to live a holy life. He did it because this was His plan before the beginning of time."

Serving, which is a special calling, is the heart of the Christian life, and it is where God wants you to be in your coaching. To do this as the soccer coach you were created to be, you'll need to grow your Christian walk biblically and grow more knowledgeable about soccer. God wants you to be a student of His Word and the game, so you will be able to serve Him completely and unselfishly, and so you can serve your players better. As you grow in these ways, your training sessions will have better impact and your players will have match success. Your players will see that Christ is first and soccer second, never the reverse! And when you serve this way, your life will have real significance. Your passion to serve Him will simply take off and your players' lives will have more meaning as you challenge them to new levels of significance in both their game and their spiritual living.

As you grow in the Lord through His holy Word, and as you learn more about soccer, you have to put your new knowledge into practice in order to serve God with passion. The maturing coach doesn't teach the game just so his players will do what he says or meet his needs. Rather, he makes an effort to teach the game to meet his players' needs, as Christ intended. The challenge for you is to minister through soccer. If lives are changed off the field by other ministries, why can't we start being the ministers He intended us to be in our coaching?

Remember, when your life is over, you'll stand before God and will receive a coaching evaluation on how you did it all back on the earth, how you served your players and worked to serve Him. Romans 14:12 says, "Each will have to give an account to God." That's an intimidating thought. The key to a positive evaluation for you lies with Proverbs 3:5-6, which tells us that we are to trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't do things independent from God, but rather rely on Him and what you gained from Him. In all you do and say, acknowledge that the source of your power is from Him and He will show you a

better way. You can't beat that promise. Simply put, He wants to make a difference in others through your coaching. This is what you were designed for and to be teamed up with God for.

To coach with passion and purpose for God, here are a few things to consider as you make an effort to achieve steps forward on the path of a Christian coach.

Be willing to suffer for Him. Suffering takes some hurting on your part. It's something that's not easy for coaches to do. 1 Peter 4:1-2 says, "Since Jesus suffered pain, you need to have the same attitude and be ready to suffer as well for Him." You then won't be spending the rest of your life like you did before you were a Christian or a halfhearted Christian [not giving your all for Him], chasing your own desires, but you'll be anxious to do His will for your life with your Passion! First Peter 4: 11b says, "Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Christ." And 1 Peter 4:19b says, "Keep on doing what is right and trust your life to God who created you. He'll never fail you." So your efforts and what you give up to serve may cost you beyond what you're used to. Are you ready to hurt a bit and get uncomfortable so you can understand how to serve?

Learn to choose correctly. Begin choosing His ways for your life in all your decisions, rather than choosing your own desires. Be faithful to Him, not your needs all the time. Walk a path that is built upon godly choices. Ephesians 4:1b says, "Walk in a manner worthy of your calling with which you've been called by God." It all comes down to you making the right choices you believe will make your walk appropriately before God.

Grow more in love with God. Work to grow more deeply in love with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. When you're in love with someone you want to be around them, learn about them and share with them. God has always loved you and He wants that love to develop by you working with Him

through speaking to Him and knowing more about Him and how He can help you coach through His Bible. 1 Corinthians 14:1 b says, "Pursue the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts." Believe me, there's enough information in the Bible to help you win matches.

God gave you special talents and characteristics. These are special abilities, meant only for you, and given by God. They are called spiritual gifts. Using spiritual gifts are necessary to coach and are available to you. 1 Peter 4:10 says, "God gives us spiritual gifts from His great variety."

Be Humble. Practice humility, and see and feel it actually working in your life and affect the lives of those around you. Philippians 2:3 says, "Don't do anything because of your selfish ambitions and your vanity, but in humility consider others better than yourself. Each of us should not look out only for our own interests, but also the interest of others."

Get some grit and don't back down. Stand firm and be a coach who endures. James 1:3 says, "When you're faithful, your endurance has a chance to develop more." Our society is losing its strength and is full of compromising people. Don't be one of those types of coaches. Make sure you get some grit and don't back down and do it with love.

Stay on a steady course and do not waver. James 1:6 says, "Don't waver, for if you do you'll not be truly loyal to God and you'll be unsettled just like a wave on the sea, which is tossed all over the place". Your players want a stable and reasonable leader.

As you grow your passion for the game, here are a few things you need to achieve in your coaching. These ideas will allow you to re-think where you've been in the game and where you want to go to effectively serve your players. It's great to have a firm commitment to growing for God to impact your players

spiritually, but if you do not have a passion for the game, you can't impact players' games. Most players come on board because they believe you can impact their game before anything else, so to reach them you need to know about the game and how to coach. It's a lot easier to get them believing in spiritual matters when you're capable of getting them to play the game at a high level. Their state of readiness is higher. Your direction reflects your players' future.

Learn more about the game. Be a student of the game, understanding that you will never stop learning. The game is a worldwide sport, so you need to change your understanding based on how the game is best played from a worldwide view. Methods have changed to help players learn and play the game faster and better. Are you keeping informed to get better results from your training sessions?

New coaching and training methods do work. Be open to new ideas and methods that will enable you to impact your players in their training and matches to play better. Be committed to the game in such a way that your player's successes become significant in their lives.

Your training sessions are where you begin. Prepare your training sessions so well that all your players become quality players who enjoy coming to training to prepare for matches. Your sessions must relate to the game. The better your training looks and is like the match, the better your players' will perform on match day. You should center your training sessions on improving your player's soccer techniques to perform at a higher level of skill and at a faster pace in attack. The game is a fast game and players are required more and more to play better at a faster match pace. If your players play faster in attack, they are fitter to defend. Slow is not part of your training results, and neither is the game slow, so if you're training players at low speeds, expect them to have big problems when it comes to match time. Use the actual match (small side or

full) in your training sessions to get players match fit. You are working on soccer fitness, not track and field fitness. Fitness is not everything, but without soccer fitness you can't expect team success. Lastly, part of your practice needs to have a good deal of tactics developed in both attack and defense. I like exercises in my training sessions which have the elements of soccer fitness, development of soccer skills, and tactics. This really works, and the players will enjoy you more if you provide quality training sessions where they'll have fun and see their game growing.

You're not the only coach in training sessions and matches.

Develop your players as mini-coaches, not just players. Let them handle some of the decision-making in training sessions, so they can learn how to make useful decisions while playing. This will allow them to play a more significant role on the team and actually play better as a team in matches. You need to be the coach who gives some of his authority away and less responsible because your players will take this type of role. This is so vital to their growth and development. Players have minds of their own, too. Together, you can make a big difference. Alone, you can be finished. Iron sharpens iron.

Players are to develop to a higher level. Challenge your players to a higher level of play, so that they can see themselves achieving from their efforts physically, mentally, emotionally and collectively as part of a team. This is your responsibility, and this is what they expect from you. If you're not doing this, you'll be losing them and not providing an experience they grow from and go on from to change the lives of others.

I had a phone call from one of my former captains, who is now coaching one of our youth national sides. He asked me, "Coach, do you know just how many guys you coached who are now coaching? There are a lot. You impacted a lot of guys in the game." He was telling me that what I gave to others helped develop them to higher levels, and that is expanding to many other players whom

they now influence.

Keep your eyes and ears open. Let your players know how well you can see them developing. Observing each player and hearing what he says and seeing what he does individually and with his teammates in practice sessions and matches, allowing you to realize what he has achieved. You then can develop him more intelligently.

Whom do you emulate during training sessions and matches?

Before, during, and after training and matches, be Christ-like and use Scripture, prayer and encouraging words, touching players affectionately with your heart, so they see Jesus in you and a person they can play for.

You're not the only person who can impact your team. Let your players know they are important to you and each other and can impact you and others as well. Look for players who impact positively; explain clearly what you see them doing and praise them for their efforts.

Are you ready to act on what you were created for? Are you ready to just do it? Let's see what God has to say to us to help us be what He wants us to be. Don't back off now. We're just getting started. If you want to coach for God and fulfill His purposes for your life, turn to the next chapter. Remember what the Apostle Paul shares with us in the book of Philippians 4:13. He says, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me the strength." Go head and turn the page, if you have the strength!

Surrendering so you can serve

Romans 12:1 says, "I urge you because of God's mercy to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable which is our reasonable service."

Chapter Two

Are You Kidding, I Must Surrender First?

God really loves it when we serve Him with all of our hearts. That means we've decided to give up ourselves for Jesus. The prophet Jeremiah shares with us in Jeremiah 29:12 about giving a wholehearted commitment. God wants us to serve Him with an obedient and loving attitude, giving Him all the praise as He uses us for His great plan for our lives. Love is His greatest gift, and service is to be the result of our love for what He did through His son Jesus Christ. So serving, if we're on the right page, should naturally flow from us as we commit our life and coaching to Him. He will provide success through our words and actions. Learning that our need to serve Him regardless of the outcome of our win/loss record is not only essential, but it's relative to the growth of our relationship to Him and the success we have in serving our players. When we emphasize serving before winning, our players see we're for real and God will honor our efforts more than ever before in our coaching.

Service for Him is demonstrating our deep love for honoring the very thing we are created for doing soccer with passion and purpose for Him. And it's

to be done with a bigger effort than ever before if you intend to be who you say you are. We'll be sharing more in later chapters about how our efforts are to be developed and how His Word teaches us the way to be the coach He intended us to be. For starters, we know how God wants us to pursue Him in our coaching and life as indicated by what Mark 12:30 says: "Love your Lord God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength." We give our very being to our players, through our efforts and His ability to empower us through the Holy Spirit.

God loves it when we use our passion and abilities to please Him before we please ourselves. All this serving and loving God can't happen unless we surrender our total person to Him and then serve daily. Surrendering yourself is the key to being able to give your very all to Him for His purpose in your coaching. Surrendering is not easy to accomplish. Surrender requires a new mindset, a changing of the thinking patterns and the acting out processes for you to give up and stop giving in to your personal selfishness.

In our country and other societies around the world, we are mental and physically trained for competition, to win matches and the very nature and characteristics of surrender or losing are to not be considered. It's simply an unthinkable concept. We train ourselves and our players to think and physically respond [not] to surrender and often teach or suggest ways to win at all costs.

Over the many years of coaching, teaching and administrating soccer, I've heard a lot of coaches say, "I do not teach 'win at all costs,'" but I have observed that many of those coaches (by their very actions and words from pre-match team meetings, halftime and end-of-the-match speeches and how they run their training sessions) are contrary to what they would want you to believe about them and even believe in their own minds. Why then if they say one thing and act another way does this happen?

Do your players see you as a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde because they hear what you say, but you're not committed to living it out? Coaches like this believe they have to be in control of training and match success, and when it comes right down to it, there's no way they are going to let their players help take charge in the outcome of preparing to win matches.

Our background in coaching is more often than not going to teach our players not to yield, give in, submit to our opponent and we're not going to get scored on no matter what happens. We demand our players work so hard in training sessions that often go beyond the necessary. We try teaching them to play together as units and if they don't each die for the team they're labeled losers and not part of the team. You may have heard worse than this and may even have been a part of this level of coaching. We simply expect our players to succeed through conquering and destroying their opponents. Players are forced, for the success of the coach, to play in matches who have bad personal injuries and personal problems. Coach put injuring players for their glory and their success. This is not serving through love and coaches like this don't care about their players. Coaches like this will never impact players because they have a style of sending mixed messages.

Surrendering to God is the heart of receiving the power of God's love, grace and mercy. We need to get on with these three as we work with our players. In Romans 12:1 we are urged by a loving God and His mercy to us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice [a giving up of something to make another thing positively happen]. We do this with a holy attitude [pure motives of serving our Lord] that's pleasing to God more than us. The writer here in Romans says, "This is to be our spiritual nature coming from us automatically and this is the way we are allowed to worship God". Pretty powerful stuff, isn't it! Surrendering then becomes the natural and obedient thing to do as we do our coaching for God. If we say we're committed to serving God through His purpose for us using our passion to coach soccer, we must be willing to do the surrender

thing and get heart surgery big time. We may go back from time to time for minor outpatient repairs.

Surrendering can be a mind-boggling experience, because it goes against the very nature of living humanly, which is the opposite of spiritual living. We have to learn to give up a lot of garbage we've learned, know, enjoy and find pleasurable at times, which is not useful to us in the end of the scheme of living. It's a sacrifice that we have to make. We have to change a lot about our present, knowing that the future both on the earth and in heaven will be rewarding and full of little and big blessings. Surrendering them becomes a transformation of our thought processes, so our acts of service will be for Him and to please Him. Romans 12:2 goes on to tell us that;

"We're not to be images of this world and follow after its offerings. We're to be transformed by the rethinking and processing of what comes into our minds, not by the pressure of the world in which we reside, but by preordained empowering changes that are to happen to us through the very person of Jesus Christ working in our lives daily by His promises. This will come through our reliance of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. Allowed, this relying will grow our passion [in soccer] to better serve."

Surrender for a coach who is committed to God, is yielding, giving in (not giving up), dying to your own interest or the for *Me Thing*, which can include win one more for the coach, school, teammates, getting a great winning season so you can get a better job, more recognition or whatever.

Really what matters is that you have to be committed to a complete surrender. Give your entire being to Him and let Him control your life. That is what it's all about. You no longer control the steering wheel, but only steer, listening for directions and let God empower you where He wants you to go. Turning right, turning left, backing up or going forward- you learn to give Him

engine control [your mind and body] completely.

God doesn't want you to get caught up in your successes. He wants to get your attention and keep you unshakably committed by doing it all for His purpose, which in the end one day is for your benefit. We find Satan alive and well and doing anything he can to get you thinking and moving away from coaching for Jesus. He's out there working overtime to mess you up, and he wants to block you from a continuous daily surrendering of your passions to your Father.

Your Father wants you for His undivided attention and 100% of your effort for Him. He's not interested in coaches who need Him only for prayers to win matches or to help them find a good forward to score goals to make him or his team look good. We cannot operate from biblical principles only occasionally. It's either all, or simply forget it. You can't be a forward and say you'd like to score goals but never do it because you decided to stay back by your team's goalkeeper. No success comes from this positioning. It serves no purpose for the team. It's the same with serving God through your coaching. You can't say, "I'm coaching for Jesus" and be unwilling to get in the correct position to do it. In the Christian walk of serving, partiality doesn't cut it for impacting yourself and your players for the Kingdom. You can't coach and serve God by your own plans.

I'd like to share a few areas to which you can be vulnerable and which may potentially block your ability to full surrender. These areas will mess with your mind and heart to the point where you'll either not surrender or they'll put you on a roller coaster-ride of surrendering one day and giving in to your own desires the next. It happened to me in my coaching and you're no exception to the rule. Everybody can be vulnerable, because Satan is alive and going at you.

We have the ability to fear. As coaches, we are frightened about the outcomes of total surrender. Will it really work for me? This [I think I

can do it on my own] concept often stops us from a total surrendering. In my case, I was brought up to be a winner by my father, who was a self-made man, and I was ingrained into thinking I could be like my earthly dad and not need my Father in Heaven to be a real winner. My dad never meant to hurt me, but as the product of a single mom, he learned to trust himself and the achievements of his own hard work during my living under his roof.

Everybody is influenced by someone or something which can chase them away from giving in to Christ totally. If you're in that situation, get out of the entrapment ASAP. Jesus speaks to us in John 16:33 when He says, "I speak to you so that in me you will have peace. In the world you live in, you're going to have trouble. Be of courage for I have overcome this world." In Matthew 14:27, He also says, "Take courage! It's I. Don't be afraid." That promise is good for us today. God wants to give you the power not to fear and give you what He has planned for you. We really don't deserve anything, but because of His grace for us, we get eternal life and the mercy He gives when we mess up is His wonderful gift to His own.

Satan wants to hold you in a state of fear and confusion, causing you to be powerless. He's what I call a Mind Messer. Of course there's no such word in the English language, but nevertheless he messes with your mind. Does he mess you up from time to time? How about ending his control over you by surrendering to God completely?

Personal Pride. Coaches and even Christian coaches can have huge egos. The attitude [I'm good enough attitude and my success is good enough and I do not need more biblical or soccer education] prevails in our coaching circles. Some coaches are silent about it while others just seem to exhort this attitude without even seeing themselves.

James 4:6 says that, "God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble." It's not wrong for us to feel great about ourselves and our personal success and the success of the players we're training. It becomes out of sync when we think as coaches we've done it all by our own little genius-well maybe with a little help from God. We must be willing to gain biblical knowledge and understanding to be able to better understand the game of life God wants for us to play and how He wants to empower our lives through giving in to Him completely. We're all guilty of having pride and we need to be daily asking God to empower us to be the humble characters we're supposed to be so we don't have to pay the consequences of our prideful mistakes and miscalculations.

Unsure and Confused. We often do not know how to follow through or where to go with surrender, because we are confused by previous bad decisions we've made. Will total surrender work for me and impact me and my players? [Perhaps you're thinking I'm not yet sold on it, or I'm confused, or believe that surrendering my willpower will really work.]

Our faith is not as strong as our efforts when we think this way. We tend to be in a stuck mode, but want more. We just have a hard time committing ourselves to giving up our struggles completely to Christ and in a wholehearted manner. It's hard to let go of our old nature and ways and let God take over.

Surrender is a giving up of something you no longer really need or find useful to your coaching. We often possess and wrongly choose idols in our career that in the end eat away at hearts, hurt our growth and often destroy the way we're viewed by our players and others. We'll put winning games and having a great record for personal success before the success of our players. Sacrifice may often be uncomfortable at the start, but you will realize it's needed to make those changes to move ahead to deliver your passion better to your players. When we do this, we are acting in obedience to God for doing His intended purpose through our passion for the game. For example, giving up a negative change in your personality to be better viewed

by your players as more loving or more concerned for them may not make any real logical sense at the start, but I can guarantee that if you stay committed to these action changes, God will be controlling your team's development rather than you having total control.

Ask yourself, based on your past, would you rather have God be in control or do it all your way? Are we willing to be obedient and get the help we so desperately need? Peter in Luke 5:5 said after a night of catching no fish, "I will let down my net, Lord, because you say so." We know that Peter and his partners caught a lot more fish that morning than they did that night, because stubborn Peter allowed Jesus to be in control. I think he must have been really tired, couldn't think straight and needed to be a winner when he went home to his wife with a successful catch. Their catch allowed them to understand that obedience can really yield dividends big time. He and the others were about to go on the greatest fishing trip of all times, that being fishing for the real thing - real men to serve God with passion.

Put God in control of your life and your coaching, my friend, and start going after your players' lives for Him. Nothing that's under His control by His power will ever be out of control. Do you want to continue to live out of control? I don't think so! I was there, and it's not enjoyable at all. Not for you or your players. You're shaped to be in His control, not out of control. So start surrendering completely today. Don't wait another minute.

Surrendering means we are learning to act in new life-changing ways that lead to deeper obedience to what God has planned for us. As we learn to let go of the *Me Thing* and start doing the *Thee Thing*, we begin to see just how God can use us to serve Him by our faith and efforts. We start to notice that if we let God do the work more and we-less, we see our passion for the game reach significant levels of success for those we coach.

If we stay focused on surrendering, our levels of significance for success will soar like the eagle to heights beyond our imagination. Psalms 37:4-5 becomes a reality when we are obedient. We'll see God allowing us to delight in Him because we see our trusting in Him giving us the desires of our heart. As we commit ourselves to the obedience of surrender, He'll shine more and more in us and through us and we'll get better and better at our passion.

Surrendering is not just the best way to be that man and coach God wants you to be, it's the only way. One of the greatest hindrances to God working through and in your life is about *Me and Not Thee*. Your will, your pride and your personal ambitions need to end. When you decide to fully surrender, count it a possibility to be tested by the standards of this world, which are often in opposition to your surrendering act. Not to worry though, for in your commitment to being His totally, He will make Himself and His power available to you and He'll give you that peace the Bible speaks about that is beyond our comprehension and imagination. You'll give a deeper and greater love to your players and receive knowledge and wisdom to move and live for Him at higher levels, making complete His purpose in you.

Keep reminding yourself daily, "it's not about me, it's not about me Lord, it's all about you." My prayer for you to pray is, "Thanks for hearing this coach, Lord, and using me for your purpose. Create a deeper purpose in my life, so I'll be so passionate about what I do for you that goose bumps will continually appear on my body when I see your hand working in my life."

Are you ready to give it a shot, surrender that is, and prove you're tough enough to do it once and for all and tenderhearted enough to see God and His grace lead you forth as the loving man and coach He intended you to be? Let's see if you're truly passionate for His purpose and meaning for your life.

Let's go on to chapter 3. Don't stop now! You're making great progress and God and I appreciate your listening ear. Several years ago in my garage on my tool rack I wrote a quote that came to my mind when I realized I needed God deeper than ever before. I challenge you to memorize it and use it. It says, "All for Thee not for me!"

God Planned You for His Pleasure

Jeremiah 29:11 says, "I know what I am planning for you. It's a great plan for you, not a plan to hurt you, but a plan to give you one that will give you hope and a great future."

Chapter Three

Your Passion Is for His Purpose not Yours!

It's not about you, me, your players or anyone or anything else. Romans 8:5 b says, "Those who choose to live by their sinful nature have their thinking set on their sinful desire." Romans 8:9 say, "Those controlled by their sinful nature cannot please God."

Man, it's all about God. Do you see that concept? It's always been about Him and His purposes He planned for you and the passion He created in you to coach for Him and Him alone. He's a jealous God and is absolutely in control of His creation. That means you and me, my friend. You're to be in God's control and make your decisions based on what pleases God and what He says in the Bible. We need to be faithfully reading His word to find out.

I spent over 35 years coaching soccer and I figured out one day that if had coached for Him and read His word daily throughout my career, I probably would have held some sort of Ripley's Believe it or not record for the most wins for a Christian coach. His words would have better impacted my coaching. I was a late starter.

What pleases God is that you serve Him in His purpose and do the designed life He's planned for you. Don't wait as I did. Get a jump early in your coaching career.

Also what pleases God is that He has designed you with passion to coach and has been available and will continue to develop this passion in you. If you're passionate to coach, you love to do it His way. You'll breathe and sleep it, so much so that it's part of your very being and you enjoy giving what you have to others to provide for them a greater purpose for their lives.

God wants you to be giving your gift of passion away. He does not want you to be addicted to the game, because addictions are sinful and further lead to other sins. Rather, He would prefer using your love for Him and soccer and your willingness to serve through the game to bring players to Christ and disciple them for Him.

God created you for His pleasure and will eventually succeed through you where you would normally fail on your own. He loves you that much. He receives tremendous pleasure to fulfill His purpose through you when you please Him. Consider what He promises us in Romans chapter 8 about your passion for His purpose.

- Eventually our passion and purpose will work out in our lives, because God has purposed it and made us for Himself. God's not a mistake maker.
- He made us like His son and we're part of His family as a passionate representative for Him on this earth.
- He wants us to serve Him by using our passion.
- God wants to help you control you're thoughts and actions (passion) and to give you peace (purpose for your benefit and His glory).

- God graciously gives us all things passion. He's a gift-giver big time. Just look around you.
- His love is so powerful that once we are His, He will not allow us to get separated from Him and His love for us.
- What we do (our passions) should ultimately to be for Him!
- He allows us to conquer because of His love. We were created for success that will impact others significantly.
- Anything that happens to us during our earthly stay will never separate us from Him wanting to be with us.

You were created and born for a specially designed life by God and for God. He has promised so much for us and will never go back and change His mind about His designed plan for us. This is how He works. He never fails. He will do what He says and you can count on it. He does not go back on His very words. God wants to be our starting and ending point. He's our hourly source of hope, strength and vision. It's with Christ in your daily life that you'll find out why you are really living, who you're living for and what you're really living about. Romans 12:1-2 urges us to offer ourselves to a Holy God and stop identifying our self with the garbage of this world by daily renewing in our minds, so we understand what we need to do to be pleasing to God vs. pleasing ourselves and Satan's. If you understand He is our purpose for living, you're ready for the next step, which is using your passion for Him. If you are going to be fully purposed for Him, you need to make sure about this now. Do not delay, my friend. Commit with some action!

You're going to have to identify who you are spiritually and understand you were made specifically with this passion to serve God. Everybody has designed passions. After knowing Christ as your Savior and Lord, this is the next most important concept about the Christian life and walk, because it's through your passion God brings others to Him. That's what you're all about. Your passion will bring others to Christ and bring them along a path

God wants for them, as Christ did for you. Our passion grows significantly as we are divinely provided with opportunities and discover our usefulness on this earth for Him.

As we discover that our designed passion is for His purpose, not our own, several things happen.

- We grow daily in love with Jesus and learn to love others more and more.
- We become empowered by His great love for us through the power of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.
- We actually see God making moves in our lives and see significant results as we are vessels coaches for Him.
- We begin to want to expand our knowledge and understanding of His words by reading the Bible daily and we start to make wiser choices.
- We will develop a special and meaningful daily prayer life that grows and empowers not only ourselves but others.
- We'll hear the Holy Spirit's soft whispering to us, giving us the confidence nudge we need to continue to use our passion to serve the Lord.

Know that God's purpose on this earth was no mere accident for you. He predated your birth, your life, and His specific purpose for you and your passion. His designing you was always for a higher purpose than what the world thinks about you or what you could ever imagine. He does not do one thing with you without it being planned well in advance. Hard to believe, but that's the reality of God's sovereignty and love. He's a Planner who makes no mistakes and He's always on target guiding you and pointing you in the correct direction. He's got an accurate shot and would score a lot of goals if He played in a game! All God really wants for you is to use His power through you to fulfill your life with purpose and meaning.

Know that your purpose will give you a motivation to passionately serve in the following ways:

- Your purpose will directly relate to your passion, given to you by your Father.
- Your passion was given to you to create a legacy that will last eternally for both yourself and those God puts in front of you daily.
- Know that when you get to heaven you'll have a personal conversation with God about how you were to be accountable for using or not using your passion for Him on this earth.

One day we'll all stand before our Lord and Savior and have to give an account of our earthly activities. Wow!

Are you preparing for this event? He's that concerned about you and lets us know up front that He's set aside a special review time to let you share about what you did for Him. God's conversation with you will focus on two areas: *What did you do with my Son who I gave His life for you and what did you do with the passion I gave you to serve my Son and the lives of my players I entrusted to you?* Romans 14:12 says, "Each of us will give an account of himself to God." Our lives are not about this earth and what it has to offer us, but about our goodness, our peace and our joy in Him by the power of His Holy Spirit. If we live life serving this way, we'll please God and help others.

The way you live life and coaching for Christ will determine your destiny and influence all your thoughts, speech and actions. We accomplish our daily living to fulfill God's purpose for us. By the way, expect to be tested and run through a few trials while doing life for Him. James 1:2-4 says, "You'll face trials of many kinds that will test your faith so you will develop your perseverance to stay on board to finish what God wants from you. This will help you mature and

complete you to serve Him."

God designed you to glorify Him in what you do and without Him you can end up being a zero in the end. You'll find out like many already have that all your efforts on this earth are certainly a great learning experience, but if He's not included, it's all for you and not at all for God. A tough statement but the reality of a Christian life of service is that if it is not all for Him, it means nothing. Nothing equals zero! Remember, if not for Thee it must be for me. Serving that doesn't include God brings glory into someone else. Since God is jealously in love with you, I think it would be in your best interest to do it all for the Lord.

I remember growing up as a boy my dad made sign that hung in our garage. It was a piece of pine wood. He burned on it: *Love Never Fails*. Remember that serving glorifies God and here are some reasons for you to do it all for Him.

We're motivated by His love to enjoy our Lord's relationship with us and to give ourselves to Him for His purpose. Romans 6:13b tells us that, "He gave us a Savior who died for us so we could have a great life on the earth [not always trouble free] and an eternity that will never end."

He has uniquely designed and given us characteristics and abilities to benefit others. 1 Peter 4:10 says, "That we should use the gifts God gives us to faithfully serve others in various ways."

We coach to share God with others. Don't hold back doing this. We're told to go and speak to others about Christ Jesus and make disciples out of our players. This is every Christian coach's role and we are also to help our players discover their passion and purpose.

Remember you're preparing them for eternity as someone else has done

for you. Serving the Lord through your passion will require you to accomplish the following things and every time you serve, doing His thing not your thing, you'll need to remind yourself, For Thee Lord, Only Thee.

Change your priorities. Remember that all you do is For Thee (God) not yourself. This is what your attitude must be. Your priorities really do not matter. His will always, so get yours in order for Him.

Change your relationships. If your relationships drag you away from God's purpose for you, your family, your church community and serving your players rid of them.

I had an assistant coach, and all he wanted to tell me was how great of a help he was to me (and by the way himself.) I found out that his very speech, his dishonesty and selfish actions weren't in my best interest. The relationship I had with this coach had nothing to do for Christ. I thought by having him on board I could influence him, but in reality, it worked the opposite way. He influenced me so negatively that it was the start of a long road back to using my talents in the way I was intended to use them. If you're being pulled away from God by others like the ones I attached myself to-give them up. Who's in control? It's you or them. God can give you power if you use Him. Change your relationships which are not focused on the impact Christ can have on others. Don't be fooled like I was. Satan likes to mess with our poor choices in relationships to bring us down and make us fail in serving God. He's the greatest clever deceiver and a very sick individual, who's full of perversion. Should I say more?

Change your thinking. Our thought process affects the direct outcome of results we try to achieve. If our thinking is not God-centered and aimed at Him, we'll end up not achieving the desired outcomes for Him. This is such a waste of our time. The way we need to think is to be Holy Spirit-inspired and based in His word. Direct your efforts as to what would

Jesus do in your situation.

Keep changing your heart. God wants us to love Him with all our hearts. Our hearts are in a constant growth pattern. We can't afford not to keep exercising our hearts for Him. It's to be part of our daily routine, just as we exercise our bodies. The life of a godly coach means a changing heart, which when directed toward God becomes a healthy way to live out your passion with purpose. A heart that is not beating for Him is a heart that is alive to the world. Get a heart checkup, my friend!

So we see the passion God intends for us is in sync with what God's purpose is for us as coaches. I know that over the years, God has allowed me to grow my passion for the game and for Him. As I look back on several decades of playing and coaching, I see many years wasted not using the passion for soccer and Christ together as one and the same to serve Him. Many coaches spend years trying to win the next match, earn a championship and develop a good resume so they can go on and repeat the same mistake. If only I could have been a man filled with more integrity and played and coached for Him, I would be further along in ministry and service. God wants us to be men of integrity. Chapter 4, which you'll read next, is just about being a man or woman of integrity to serve Him. Let's have a look and see if we're in the game and where He wants us to be.

Integrity Needed to Serve

1 Chronicles 29:17 says, "I know, my God, that you are testing my heart and are pleased with my integrity."

Chapter Four

Integrity Is Required! Do You Have It?

If you're committed to using your passion and purpose to serve the Lord through your coaching and want to be successful at it, integrity is going to be required by God. So we've now got to look at what this integrity thing is all about and why we can't coach without it.

God wants you to be so passionate about serving Him, but without integrity He can't let you coach for Him. Sure, you might keep your job and have some worldly success, but you'll have no success for Christ in your coaching. Zero-that means nothing at all.

Integrity is hard to come by these days. I think we know we live in a world that lacks leadership with integrity at all levels. The newspapers, billboards, TV, radio, new reports and the Internet reflect the times we're living in. With so much negativism and garbage viewed by our eyes and listened to by our ears, and with the constant bombarding of our senses, we don't always make correct choices to be the coaches of integrity we should be. We simply have a lack of integrity in our lives, and we often float through life and our coaching doing nothing about seeking to become completely filled with integrity. The type of integrity will bring about a revolution in our lives for serving Christ.

Take, for instance, dishonesty. It taints the world around us and we get

caught up in it. A lot of Christian men find themselves often trapped into maintaining that they are publicly men of integrity, but only wink at integrity as a barometer to guide them. They are entrapped by their very nature, that of being a man who is just not who he is supposed to be before His God. Just think about it long enough and I'll bet you could find something in the last several days that put you in a position to compromise your honesty. Did you? We're guilty of stuffing that hotel towel in our bag on a road trip, or giving it to a referee beyond what the guy really deserved even though he needs a new pair of glasses. Maybe you were tough enough to do it with integrity. If so, then you honored God. If not, you honored the devil and your choice then was poor. Integrity is not very highly valued these days as seen by its very lack of being in our culture. Parts of our society just don't see that it's all that important anymore to live with integrity. It's almost as though it has become easier without it. We are being deceived.

God's plan for you is not going to happen unless you know what integrity is, unless you practice its meaning and use it in your coaching. A person of integrity follows what Galatians 5:22-23 speaks about and what makes a coach of integrity. It says, "We're to have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control." These must be your spiritual passions. They create a picture of the way you speak, act and react with your players. Throughout this chapter of Galatians, it's plain to see that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be that person with integrity. Our very nature needs to represent that of our Savior. Galatians 5:10 says, "I am confident that you will take no other view." In our commitment to coach, what really matters is that we have faith strong enough to be filled with integrity to serve with passion. Coaching goes beyond winning matches. We coach players, impacting their lives, for His pleasure for eternal rewards for them and for us. Winning or losing matches has very little to do with impacting the world. If you win games for any other reasons, it's not through the integrity God expects you to use.

Integrity is a personal state of being complete. Integrity means honesty. You'll be trusted by your players and they'll commit to you as they see you filled with integrity. When you have integrity, what comes out of your mouth matches up to your actions! The world in which we live in is lacking in leaders who are people of integrity. If you can coach with integrity, you will not be divided by how the world operates: by the lack of integrity vs. how God wants you to coach by integrity. A coach who is full of integrity coaches by a system which is God-centered. When integrity is the *Official* of your coaching, you will be consistent and your God-honoring beliefs will be reflected in your words and your walk. Integrity gives you the freedom to be the complete coach God wants you to be.

If you're not a person of integrity, you're probably coaching dishonestly. God can't use you to serve Him if you remain a dishonest coach, a thief, a cheater, a hater, a jealous man, a person who twists the truth and so on. Ever do any of the above when coaching? I did, and I was out of line. How about admitting you need to reboot your personal computer and start using integrity to make the next moves at your practice sessions, matches and team meetings? David, in Psalm 15, shares that we can be coaches of integrity if we do eight things:

- Walk blamelessly and do what's right.
- Speak the truth gently from your heart.
- Don't speak slander against anyone.
- Don't harm anyone's reputation.
- Honor others who love God.
- Honor others because God loves everyone.
- Don't go back on your word even when it hurts you.
- Lend what's yours without expecting it back.
- Stand up for those in the wrong even when you could reap financial gains.

Getting the job done means you follow what God says in His word. If you use other ways to coach, integrity is out the window and your players see right through you. They won't trust you and commit to you completely. If you're not coaching with integrity, start to change and coach His way and how He would act and what He would say.

Remember that our success and significance has everything to do with being coaches who exemplify integrity. We must be committed to obey God and be the person of integrity He expects us to be.

God expects His coaches to be full of trust, hope, grace and mercy when they are coaching and training players, not people who are full of themselves and their agendas. Take a look at yourself and see where you are positioning yourself on your way to eternity. When you have integrity, you have the means to move yourself ahead to the plan from which God wants you to serve Him. He divinely gives you the Holy Spirit to empower you to move with integrity. God will never be disappointed in you if you have integrity. Integrity will guide your coaching and help you plan in all your decision making processes. You will be that leader God wants you to be because your players will see you as a person who is unquestionable because of your integrity. Without it, no real success will be possible. You'll actually win more games by using integrity. That's right. If you're fully committed to coaching with integrity, you'll not only win more games, but the impact you'll have on your players will be visualized and verbalized by you and them both.

Go ahead, prove me wrong! You will not be able to, because God's in control and driving you if you use integrity. You see, God does not want losers on His team. He takes the losers, like you and me, and makes them into winners. You can be winner and a person of with integrity as you steer your team to some great wins and victories. Integrity is modeling Christ with your

personality, characteristics, speech and actions. Your integrity will influence your players in a big way for Christ and form a deep trust in your players toward you and each other. Proverbs 11:3a says, "The integrity of the upright guides them."

Coaches who do not have integrity are not trusted by their players and anyone else in their program. They are not seen as honest, they're unreliable and not too dependable for help and for the development of their players' futures in both in their soccer and spiritual lives. Your position with your players is to bring something to and into their lives that will benefit them and not yourself. If you've got integrity, your players will want to be around you, follow you, and give 100 % to their team and you. They'll simply sacrifice for what you expect of them, knowing you're God's man or woman. If you're a teacher of integrity, you'll have a successful team.

The real benefit of you being a coach of integrity is that your players will trust you completely, and trust is what holds teams together in one common bond and impacts beyond the matches and practice sessions. When you earn the trust of your players and staff, you'll earn their confidence and a special place in God's eyes, and He'll reward you immeasurably, both on this earth and when you spend eternity with Him. Without integrity you will fail, not only as a coach, but as the person that God wants you to be. Hey, you'll fail your players and cheat them of the experience they could have had with you because you forgot to use integrity.

Coaches with integrity always choose the right way. It's always easy to do what's right when you know ahead of time what you stand for. The results of being filled with integrity are the efforts of a self disciplined person who is always going to be truthful and honest in all his coaching and life situations. Are you ready to stand for what's right and be that coach of integrity God wants you to be? Are you ready to please God?

1 Chronicles 29:17 says, "I know, my God, that you are testing my heart and are pleased with my integrity." Though you cannot go back and make a brand new beginning, you can begin from now and create a brand new end. Many Christian coaches need to just do that, but somehow they have made the effort so many times that they just don't have the commitment. These coaches still seem to rely on themselves and can't step out in faith and give their lives to Christ, fully believing He's got the power to change them. They seem to want to trust themselves more than their Creator.

God asks you to simply surrender all your heart. He'll provide you with the right course for your coaching and He'll teach you what integrity is from the Bible, and allow you to use it for His purpose in your life and the lives of your players. Give in to Him and give up what you want. It's so much easier to coach when He becomes the administrator of your plan. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in your Lord with all of your heart. Stop leaning on yourself and your own understanding. Acknowledge that God's in everything you do and He will put you right on target to make your path a straight one."

You might want to pray this prayer right now and use it as a tool daily to inspire and encourage you to grow in integrity so you can coach with integrity:

"Lord and Savior, I need to have a heart that is pure. Show me the areas that I need to be a coach who has the integrity you want me to have and use for you as I coach. If you see any lack of integrity in my life, bring it to my attention by others, my own thinking or by the prompting of your Holy Spirit, so I can make corrections in my life to better serve you. Thanks Lord. I love you and appreciate you giving me this passion for soccer. Help me serve you better, Lord. Amen."

If Christ has your heart 100% and you're daily committed to serving Him through your coaching plans, decisions and actions during your career and you really mean it, then you'll be the coach of integrity He's looking for. God wants you to serve Him and He will bless you through the love that you have for soccer. Unless we grasp tightly to integrity and use it in our coaching, I think we're going to grieve the Lord and get cut off from the many blessings He wants for us to have and give to others.

God is looking for good coaches, just like the Marines are. He's always on the look. He's not looking for the smartest, the best-looking person, someone who is articulate in speech. He's looking for coaches who can get the job done. Hey, just like the marines expect, God has a job for you to get done before He takes you home. All you have to do is be faithful.

Integrity is what we do and what we think. It causes us to go one way or the other in our coaching and living for the Lord. Proverbs 10:9 says, "The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes a crooked path will be found out." You can't have integrity without being a person who walks securely before the Lord and who has the faith and trust in God to help you achieve it. God is our unseen partner who is always there to show us the path to succeed for Him.

The next chapter is about faith and the need for faith to serve God passionately. Deeper faith-which we need as believing coaches-and trusting God to help us get through, is not easy to develop. It takes practice, commitment and prayer. We often make the effort to do things on our own and not grow the faith needed not only to change our lives, but to be used by God to impact the players we care about. What's your present level of faith? Let's check it out.

Faith is Required for Serving

2 Timothy 4:7 says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course and I have kept the faith".

Chapter Five

Do You Have a Growing Faith?

Most coaches are overworked or they decide to overwork themselves for many reasons. The reason we work so hard is to simply win the next match and hopefully have a good enough season to get in the league playoffs. We were born to work. In fact, God is described in the Bible as a worker. From the creation of earth to His finished work on the cross, He is always at work for you and for your players. Paul sets a great example for being used as He served His Lord. God was pleased with Paul and He is pleased with you when you use your faith to work for Him through soccer. Remember that you are a co-worker with God in your coaching. 1 Corinthians 3:9 says, "We are God's fellow workers; His workers in His field [soccer] and are God's building [your body is place where the Holy Spirit dwells]."

Being able to rely totally on our faith to accomplish our coaching and see that our faith impacts the completion of our efforts has always been difficult for many coaches. When we coach, it requires a tremendous amount of energy with regards to using our physical, mental and emotional abilities, which often becomes the main focus of success. We can become so absorbed, putting out high energy levels and getting caught up into the falsehood of not relying on the faith so desperately needed to move forward for Christ. Somewhere along the way, we've been either brainwashed or have the wrong idea to think that we can do this thing called coaching and either include God partially or not at all. This is how the world operates and not at all what God wants for us. God wants to put in the effort to help us, but we have to keep our faith as a priority to get the job

done. In 2 Timothy 4:7 it says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course and I have kept the faith."

We need to keep focused on having a strong faith to get every job done. Remember that faith without works is dead. This is a pretty sound scriptural way to go.

God wants to include you in His partnership to coach, but it must be through your faith. He wants us to depend on Him, because He is always available and He tells us we can actually rely on Him always and in everything. He wants to be totally included in all that we think, say and do. He wants us to really learn to depend on Him when it comes to using our faith to succeed for Him as we coach passionately. He does not want to be left out of anything we're planning to accomplish. The problem we have as coaches is that we simply forget to include Him because it's not natural for us to think He'll be there for us when we're born to work.

Work gets in the way of our growing our faith in God. We have to learn how to include Him by using our faith to support our efforts. We get so busy coaching to win matches that we forget to use our faith and see the benefit of its availability. We simply do not have faith strong enough to believe He's the driver in control, not us, and that we're just going along for the ride, serving and doing His thing.

Our cup in life many times becomes so huge that we often leave God out in the cold. That hurts Him deeply. I'm sure He thinks, "I gave this person all the tools, his love for the game and his passion for being successful and he drops me like a hot potato just when I needed him the most to serve Me. I thought he was on my team. Why can't he see that I'm there to help him be a winner? He just doesn't get it. I feel like I'm knocking my brains out up here at his future home for nothing. Maybe I'll just have to start back again with what my half brother James was saying in the second chapter of his book. Wonder if this guy

ever read it, believing it works." Throughout James 2:14-26 we hear God saying to us, "What good is it if we claim to have faith, but have no deeds; I will show you faith from my works; and you see a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone; as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." Getting a faith committed attitude to God is a real action of worship and service and it verifies our faith in Christ's.

Being a Christian coach is more than a title, wearing the best Adidas, Nike or Puma gear or seeing your name in the local newspaper. Your title and position needs to represent your life-style, not what it says and looks like, but how you do your life-style in your work. Your behavior, attitudes, thoughts and reactions to your players and those around you will reveal your real heart. Title names are or will eventually mean a big zero for you if your heart is not committed to serving Christ through the game by a growing and committed faith.

To be a great coach, you need to have knowledge of the game to coach for match successes, recognizing what really works (or not) in training for your players, use effective coaching methods, change wrong attitudes you have when you don't always get your way, and you need to do what is right for the team to be successful. In order to be a great Christian coach you need faith in God to improve their lifestyle. Let's face it! You're the leader and you're supposed to lead, and if you're not in sync with using your faith and works equally together, give it up.

I remember the night I accepted Christ as an adult soccer coach of 38 years of age. Burdens were released. I actually felt brand new, pressures disappeared, sins released and I started doing the passion thing for Him.

My faith was just beginning, and I had more mouth about Christ and what He did for me than faith. As the years went by, I did not grow my faith in Christ

and my lifestyle and coaching style were not at all in balance with that small faith I had. I wrongly focused on my work growth, rather than developing my faith.

Later on in life, because of His preordained plans for me, my faith grew stronger as my passion for Christ renewed. Balanced now with my passion for soccer and passion for serving Christ, I now work at reaching others for my Jesus, my Lord and Savior, through Global Soccer Ministries International.

I believe we need to ask ourselves what God wants and how He wants to reveal himself in us so we grow our faith to strengthen us to accomplish coaching for Him. As we learn to seek God through our faith in Him knowing that He says, "Do this and do that," we need to consider four things:

What we need to know to grow our faith. I believe the Lord wants to reveal to us what makes us tick. This is why we think and say what we do and how we project ourselves in a manner that's honoring Him. Honoring God is important to grow your faith. Coaches are not perfect, but we can't keep on doing the same things that grieve and dishonor the Lord. We need to get our act together biblically so we can understand the type of person we're to be. We're to make an effort to know more about our players as well. Getting to know God's family and how you can best serve then is honoring God.

I have a friend who has been a coach. He reminds me of my younger days in coaching-very intense and thinks that this is the way to coach. It scared my players from playing better and it did for his.

He came to me one morning after a men's Bible study and mentioned he was meeting with his players to get to know them one on one and to start having relationships with them so when he coached them together in training he would be more sensitive to them, having gotten to know them better. I think he's on the right track.

Lastly we need to get to know God more. Just like I feel honored when a young guy asks me to mentor him, God is honored when we want to seek Him more. We do this daily (not monthly) by reading about Him, praying and speaking to Him, spending time with other Christians, who can hold us accountable (if we are gutsy enough to pour out to them) and so on.

We need to give up control. What in heaven's name are you holding on to and trying to control? It's not worth it! Coaches like to hold on to manipulation, controlling players, deception, personal pride, dislikes and they like to succeed to win matches. How about giving the players more chance to determine their success by letting them help take control with your help? It's the responsibility of the coach to teach the game and impart leadership to his players. One of the great attributes of the Christian coach is to surrender totally to the Lord and let the Lord do more of the control of your training sessions and the coaching of matches. He also wants you to make disciples who can use their brains and grow their relationship with Christ. This means helping to create thinking players who help control the outcome of winning matches. You need to think that if you're His and want to serve Him with completeness of faith and passion, you need to figure out the way to give up controlling your players. If you do this, you'll be that person God can work through by your commitment to Him. He basically wants you to teach the game, while you have faith in Him to turn the wheels of your team to play better.

We need to make changes. Most everything is cause and effect. We coach because that's our role and we try to affect our players' lives while we're trying to win games. The big question we face is-are we making necessary changes and are we personally willing to be changed? Changes only take place in your players if you're ready to change. Most people need to change something, but it never happens unless we recognize the necessity to

change. Are we willing to do a metamorphosis, saying, "Do I need to put my thinking, my attitude and my actions in line to honor God and not satisfy myself or my players' needs before Him?" Of course the answer is yes. Committing to understanding why you need to change and the change for Christ is where it's going to make a difference in your life and there's no other way, my friend. I've heard coaches say, "My way or the highway." Sorry to tell you, but in the end biblically it's God's way or the highway for you-kind of drastic but it is in reality quite true and, by the way, eventually for your benefit and those you empower.

We need to take action. If we're coaching for Christ, we need to be doing the right things and be totally obedient to leading players to the Lord and making an effort to win matches for Him. As we take these actions, we walk and take on the characteristics God wants us to pursue. We move our coaching forward with integrity, honesty, humility, a trusting faith, clean lips, a giving heart, walking in the Spirit of God and in a manner worthy of who you are supposed to be, and in the same manner that Christ walked.

Hebrews 11:1 speaks of what faith is: "Now faith is being sure [convinced] of what we are hoping will really happen and certain that what we do not see is really to become reality." Verse 6b of chapter 11 says, "Without faith it's going to be impossible to please God." If we use the Bible as our guidebook to coaching, we read that in Hebrews 12:2, that Jesus is the author (designer who writes down the exact words of how it's to happen) and the one who develops (sets up the plan) and He strengthens our faith by His empowering. So what, in reality, is the real reason that keeps us from not having this type of complete and trusting faith when we have Christ on our side? We simply take our eyes off Christ Jesus (His birth, life on this earth, death, resurrection and ascension back to His Father) or we never realized we could look at Him with certainty to help us accomplish certain parts of our job. It's that simple. Are you kidding me? Nope, I'm not. It's that simple.

It's seems to me like a no-brainer and I'm sure God wonders why we haven't gotten it after so many years of living, knowing about morality, being in church, Sunday school, Bible study groups, personal Bible studies, conversations with friends and reading books. Hebrews 12:1-2 says, "We need to throw off everything about ourselves that will hinder us and get rid of the sin that so easily strangles us and then we can run (coach) with perseverance the course (our purpose and passion) God has for us. Let's fix our eyes on Jesus." What are your eyes looking at? Are they seeing the world and its messes or Him? Who is influencing your vision? You may need more than glasses.

For many years, my eyes could only see the back of the net. That's the truth and I really mean it. My entire concern, energy and life was centered around doing one thing; and that was get my players to play so well that they put more goals in the back of net than their opponents. I was good at it and they got it and were good at it as well, and together we scored a lot of goals. It was like what Mother Teresa said, "I'm good at something and you're good at something and together we can do something great." My teams and I had great times doing soccer together. We had a lot of fun, worked hard to win matches, shed tears of sadness and joy and loved each other through the common bond of soccer. We sacrificed for each other, and most of the time we had great successes. The one huge problem was that I did not do any of this for Christ's honor or for His name. I did it for my players and myself, so we could look good for each other, the school, and friends and family.

My commitment had great intentions, which were to be the rewards in being successful for the game itself. I had more faith in my players than in God. Sorry to say, but my faith in God was weak and quite absent. I was blinded by achieving success for everything else but for Christ.

I didn't see that my passion for soccer along with a passion for Christ could work together. Had I coached this way, I would have been on the correct course for my players' and my own life. I chose the wrong path and didn't impact players spiritually, and I was in a spiritual no-growth pattern.

Remember, they will know you by the fruits of your labor. In my case it was the fruits of winning the next match rather than winning the next soul. I simply was blinded by my poor choices and did not use what God wanted me to use for Him.

My faith for His purpose in me was a big huge zero. I only saw the important of winning the game and casting a vision for Christ through my coaching was lifeless.

Now and then when I see past players, I tell them, "What a privilege it was for me to coach you. I appreciated you so much and how you served the team and me so well, but I failed you. Would you forgive me?" I tell them how I was so centered on the game that I forgot one part. When they say, "What part was that, Coach?" I tell them about Jesus.

You can't influence players for Christ without using the faith that He has prepared and designed to fit your personality to serve Him. The game is more than the game itself. It's about your life-how you help God affecting the lives of your players for eternity. It has nothing to do with winning a match. The match is just one aspect of the work God wants you to do, so eternal values become the reality of all your efforts being worked out for His final glory. Oh the aches and tears I have at times, knowing that year of neglecting Christ and the lack of what I did not do for Christ could result in the possibility of many of my past players never being in heaven. God though is sovereign and my pray is for many still to be His. I love to see them in Heaven one day. God only knows.

You can't help your players grow toward being followers of Christ, and

see them in heaven one day, without them seeing you model Christ through your faith. Our players are taught the game by us as we model the game for them. Players need modeling. That's one part of leadership. I modeled my Umbro clothing contract, modeled my efforts in the local youth soccer program, modeled my speaking to local community organizations, modeled my teaching coaching courses as a coaching educator, but I forgot to model Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior. Won't do that again! My only hope for so many years of coaching was to win matches, not win guys to Christ. That's not what coaching is all about regardless of where or who you're coaching. Coaching is fixing our eyes on Jesus and pleasing God by using the power of faith and realizing the impact we can have if it's part of our lives and we see why we're to possess it with passion.

My hope for many years of my coaching career was built around the accolades of this world. Even after I feverishly prepared my teams to play matches through intense training sessions, I still was not sure of the outcome at the end of the match. It always gripped my inner soul with an emptiness I was not able to control. Those feelings were a result of my lack of faith in God and in my humanness to believe, that no matter how hard I tried, I could fail at the end of the match if the opposing team scored more goals against our players.

Maybe you're like I was, coaching and making the mistake of serving everybody but Christ. Know that God speaks to us about our past screw-ups when He says in Philippians 3:13-14, "Forget what you did in the past and reach forward to what lies ahead. Press on toward the goal to win the prize which God has called you toward heaven in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:13 says, "You can do all things through Christ, who gives you strength." These are very powerful words from God, and believe me when I say they will impact the direction God is intending for your coaching. They have made a great impact in my life and have directed my path as I serve my Lord

through the passion He has given to me for soccer. If you have faith in these words and use these verses to help you serve, you'll be a winner and develop your growing level of faith not only for yourself but also for your players.

If we, as coaches, put our efforts into our training sessions which are built on pleasing God while using our faith, the outcome of the match we're training for will have great success. I believe you'll produce players as winners not in just the end result of the match, but in the end result of what direction they are heading with their lives. You may not win by actual score all the time, but you will impact your players, because they will see that the efforts of your coaching by faith will have its eternal value on their lives. You and God together will be producing big-time winners.

On a side note: I honestly believe you'll win a lot more games than you have in your past. Why? I've got the faith, and I've been praying that those coaches who read this book and decide to take a different course with Christ in their coaching will see this happen as they serve the Lord.

I did one of our Christian-based coaching education courses for Global Soccer Ministries International in Jamaica in 2004 for a group of Jamaican coaches who coached senior players in a Christian outreach ministry program sponsored through Whole Life Ministries developed by Rev. Al Miller, pastor of the Men's National Team. The league has two divisions and over 50 men's teams and growing. The emphasis of course is to teach biblical principles so coaches so they will have a better grasp of how God wants us to be the person He tells us biblical how to act during team training session and match times. The course also teaches you to better managing your field training. The attending coaches so as they coached and managed their teams they could better impact non-Christian and Christian male players. The course went well and God was impacting certain coaches.

In August of 2005, I had the privilege of meeting one of the coaches who took the course. He got excited when he saw me and mentioned that the previous year they had a nightmare of a season. He wasn't impacting the players either game-wise or spiritually. This year's season was different, he told me, "We won the league and the team got promoted to the 1st Division. But Coach, "He said to me," the thing that was so great for my team was that because of the course, I grew in a deeper in my faith and began to use the Biblical and new coaching principles from the course in my training sessions, team meetings and matches."

He got even more excited when he told me that five of his players came to know Christ as their personal Savior and are in Bible study programs to strengthen their faith. So, faith in this instance worked for him, and it could do that for you if you use what Jesus wants you to have to be a better coach-faith in Him alone and no one or anything else!

I have found that over the years if you serve Him by your constant growing faith and trust Him to work through you using your passion for Him, you'll see miracles happen in your own life and the lives of your players. Faith then becomes the foundation of your passion, the inspiration to serving, the support on which you can build your visions, ambitions, dreams and life's goals for Christ. It is how you're to serve Him to impact the players under your guidance. Without faith, we are only kidding ourselves that everything will be okay. It won't be okay. Your day will be meaningless, useless and you'll be more than likely living out of fellowship with the Lord and possibly be miserable and making those around you miserable. Life will be a disaster for you and the future of your players without faith as your guide to do coaching. Without faith, you can expect that your coaching will produce a lot of unhappy situations for you and your players. You'll be insecure and your life and coaching will not be successful.

But with faith, all things are possible. It's His promise to us. Just as we have hope in Christ for our daily living and for eternity, we have spiritual hope based on biblical truth that our faith, although a growing process, will prepare us for our passion of coaching for His purpose. Your commitment to using faith in your coaching then becomes part of the package which God has planned for you. Without your sincerity to use faith, you can't serve Him passionately and completely. In 1 Timothy 1:5 it says, "God's goal for us is love from a pure heart, a clear conscience and from your sincere faith."

Being the leader of your players depends on you growing your faith and using it to develop and grow each player on your team. As a coach, you need to be committed to the following:

Stay in love with Christ to grow your faith. Without Christ we would have no faith. Seek Him daily through His Word and grow bigger.

Serve Him with your entire heart, because you know that our faith is not much of any value if we sit and do nothing about it. Allow your coaching efforts to be a result of your developing and growing faith.

Eternity awaits you. God has your life planned out on this earth for eternal purposes. This is because He loves you and sees that through the passion of soccer, you could be a coach on His team and be a winner for Christ and not the world. He sees you as a great winner in this world, helping Him win it. This is the real game and it's about to happen in a greater way for you if you start using faith that He created for you. Are you ready to begin?

A Holy Calling to Service

1 Thessalonians 4:7 says, "God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."

Chapter Six

Get Holy or Forget It!

Most of the world is aware of Mother Teresa and her efforts in India with her with the poor. In 1952, her first home opened for the dying. She influenced the building of over 450 centers serving thousands of poor people all over the world. Acclaimed for her tireless efforts of behalf of world peace won her the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. Some of her most famous quotes are really impacting:

- Keep the joy of loving God in your hearts and share this joy with all you meet, especially with your family.
- Be holy - let us pray.
- If you really want to love we must learn to forgive.

If you've ever read about her extensive life and work, you'll see that Colossians 3:12 is really what she lived and died for. It says, "As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." These same words that characterized Mother Teresa should be the same words that impact us as Christian coaches.

We are His and He chose us to coach for Himself because He loves us. His requirement for us to coach is what He names us-holy, so be holy. Coaching is a holy calling by a holy God who expects us to be holy by thinking holy, planning holy, speaking holy and acting holy. You may not be called to India, but you are chosen to coach and to be holy.

Few could deny her special holiness as she fervently served her Lord. The question is why are there not more like Mother Teresa? In 1

Thessalonians 4:7 it says, "God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." If this is what drove her to serve so faithfully, it could be the reason why we don't have a lot more like her out there in the streets and on the fields. Holiness is a process which takes a long time to achieve. To be holy we have to take on the attributes that God is all about: compassion, kindness, suffering, humility, gentleness, and patience. Holiness doesn't happen overnight. Personal holiness is an effort that takes practice, hard work and sacrifice. God, however, wants us to do it. God sees holiness for us as essential as we're developing the relationship we have daily with Him.

Being holy is cutting off what is not pure in your life and concentrating on what is pure. In 2 Corinthians 7:1 it says, "Let's purify ourselves from anything that contaminates our body and spirit, perfecting our holiness out of reverence for God." For all that is said about God's grace, mercy and love, there's no less emphasized about His holiness or the holiness of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, "He called you to be holy in all you do; for it's written: Be holy, because I'm holy." Hebrews 10:10 says, "We've been made righteous through Christ's death." Holiness belongs to those who believe in Christ through salvation. Since we have a God who is holy, it's His main concern that His people likewise become holy as well. Holiness is not just an internal reality but a concept God wants us to perfect. Holiness becomes an outward expression of who we are and what we do. Remember 2 Corinthians 7:1. Guess what? We have to put an effort into being holy in all we do as we coach.

Like anything else, we have to work to get better at coaching to impact our players and we need to be growing in holiness toward God and use it for the success of our players' spiritual growth. If they see you lead like a servant who is being more like Christ, they'll follow you off the face of the earth to win games. You're then becoming the image of God and Christ and the song you'll sing will be the melody they'll follow. God has called you to coach with purpose and passion and being holy will help you get it done. Being holy is a calling you

receive by the impacting of the Holy Spirit on your life. Consider some of the following as you develop and grow in the process of holiness.

Be more like God. 1 Peter 15:16 says, "Be holy, because I'm holy." Our God is really a holy leader and He made us in His image. My picture of God is that I have similar characteristics like Him. One of those is holiness. As we coach, we want some of our character to rub off on our players. They don't have to be like us, but they will, and you should want them to take on the character of your leadership, words and actions. I think God wants us to work that way with Him. So grow to be holier each day.

Recognize who God is. Daily attempt to understand more about His holiness by being like Christ and as you learn more, try to build on what you find out to become more holy. In 1 Peter 2:5 it says, "We are breathing people and are being built into a spiritual nature to be a holy priesthood". To accomplish this, we need to trust the Holy Spirit to enable us to grow in practicing and living for God in our coaching.

Know more about Him. God wants us to understand more about Him by reading His Holy words. In 2 Timothy 3:15b and 16 tells we learn that studying the Bible will make us wise and that is going to be useful for teaching and training us to be holy. It tells us what is wrong and what is right for guidelines to live. Verse 17 says, "God uses His inspired words to prepare and equip coaches to do a good job at coaching."

We regard this earth not as our real home. Scripture is clear that we're just passing through our short stay on this earth and warns us not to get too caught up in this world. It's a great place to live and coach, but our real home and future job will be in heaven. I've coached in a few foreign countries, had wonderful experiences, but I couldn't wait until I got back home. There's nothing like your home. We need to have the desire

to coach as though all we accomplish here is for the purpose of being with Christ one day and to hear Him say, "Well done, my faithful servant [coach]." Jesus wants you to coach for Him in the now and it's His desire for you to be one day at home with Him. To be ready for our end, we must live out our daily lives holy before a holy God.

Holiness will require your suffering. We can't be holy without growing pains. Giving up something, or suffering, is part of it. In 1 Peter 4:12-19 you will learn that this is going to be part of your life and not to think it strange when it's happening to you. We need to stay on course and be committed to God through using our faith and continuing to coach. James 1:2 shares that we'll be facing trials in our lives. Going through these trials or sufferings, though tough at times, will mature us and complete God's work in our lives so we will not lack anything.

I used to tell my players, "Men, you'll have to go through some real live physiological pain in terms of your personal soccer fitness levels to be ready for your first match of the season. Without this pain we would not be able to grow in success to be a winning team." Although it was not always liked and appreciated, the pain served a greater purpose than being able to compete on a match fitness level. My teams were always match fit and were rewarded by winning matches.

So it is with God. He wants us to go through and grow from a certain level of suffering to grow in our holiness. Remember the ultimate for a Christian coach who has withstood the tests of suffering is the crown and blessing you'll receive from God. The one that He's promised you will be waiting. So by being holy, you could win more matches on the earth and get your reward in heaven as well-a double blessing all around. Let's get on with this holiness thing today.

Know how the Holy Spirit can impact you. When Jesus left the

earth, He said He would not leave us alone, but would give us a Person to comfort, help and teach us. That's the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, and He is ready to help you grow holy, to impact your own life and the lives of the players you've been assigned. With a name like the Holy Spirit, you've got to know what He's about. The Holy Spirit is the third person in the trinity and the One who God instrumentally uses to bring us into being holy. The power of the Holy Spirit enables us to search and grow into being a coach who's holy. I like to call the Holy Spirit; "The *Impactor* of my life".

Live out your Christianity. You were designed to live with Him forever, but before this happens, you've got to practice it here on the earth. Just like you expect your players to get better through your practice sessions and matches, God expects you to train yourself daily to be a more holy coach. In Romans 12:1 it says, "Our bodies are a living and holy sacrifice." This is a daily giving up of you personally to the Lord. That means making an effort to practice and train hard to get holy. We're not to be weak but strong. I do believe that hard work yields great team success. Same with getting holy-it needs a big time commitment with action.

The Bible uses the word holiness hundreds of times. God want us to have this quality to be able to serve Him with passion. As we grow spiritually we grow in holiness. As we become more holy, we separate ourselves from the garbage of this world to be more like Christ and the Father; to perform our coaching at the highest standard. By being more holy, we are freed up to living and serving Christ fully through our coaching. Holiness becomes a must. When holiness is developing in our lives, we seem to want to be and grow closer to the Lord, be led by the Holy Spirit, feel His presence more in our lives, see His actions taking place with authority and have a keen desire to serve Him passionately with all that's in us. The Holy Spirit is creating you to be a better person with a new heart, mind and body and you are learning to enjoy and rely

on Him to help you coach. We then are actually living and growing by the Spirit's guidance daily.

The Holy Spirit comes along side us to help with changes that take place in our minds, our hearts, our inner spirits and even our physical being. I like to call them *supernatural manifestations* of the Holy Spirit because for me, they had to be supernatural to change me. These changes help mold us toward becoming holy. The Holy Spirit grows us, just like you help grow your players.

These changes are from the Holy Spirit giving us His characteristics or the fruits of the Holy Spirit which gives us a tremendous freedom in Christ to really serve with passion and purpose. These fruits are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self controlled (spoken about in Galatians 5:22-23.) In 2 Peter 1:8-9 it says, "For if you possess these qualities, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge about our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, be all the more eager to do your calling." Your calling is coaching soccer with passion and purpose and to be holy when doing it.

Serving with Christ's purpose isn't always easy. It's often a battle, but it's more enjoyable to see that you can actually impact your players because you're making the effort God wants you to. That effort for us is to be more like Him and that's doing the Holy thing all the time, as much as possible and doing it with commitment and strength of your character!

Our next chapter is about what tools are available to help you serve your passion. What are some of those weapons to fight the good fight? God makes available His arsenal for us to succeed, and we really need to take advantage of His provisions so we can serve Him with success. Using God's weapons will allow you to fight battles and get victories.

Prepare for a Battle to Serve

2 Peter 3:18 says, "That we are to steadily grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Chapter Seven

Prepare to Battle with Some Great Weapons!

Coaches live part, or a good portion, of their lives through their failures and successes from their own and their players' efforts. I often wondered why we as coaches have to struggle more than succeed, or struggle so much in our attempts to succeed. We struggle through periods of our lives with bad choices, wrong words, over working, bad attitudes, inappropriate actions, weaknesses and temptations that play a significant role in our ability not to succeed.

When we go through trials, we often choose to go contrary to God's Word, His plans for us, the correct appropriation of our abilities and what God really wants for us. We face failures that rob us and from helping change our players significantly for Christ. Often, after realizing that we screwed up again for the tenth time in a row, thoughts come into our heads like, "Will I ever do this Christian life the way it was organized for me? When will I consistently start impacting as the Christian coach I'm supposed to be?"

So, if you're a coach who is experiencing the ups and downs of your efforts to impact your own life and the lives of your players, make today your commitment to start changing all that. Even if you've tried before, start again. But this time, don't turn back. Know that you can do it because He will guide you, give you the strength and He wants it no other way. Don't listen or let Satan get to you and con you into his patterns for success, which never work and cause your failures. They won't help you in the end; they stink and they're rotten to the core like Satan.

I can tell you that you're not alone, because we're in a battle that will only succeed through Christ strengthening you. The Apostle Paul is right on when he speaks about himself. He admits to being an unspiritual person who

sins. He says, "I don't understand what I do. What I want to do, but I don't do, but it's the sin in me that makes me do what I shouldn't be doing. My sin nature that's inside me is not good." I've kind of felt like that in my own life many times. How about you? These words were true then, and are still true today. We battle our inner spiritual person constantly against the struggle of our unspiritual nature.

I have found that life is not always easy during certain times and it takes a greater effort on our part at times, often than we're prepared to commit to. It's no different than a soccer match. As you play the game with all your strength and willpower to win, sometimes the breaks of the game don't go your way. Being a Christian doesn't allow us to avoid having problems, nor will it in the future. If we look at the life of the Apostle Paul, we see a guy who had a lot more struggles than we'll ever go through. As you read about his life in the New Testament, you realize that your life is on easy street compared to what problems he faced daily.

I counseled a Christian friend of mine, who was depressed over situations in his life to the point where he wondered, "How am I to get out of all that is on my plate?" While wondering about his predicament, I told him that Christ is not about what's on your plate or about your how sloppy your plate has become or what you've done. He cares that you're troubled, and He's ready to lift all of that from you if you simply come to Him and give up. He just wants us to let go. It's He who will provide you with the way to straighten out your life, not yourself. It's about the total surrender we spoke of in chapter 2.

Gaining experience to coach others is a process that takes time. It takes going through the mistakes to see certain approaches you're using aren't working, and just don't cut it. Because I was a hard worker and stubborn in my teenage years, my dad used to tell me, "Son you're just going to have to make some bad choices to find out the path you need to improve." That wasn't

too encouraging; it got me angry, because I did not like making mistakes. Mistakes hurt. My dad was right on target as he was with many things he told me and I would find out later his words cut even deeper into my life to impact me to grow up to be the man God intended me to be. Some coaches find out ways to be successful early on, while for other coaches it often takes time. Many of us should have listened to the advice of our fathers or older mentors. I know I wish I would have, much earlier in my coaching.

As you go about preparing to be that coach who is successful both impacting players with a better way to play the game and impact their lives, you'll need to be creating an arsenal of weapons for your efforts. Here are two main areas of weaponry. To win any battle, you have to use weapons to fight. God provides these for us to take advantage of so we can be serving Him the way He intended us to. *The first is how can I spiritually move my life forward to impact my players? The second is how can I be a more knowledgeable coach to impact them to higher levels of playing success, so they can one day people of significance on and off the field?*

Here are some spiritual weapons to impact your players. God shares through His Word a lot of practical ideas to help us as we attempt to impact our players daily and ultimately for their eternal future through our times with them. Believe they will make a difference and be part of your everyday use as you battle with Satan and the world for your players' attention. As you coach, you can actually teach these biblical truths: Pray privately for a specific player; pray with small groups or the entire team at specific times in training (with or without your players); share impacting scriptures that you've memorized; encourage players in His name when you see good stuff happening in your training times; challenge players' spiritual lives; tell them that both you and God love them and much more while you're training and coaching your team.

You're thinking, "That'll never work for my team." Coaches, it will work done in the right way at the right time and over a period of time. Your players will not be afraid to hear you speak about God, so what's stopping you? You don't have enough courage or feel you'll offend someone? Is that your excuse? The only person you'll be offending if you don't do it will be your Lord and Savior. You need to be bolder and more honest with yourself about who is leading your life allowing you to live the way God wants you to. If you don't, you're cheating your players out of what God wants them to see in you and hear from you. You're a coach who has a message to share about the passion of soccer and the passion of Jesus. Pray now for a new commitment to do this and be prepared for action with new weapons. He will give you your strength.

Most coaches concentrate so much on their meticulously planned training sessions, that our Lord doesn't exist at all or only a little in their thinking during these times. You're limiting yourself to a quick team prayer before the game or you're asking for safety for both teams (mostly yours, but covering the other team too so God thinks you're covering your bases when you really could care less about the other team) and the big one is that you ask God for a win today.

Hey my friend, you're really limiting God and how He can use you as a Christian coach. Although these are okay prayers if done from your heart, they certainly leave a lot undone and this attitude on your part doesn't cut it for Him. You become a prayer requester prior to what you think is the most important time (match time) God can help you with. You've left Him out of the rest of your soccer coaching efforts. If He's not part of the other times you impact your players, you need to rethink who you're doing this coaching thing for and why. Ask yourself right now-is it for *Thee or Me*? He needs to be more involved and you're leaving Him out in the cold. How could we do this again when we read so much about how God loves and is faithful to us in Lamentations 3:22-25: "The faithfulness of the Lord never ceases. Great is His faithfulness; His mercy

begins for us afresh every morning. I need to say to myself, The Lord is my inheritance and I'll put all my hope in Him. The Lord is good to those who depend on Him."

So you want God more involved in your coaching. All right then. That's great. Let's get moving. You have to realize that He has this amazing plan for you to accomplish and it's beyond anything you could ever imagine or dream you could finish. He wants you to see from His Word how He can help you fulfill His work in your life through your passion. As we look at what He wants us to know more about, prayerfully and open-mindedly seek Him to impact you as He teaches and guides you.

Believe that God has given you an amazing inheritance. He is giving you an inheritance, a gift, to you and that belongs to you. We just have to start using it. In 2 Peter 1:3 it says, "God's power [He's the creator of all things] gave you everything you'll need to live out your life on the earth to its fullest. He called us to this inheritance by His very words, His perfect glory and goodness to us." So know that you know this promise: He's always ready for you to get active. He doesn't want you to sit on the bench waiting for Him to do His purpose in you. He wants you off the bench now to play for Him. No sitting-A fulltime player on His team. This is His plan for you. It's always been available for you and He is ready for your action, but you've got to make the committed decision to get on with it.

So if we start off knowing you were specifically chosen to play for Him (be a significant coach of others) you do not have to worry about your past, think about your baggage and how that would interfere with playing for Him. It won't. It can't. And He won't allow it. He wants you now as you are. He always planned for you to be a starter. You just have to play like you're a starter. Satan always planned for you to be on the bench your entire life here on this earth. He wants you to be a loser in the game of life. Are you ready to play for God and do the inheritance

thing?

Life is a game that will end with an eternity. We are growing and learning all the time, moving through life and preparing for the end of life on this earth one day. We have a saying within the soccer coaching fraternity and that is, "We never stop learning about the game." I recently spoke to one of my former players, now the director of a very large youth club in North Carolina. I told him, "Although I'm now in my 60s, I still can learn something new about the game and life." And that's true about spiritual growth as well. In 2 Peter 3:18 it says, "That we are to steadily grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." As we grow more graciously toward others, we become stronger in our passion about impacting others. Growing is about getting away from the old me and letting Christ live His power in and through the new me.

I've told many of my past players, "If I can move out of the way, just about any jackass could." They laugh now and believe that statement to be very accurate, having had to live with a one-sided, hard-nosed leader with a semi-tender heart when everything was going smooth. We simply grow graciously from reading the Bible daily and studying it just as if it's a soccer book that would help us win matches. Imagine not allowing your players to have the correct food and liquid intake before a match. They would lose the game that they worked so hard in training to win. You lose as well when you stop feeding on His Word. If you're off it right now, get back to eating it daily. Memorize, read it, believe it has practical use in your life and coaching and have fun watching the Lord use you because you've got the guts to realize that you're on a trip toward eternity rather than the trip of a 90-minute match.

Personal failures can move you forward. Having personal failures in my life and career were reasons to move me forward and grow. We can grow despite our failures and losing games. You can only go back so far before the forward process begins again. It's a matter of how many times you're willing to

go back and forth on the same failure. The question is how fast and how much we want to grow when we fail, and who is pulling us the wrong way or the right way. Growing as a Christian coach is developing yourself in grace despite your sins.

Growth is still a prerequisite of the Christian life regardless of our sin nature (failures in our lives). Don't think for one second that the baggage (sin) you haul around should stop you from growing. Christ wants us to confess once and not repeat the same confession of your failure over and over. We release sin to Him so we can have a maximum effect to be able serve Him, enjoy fellowship and the joy of having Him enable us to be a success. Just like serving Him takes commitment, so it takes a commitment not to continue in that sin we've confessed.

One of my favorite verses I learned many years ago in a scripture memory group in my church with a lifelong friend of mine. It's a verse with such a great promise about when we fail. God is prepared to forgive; He is faithful. Jesus says in 1 John 1:9, "If you confess your sins I'm going to be faithful and just to you. I will forgive you of your sin and purify you." What a deal! This goes for the fact that we can do nothing unless we abide in Him. Why did He tell us this in John 15:5? He wants us to depend on Him all the time and grow in grace, knowledge about Jesus, and then advance our abilities to serve Him, not to be blocked by our failures.

Our growing in grace depends upon a strong fellowship with Christ. It's like your players! They want to be around you (I hope), learning from you, hearing your approval and feeling your presence, so they can receive what you're giving them. In reality they want your grace or your gracious giving because they believe in you as their leader. It's the same with God. He wants to give you grace so you'll believe in Him to lead you. Just as your players want to mature and fully grow their game, Gods wants you to do the same with the

relationship He has with you. He does not want your failures to interfere with this relationship.

One of the basic characteristics of a Christian coaches are they make efforts to be more what Christ wants us to be. Christ is full of grace and since He is, we are and we need to be working at it all the time. Another one of my favorite verses along these lines can be found in 1 Corinthians 13:11 and it says, "When I was a youth, I talked like a youth, spoke like a youth and thought [reasoned] like a youth. When I became a grownup, I put away my youthful ways behind me." Everyone can see how you portray yourself as you grow and do your coaching. Whether you're coaching from the sidelines in a match or in your training sessions, are you acting as a youth or a growing adult?

Did you ever wonder how others perceive you? If you're not too embarrassed, ask a few close friends, your wife and maybe a few of your trustworthy players. Tell them you want them to be straight up, with no holding back. Be prepared for a wakeup call. We need to not be juvenile in our attitudes, no longer unstable, petty, flippant, but rather very steady, maturing constantly, thoughtful, competent and easy to be with. One of the simplest ways to grow our grace is that we focus on what God is going to be doing when we're doing our thing for Him. If we think He's there next to us, we'll impact better and more consistently. Remember John 15:5 says, "That if you remain in Christ, He'll allow you to bear a lot of fruit." That means you're going to be able to see the results of your coaching and it will be very good.

Guess what? You've got a fighting chance, my friend. The smartest thing I ever did in my Christian walk was to let Christ in and let Him take over. I have found over the years it was just too hard and it was impossible to do it by myself and if I succumbed to the pressure, I sinned and failed.

Before I became a Christian the biggest thing that kept me from Christ was me, my sins and seeing me as a big failure even though I was winning games, conference titles and getting into national championship college play-off matches. I didn't think God would take the sins all away at once. I couldn't trust Him to come through for me, because I thought my failures were too immense for Him to handle. Was I ever deceived by Satan, the rat! I couldn't have been further from the truth.

When we sin, His grace says in John 8:11, "Neither do I condemn you." His grace gives us a better way to live and overcome our weakness and mistakes. He goes on to tell us in Romans 8:28 that, "Everything is working together for our good for those who love God and are called to His purpose." The difference between really knowing and following His commands is about obeying Him. 1 John 2:3-6 says, "The [coach] who says, I know Him and doesn't do His commands is a liar and the truth [Jesus] is not in him. But if you obey His word, God will allow for you to be complete through His love for you." You'll know you're in God by walking as Jesus did. If you believe you're called to coach, then do it like Jesus would, use the weapons that He gives you to fight the good fight, and make sure that you grow in grace to impact the lives of your players.

Your players need to be able to trust you. If your players can't trust you, who can they trust? Most players commit to their coach because they believe they'll be led by him. To build a winning team, one of the greatest abilities of a leader is to get others to follow their leading, because others trust who leaders are, what they say, what they see and what they perceive is their role in following a good leader. If your players can trust you in all things, they'll be changed for the rest of their lives.

For without trust, really nothing can be truly accomplished through your efforts.

It's the same idea when it comes to you doing your passion for God. If you are trustworthy, then the Lord can really use you big time. Let's face it.

Can we live trusting God all the time? It's hard to do. We may trust Him for certain areas of our lives and other areas we take over and do it ourselves. Think about it. What areas do you trust Him for and in what areas do you not trust Him? Oh, come on! You've got to have a few, everybody does.

Trusting the Lord is about your character, convictions and strengthening your faith. If your players believe in you, they have faith in you and trust you. They are developing their character because of your influence. One of the greatest compliments is for you to hear one or more of your players tell you to your face they trust in you because they have faith that you can help them get the job done. That's exactly what God wants you to hear from players. It's about you saying, "I trust God to get this done for me. Right, I may have to put in the effort, but I have faith and trust Him to do that in me which I could not accomplish myself without Him being my teammate." Coaching by faith in Christ is what you've got to be all about. If you coach by faith in Him, He'll only strengthen your faith. When we see that our faith is getting stronger, we begin to trust Him more and more to grow us to be significantly used by Him. Remember that as you grow in faith, trusting in Christ, Philippians 1:6 will become a great promise for you to appreciate. It reads like this, "God who began a good work in you will carry (bear the effort) it on to completion for you until Christ comes back." Wow, that means you can be assured (by having the faith) He'll be doing His thing for your passion for the game.

Your wholehearted commitment is the answer. In Proverbs 3:5 we read that we need to "Trust the Lord with all our heart." Jeremiah 29:12 says, "To seek God wholeheartedly." It's something about our hearts that God needs to use to impact others. Why is this? Once I gave God my heart completely, I realized He had me 100%. The problem with this 100% thing is that He wants you to have a pure heart by giving your heart to Him daily, so you can see Him moving in your life.

In Matthew 5:8 it says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Obviously if we have that type of a heart, He wants us to see Him as we go about our day until the one day we'll see Him face to face in heaven. That means that we work on cleaning up our hearts daily so no impure thing enters in to hurt our relationship with Christ. This is a really hard thing to do, and it takes practice. Impure hearts can be forgiven and that's what the Cross was about. This is our way out to get our hearts pure. If your heart is pure, it will come from your deep desire to please the Lord and to serve Him. In 1 Timothy 1:5 it says, "The goal [the work we have to do for Him] is to be done in love, which comes from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith." Having a heart that strains to be pure will allow you to do the action steps He wants for you in serving Him. When you have a pure heart that means you'll be honest with God. He's not interested in dishonesty, faithlessness, selfishness and the like. When we start having those daily chats with God in the honesty of your heart and a walk in faith that's trusting and obeying what we know He has done already in our lives (salvation, forgiveness, etc.), our hearts will grow for Christ [by the power of the Holy Spirit], slowly but surely, with one step at a time focusing on Him to enlarge our serving Him.

Every good coach knows that they need a game [battle] plan to win matches. They know that practicing this plan prior to the match is a must to move forward successfully. I like to call them weapons in attack and defense that will impact your players game. Here are a few practical things you'll need to develop about your coaching so you will be more knowledgeable about the game to bring your players and team to higher performance levels. You can successfully impact their playing development only if you are committed to personal growth and development about the game yourself. The growth and development of available knowledge of the game has been growing by leaps and bounds. All you have to do is make decisions to believe you need to be a better coach and want to go after it. Believe the Lord will give you the strength and understanding to accomplish it. The best coaches don't always turn out to

be the former players. It, of course, really helps to have played the game to feel what players are physically and emotionally going through in training and matches. But the best coach is one who is educating himself with soccer educational information to create a better played game for his players both in attack and defense, and who understands how to get players winning matches and sacrificing for each in a common bond.

Know how to communicate in your training sessions, matches, and meetings with your players, staff and the public. To be able to communicate you have to have the ability to effectively share your thoughts, ideas and information to others so they understand. If you're not good at it, you've got to quit coaching or get better at it, because your players depend on and want your sound and reasonable opinions. After all, they think you're the coach/leader and are on your side because they believe in what you say. You really can lead if you can say the right things at the right time and to the right players. Keep in mind that you can't do all the communicating. I've known some coaches, and all they do is speak through most of their practice sessions and while the match is going on as they furiously run up and down the lines, coming close to clearing out the assistant referees. They never stop and really they cause player confusion. They wonder why their players do not or cannot communicate in training sessions or matches. They've not had the opportunity to learn that, even though the coach has asked them, because the coach is overbearing with his verbosity. I actually was one of these coaches during part of my coaching career. I wanted to win so badly that I felt I had to control my teams by my voice and did not give enough over to my captains and other key players. Wow, did I do the mixed message thing to my players. If I would only have let them say more in training sessions, team meetings and during matches, we would have won more matches.

Practice communicating only what is important. Don't be doing the talking all the time, and when you do speak, make sure it is going to stimulate the players to a higher level of performance rather than shock the willies out

of them. I don't care how mature your players are, they can only take so much of your mouth. When I took my first USSF Coaching badge at age 23 one of the staff coaches said to us, "You can attract more flies with a drop of honey than you can with a block of salt." I remembered those words, but didn't start using them until later on in my coaching career. Be sweet like honey and leave a good taste in your player's minds.

Provide training sessions based on exactly what it takes to play the match. I have met a lot of coaches. I've watched many training sessions over the years, and have run thousands of them myself. I have learned that you always run your next training session or sessions before you play your next match (for field players and keepers) based on their previous match performance and not much else. One of the biggest problems I have observed over the years are coaches who are so intent on winning that their words, actions and thinking from the sideline are swayed by the fact that, while the present match is going on (whether they are winning or losing), they are not concentrating enough on each of their players individually, as small playing groups and as a team in both attack and defense. When it comes time to go back to the practice field, they are not ready to coach their team to win or play better in the next match because they were not paying much attention to their performance standards.

Coaches need to evaluate how they run training sessions and determine the purpose of these sessions in preparing for the next matches. This goes for coaches who are coaching youth through professional soccer. You do this by preparing yourself before the match to concentrate on how all your players are playing as they attack and defend against the opposing side, so you can get them to play better: 1) If you felt they did not have their personal best performance; 2) If it was lower than they usually play; 3) To improve them if they had a good or great performance. Your job in training is to move players to a higher level through better individual player performance and together as a

team from one match to the next in preparation for championship rounds of match play.

You must create, in your training sessions, situations where you allow your players to have opportunities to solve problems for match success. Rather than you continuing to try to solve training session problems or conflicts that may stop your team from progressing in their development in these sessions, teach and challenge your players to feel like you're handing some of that responsibility over to them. As coaches, we often believe we have to have everything worked out from our point of view and expect our players to get it the way we see it and want it. I've found over the years that doesn't always prove correct. Soccer doesn't happen this way. It's a game of creativity based on the creative abilities of your players. Soccer is not played by robots, but the free movement of thinking players in shape going forward and working together to get the ball back if lost, closing down the opposing team shape.

We can learn that each of our players has gifts and abilities that we do not see because we do all the thinking for them and they are stopped from showing us their better abilities or a higher level of their abilities. Your main job is to get your players seeing what you want out of each session and eventually thinking for themselves so they can carry that onto the field in training sessions and matches. If you accomplish this, then you'll be doing less negative information-giving both in practice situations and from the sideline of matches. You're basically getting your players to be more creative thinkers; to solve problems while playing under match conditions. This takes time, but it's worth it, because you're developing players who are thinking while playing without pressure from you during the match. Believe it or not, you'll win more matches.

Organize your sessions to prepare to get your players solving problems when they arise. Challenge them to think, "Why and what are the reasons we're training like this?" They will also, for the most part, appreciate you more

for allowing them to be a role-player rather than a robot in the team's development by you getting them to help you coach themselves and each other for a good part of the time without you always having to think for them. Eventually you'll be actually producing a lot of player-coaches who are playing while you're sitting on the bench watching them win matches. Try it, you'll like it.

Make soccer into a simple game that your team will play well. Don't make it complex by something that has nothing to do with the game.

Know how to motivate all your players. Motivating players is an art. Some coaches were born to motivate and others have to learn how to do it. When we motivate players, it can be by one word, many words or a process that has a plan to bring about success in particular players, groups of players or the entire team. As we motivate, we use encouragement, inspiration and stimulation to allow players to believe that their efforts will bring forth something good for them personally and the team collectively. Christ wants us to motivate with passion for Him, so what we say brings about not only greater performances from our players, but spiritual truths that will help change their lives.

Know how to create partnerships in both Attack and Defense to win matches. Playing soccer has always been a total team effort. To get results from all your eleven players, you must understand that smaller groups of players win matches-not larger groups. In playing a K-4-4-2 groups such as the right outside midfielder, two center forwards and one center midfielder work together with well-timed passes and runs to create scoring opportunities to get goals. When your team is trying to win back the ball, the concept is everyone defends from their playing position and partners with two three team mates whether they are marking an opposing player from the back, in the midfield or a forward. If teams don't work together in partnerships, they'll struggle consistently to win back the ball. Partnerships in defense or small

groups attacking together win or tie matches. I am a big believer in using small side games from 4 vs. 4 to 8 vs. 8 to create partnerships. Your players love to play the game and the more they play in functional small side match related games the better they learn to understand how they work together developing these partnerships for full side matches. A lot more player repetition takes place in their playing positions in small side games than 11 vs. 11 practice matches.

You must go after soccer education opportunities from national licensing programs, mentoring from other coaches, viewing good videos and DVDs. We never stop learning about the game. Simply take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way to advance your knowledge and understanding about the game. The more you seek to know and learn the wiser you'll be. Knowledge and Understanding = Wisdom. In James 1:5 we learn that if we lack wisdom, we need only to ask God for more. God will give it to us generously. God is very willing, but we will not be able to receive it correctly if we receive wisdom for self-centeredness rather than God-centered. When we ask God for wisdom opportunities, ask Him to reveal how you are to use this wisdom for serving Him. Remember, if you like to see success for your players, you must take advantage of as many learning opportunities for yourself as possible. From what you know and understand about the game, your players will be better off. I have run my own soccer team camps for over 25 years and it's always exciting for me to hear that a coach who attends saying he is walking away with new ideas he plans to use in his program from our coaching staff. There is so much today on the internet about soccer education. This information is only going to grow more for your benefit and your players'. Get educated somehow and plan the time to do this. By the way, make sure you're taking a vacation with your family as well.

You must be committed, but not be addicted to your profession. At one time in my life I thought that soccer was not just the most important

thing in life, it was the only thing that mattered for me. This could not be further from the truth. I was addicted to the game. My day of 24 hours was saturated with coaching; playing, recruiting, planning and you name it. I was a slave to the game. It was not fair to my wife, family, my players and most of all me. Any addiction is not good. Addictions control you and put you in a position of making bad errors from bad decisions. Addictions take you away from reality and into confused thinking and living patterns. You need to get away from the game and have forms of recreation and friendships. If you're a family person, you need to have other non-soccer times with your family. They need to be part of your weekly thinking and planning. There are times that the word soccer should not be part of your vocabulary. You will come back to the field renewed, refreshed and ready to better perform your coaching duties. Do it and believe it works. If you're not sure, ask your wife! She'll tell you the truth. Remember truth sets you free. When you're free, you're not controlled by the addiction to the game and free to serve the Lord and your players.

You must train and coach your players with enthusiasm. I saw a commercial one day on TV. It was about a guy who won some sweepstakes for \$100,000. His words when he was interviewed were, "I'm excited to have won." I waited for more, but that was all. Not only did he say very little, but believe me when I say the sound of his voice was boring. He had no enthusiasm and no body language. I literally did not believe he won. He did not convince me. With his lack of enthusiasm I started to think the guy didn't deserve the \$100,000 check. I'm sure those running the sweepstakes really took it on the chin from the bored winner. You can't get your players to believing you're the coach they respect and want to learn from you if you're not going to say the right things, with the right words and in the right way. If you're boring, forget it. Who wants to follow someone who can't have fun, crack jokes, and get players believing in you for their playing success? I used to having pithy sayings or stupid jokes. Somehow, not my family, but my players got some strange rise from them. Even though they heard them a few times

(actually it was too many times). They saw me as somebody who wasn't boring, who had a love and zest for the game. This always inspired me, even when they were willing to laugh at the same stuff over and over again, rather than to walk away from me mentally.

Make sure that what comes out of your mouth reflects the person God wants you to be, not what someone from the gutters of life would be saying, not something that is dead boring. Remember that a lot of others are going to be hearing what you say to your players through what your players say about you. They do speak about you when you're not in their presence, so say it well when you have their ears to listen to you.

You must coach your players with respect, honesty and with love, in a caring manner. In October, 1977, Pele's mission of playing in the NASL in the USA ended. His last match, an exhibition game between the Cosmos (his team, for the younger readers) and Santos (the former Brazilian team he played for all his career), was sold out six weeks beforehand, covered by over 350 journalists from around the world, and broadcast in 38 nations. Muhammad Ali embraced him in the locker room before the match and said, "Now there are two of the greatest."

In a speech to dignitaries, celebrities and more than 78,000 fans, Pele urged his audience to pay attention to the children of the world. He asked the crowd gathered in Giants Stadium in New Jersey to shout together, "Love! Love! Love! Love!" The he went out and played the first half for the NY Cosmos- scoring a goal on a rocket shot from 30 yards out-and the second half he played for Santos. I can remember watching and listening to Pele when he spoke that day. I was age 31 and I began to cry uncontrollably. I was so inspired by his ability to take the opportunity to get people to think that love could change the effect they would have on youth. I believe it was one of those times that I was impacted to believe that I had to take the game and use it to help love others. I

wasn't even a Christian, but I somehow was impacted that day.

Pele earned respect from those who played with him, because he could play the game well and was believed to be a great player by his peers and coaches. He played the game and impacted everybody who watched him in some sort of a special and personal way-not just for a few minutes but throughout an entire game as all eyes were on him to see when the next goal was going to be scored by one of the greatest of all. He was a hard-working, honest player who loved the game, his fans, his country and his teammates. I urge you that you need to be like Pele to a degree. We need to let our players see we honestly care about the game for them and we're willing to do our part for them in an honest way. If you do this you will give of yourself sacrificially for their benefit. I don't know if Pele will be with us in heaven (it would be great if he was), but we need to see the great example of others to set patterns for ourselves. Plan your training sessions with deep a caring attitude, concern and love for your players. If you do, you'll be getting the job done and be surprised by your outcome.

Knowing where you're going to end up will always be incomplete without knowing and being committed to the promises Christ has to for us. You need to put in your effort to do what He wants you to be for Him. His promises for you and His work on your behalf are real and true. Knowing we have an inheritance in heaven waiting for us and given by God to us, we need to work by a growing faith on our spiritual understanding of the bible, growing in grace, trusting God for His mercy to us and doing what we're called to do. We don't do this with a pure heart it's all a waste. Imagine trying to lead a life of perfection on the earth and that's the end when we die with no eternity to live in. No Heaven-simply nothing! What kind of a deal would that be? What would be the use and why bother to be cool for Christ? God's promised us eternal life - living forever past the short time we're on this earth.

Trusting in His words simply makes it so. Christ told us in John 14:2-3, "In my Father's house [dwelling place of God] there are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I'm going back there and prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I'll come back to get you and take you back home with me, so we can be there together with my Father forever." I'm not sure what heaven is really going to be completely like. I think it's one of those unknown factors. If you believe you're here to serve God's purpose, use the passion of soccer He gave you and you work at this to please Him, then look forward to being significant on the earth, impacting yourself and your players' for eternity.

Jesus ascended and returned to the Father for you. He is interceding for those who have come to Him by their faith right now. In Heaven we'll have no more tears, pain, death or struggles. We'll live with the Lord forever and He'll give us treasures and rewards for using our passion for Him. At one time I found that almost mercenary to think that if I work my backside off down here, I'd obtain some rewards and treasures while there as well. Really, you can't beat God's promises. The more I thought about it, the more I really wanted rewards and treasures. I don't know what they're going to be, but they've got to be unexplainable and something just simply fantastic-something that God wants to bless us with for what we did on the earth for Him.

The blessing on this earth is sometimes hard for me to believe. I wonder often why He would choose to give me earthly rewards when I sometimes really don't deserve His goodness at all. When I think that He is such a kind and loving Father, I begin to realize that I haven't seen much of what His best is going to be for me when I get to Heaven. I think that He wants us to realize all this and to better serve Him in the now. Sounds a bit selfish, but God is selfish for His own. He's had a special plan for us, and I believe if we work it, we'll be rewarded accordingly, because He says we will. I believe He is

who He says He is and that's that.

One of my favorite verses is James 1:12 and it says, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those that love Him." Others are 1 Corinthians 9:25b and 27, where Paul is sharing about serving the Lord and he tells the reasons why he has served the way he did. "We do it [coach with passion and purpose] to get a crown that will last forever. I beat up my body and serve real hard so that after I have served others, I will not lose the crown God intends for me to receive."

So we see that God has some interesting resources available to fight the good fight and to serve Him. You just must be committed to using them, make an effort to go for it, rely on strength and guidance from Him to prepare yourself to be the best that you can be. Your commitment is what He wants from you, which brings us to Chapter 8. Go for it.

Commitment for Service

1 Corinthians 9:27 says, "I beat up my body and serve real hard so that after I have served others, I will not lose the crown God intends for me to receive."

Chapter Eight

You Must Be Committed or Give It Up!

Coaching soccer takes a real commitment to hard work. I remember when one of my teams finally got into the NCAA Division 1 tournament on

probably the worst operational budget of all the teams in the tournament. I had to mark fields, help repair the grass on the field and buy the sod out of my own pocket, go out and raise money for the budget to support staff, our operational budget, players, etc. Would you believe my entire recruiting budget was \$1,500 for the year? This covered recruiting trips, postage, stationery, phone calls and players' visits. Worse than a high school travel budget and you're thinking it can't be possible. How could you make it into the NCAA tournament on a budget like that, you ask me? It was commitment! It took a total commitment of my time year-round, working 80-100 hours weekly. My wife and kids never saw me enough! I knew I had to sacrifice more than a coach who had plenty of money to make his program work. I sacrificed and did whatever it took, because I was committed to my job and I knew what price I needed to pay if my players were ever going to feel the grass under their feet of a match played in an NCAA Division 1 Soccer Tournament. And that was just that year. There were many other previous years that unusual and personal sacrifices were made by our players, by me and by staff to be winners. I learned that if you want to win badly enough, you'll give up part of your life, your health, roll up your sleeves, pull up your boot straps and go for all it's worth.

Soccer has inspired a lot of coaches to go beyond their job description. Many reading this book have sacrificed more or are no different from what I did. I have a number of coaching friends that bring their high school teams to my summer soccer camps, and the stories are the same. One coach in particular from NC has even built his school soccer field, so the school teams would have a decent pitch to compete on. This type of effort was a commitment beyond the norm, and he's leaving a legacy for his players, school and mostly himself. He's also a Christian and is bound for a huge blessing and reward in heaven.

When we speak of commitment, it takes more than the physical hard work and emotional energy to actually do the work off the field as well as on the

field. A significant level of mature spiritual commitment is also needed and required. If you're going to serve the Lord through your passion for the game, you need the extra time to commit to your spiritual concerns for yourself and your team. Guess what? It's a hard battle. You can't go it alone. You'll find that inner strength and peace will come only through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In John 16:13 it says, "The Holy Spirit [spirit of truth] will guide you into all truth." The power to use your faith that God provides you with and your efforts will be the enabling factors, allowing you to serve when you get frustrated at your administrator, complaining parents, a poor budget, spoiled players, bus breakdowns and the like. If you're struggling to find a better way to do what you face daily, you'll need to start taking some risks. You need to make the tough choices of being more committed to the Lord, about using your faith, remaining committed to Christ, and using the power of the Holy Spirit to believe God will work His purpose through the daily grind to complete His work through you. Remember you were selected to do soccer for the Lord. Remember what John 15:16 says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to [coach] go and produce fruit [players] that will last. If you do this I will give you whatever you ask in my name."

As you read this chapter, one of the main points is that we are to remain in Christ. It says to remain in Christ eleven times. This is what He wants. *Remain* is a verb meaning to stay even if others leave; to continue; go on being; to continue to exist; endure; persist; last. You don't give in and don't give up. We're to be lasting with our commitment to Christ. Just as you train your players to think and practice this way to win matches, God wants you to do the same for Him. If you remain steadfast, watch His commitment begin to work through you. Just like He said, "He would never leave us or forsake us." He would like you to never leave Him or forsake Him. In 1 Peter 5:7 we read that we are to, "Cast all your care on me [Christ] because I truly care for you." If you

do this humbly, under the control of God's power, He will lift you up to a new way of doing commitment.

There are characteristics which make up what coaches need to be committed to. They are very important, in order to be able to serve and move your passion forward. As you read some of the following, see where you perceive or where others would perceive you to be at this point in your coaching.

You need to be honest. You'll need to speak the truth in a caring manner. Love, our great gift for others, is what Christ wants most for us to be committed to. Exemplifying Christ's very nature is what He requires of us. John 13:34 says, "He commands us to love each other. As I tell you, so you must do it." God loves you, so Jesus will love you as well. His love will remain in you as you show this love to your players. Jesus commands us in John 15:12-13 when He said, "Love each other as I have loved you." The greatest love you can have for a player is that you can sacrifice for the Lord as you serve them.

Players need to be a mentor. Most players don't have a lot of people in their lives that tell and show them they love them, who care enough about them to tell them about their development in the game and talk to them about their spiritual lives. Your job is really to go after improving their match play and to help grow their spiritual walks. Coaches need not fear teaching players truth. Just do it in a loving and honest way. Ephesians 4:15 says, "That we need to speak the truth in love, and then we will grow together with Christ who's in charge of our lives." Giving an honest answer is a sign of your friendship with your players and you're building their trust in you.

The game of soccer is for the tough and sturdy coach and player. By the very nature of the game, we need not to be afraid of conflicts that arise. Face them head on. Don't gloss them over and create a false sense

of peace. Players can quickly sense inter-team problems, and they need to be solved ASAP. Open discourse is a must. No secrets, so Satan gets in on the act. Keep him out and off your team. He has no place near it or on it. As you teach, your team is to be connected by the very nature of the game; they can be connecting in the body of Christ with your leadership at the same time you teach the game. A real coach with a real team depends on his honesty and frankness, creating commitment to what they stand for and what they're going to be about on and off the field. If you can influence your players to be honest, you've guaranteed they will be further committed to the team.

You'll need to be humble. Ever experience a coach who is stubborn, single minded, the picture of self importance, a know-it-all guy, rude or it's their way or the highway? I had a high school coach who had no clue about working with players to either improve them on the field or positively touch some aspect of their hearts. He has no interpersonal relationship skills. He did such a bad job that I think he probably subconsciously drove me to make a better effort than he did. He had no idea how to coach or treat players. It was his way or the highway, and he was so stubborn that he was not appreciated. We were stuck with him, because we loved sports-not because we liked or loved him. Not many players wanted to commit to him. My love for sports superseded my liking of him, as did many players on our team. He would not make it today's school systems. He would be found out pretty soon and lose his position. I don't think he could spell the word [Jesus]. Sometimes where there is nobody for the hiring, somebody has to fill in. They're out there still, aren't they? They are not humble and full of pride and have no clue.

You don't need pride. Pride blocks moving ahead with the development of your players' soccer and spiritual growth. Pride blocks movement forward toward what God wants through His purpose for you. With

pride on your plate you will struggle to succeed in seeing your passion for the game be integrated into the lives of your players. Coaches like this may think they're getting the job done, but their self-absorbed blindness is killing the game and what God wants them to do through Him. If you have pride, it opposes God and hurts Him. In Proverbs 18:12 it says, "Before a man's [coach's] downfall is his heart of pride, but humility comes before honor." If we get our acts together, we'll be honoring God before our players. In Proverbs 3:34 it says, "God opposes you having pride, but He'll give grace to the humble." If you had a choice, wouldn't you want the grace of God given to you rather than to be in deep trouble because you've got a problem with getting your way all or part of the time? How about making some better choices, my friend? Think about God's grace for a moment. What is it and how do we get it? We get it by the acceptance of Christ as our personal Savior. God freely gives us salvation through Christ's death for our sins. Through this gift for us, He also gives us mercy when we screw up and He always loves us through His continued kindness, His grace to us. His divine grace is never ending for us.

Here are a few ideas I suggest to use when your pride starts to appear and your humility is not functioning like God wants. Try them. They can actually work for you if you use them.

Learn to be more patient. Be willing to wait for your players to respond. Let them try to sort out and solve problems in training sessions so they carry over to matches. Don't expect instant perfection. Rome wasn't built in a 90-minute match. Have some fun and wait and see if they can respond to your coaching. Don't try to manipulate them with pressure. Pressure doesn't work effectively. All you have to do is figure out a new way to teach them to play better. After all, you're the coach and you need to be able to challenge them with different approaches. If you're patient with your players, chances are they'll get it and be able to put a bigger effort into what you want from them. They even appreciate you giving them some time to get where you want them

to go. Try waiting for a while, it's a kinder approach and more loving. Be like David in the Old Testament when he shared with us in Psalms 25:4-5. He said, "Show me what you want, teach me in your truths and teach and guide me for you're my Lord and Savior. My hope is found in you and I will wait on you all day long." Remember you're coaching for God and you have a responsibility to teach and guide your players correctly.

Be ready yourself to receive correction and follow it. You're not the only guy on the block. For years, my wife has been my greatest advisor and friend, whether or not I like or want it. If I only would have listened to her earlier in my coaching career! They say behind every man is a good wife. In my case I say from time to time, behind my dead brain cells is an unbelievable wife. It may not be your wife. It could be an older person who could mentor you. It could be just listening to your players and what they think about you. Find a friend that will hold you accountable for getting it together. Remember that you're not always right. Life's a learning experience and the answers are out there if you don't know them all. Find them to do your job better.

Point the spotlight away from you. Give honor and the credit of your accomplishments to other people who were part of it and who deserve some of the credit. More than likely it will be your players, who have to physically and mentally put up with what you give them and who have killed themselves for you.

Be careful what you say in public. Keep your public words to a minimum and keep what you'd like to say to players sometimes inside you. Don't sin with your words, but rather show love through them. Matthew 12:36 says that, "Everyone will have to give an account on the day they face God at the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken." We better starting shutting up our mouths with those thoughtless words, and strive to be like David when he wrote Psalms 19:14, "May the words of my mouth and

the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." Make sure our words please rather than destroy.

Humility is thinking and doing for others and less about your agenda. It becomes the act of thinking less about you. You think, do and say more about your players and other staff than you do about yourself. When you start focusing mentally and verbally on others and their successes, you're honoring God. Doing less of the about the, *me concept* and more about the *others concept*, means you're on target with being the humble character God wants you to be. From the practice of being more humble, you will cultivate your players to play better and you'll have a better chance working with them to develop their spiritual growth. Humble men are men and women to be trusted and believed in. If you want your players to believe and trust you, be a humble character.

Respect your players regardless of who they are and how they play. The key or the art to gaining the respect of your team is to understand where your players are coming from and where you believe you can take them. We all carry baggage that affects our daily living. Players aren't any different. They carry baggage just like you, sometimes pretty heavy stuff. We've all seen many types of baggage: divorced parents, death of a family member, boyfriend or girlfriend problems, drugs, stealing, cheating, alcohol, bad grades and a plethora of other issues. Don't emphasize how far they have to go to change their baggage, but rather how far they have come with the baggage they carry. Remember that if we had to clean up our baggage before we become Christians, we could never have been one. You coach players, not baggage. Christ saved you, not your baggage. As you accept your players and help bring their lives and games together, you will be able help get them out of the hole they're in. By respecting your players as players and not disrespecting them because they carry loads that burden them; they will respect you for working with them as you build confidence within them to move their very

character, lives and games forward.

Develop a Confidentiality Policy among your staff, your players and you. If your players can come to you privately, you'll be the guy who is trusted. It often takes time for this to happen. You have to prove that your mouth is a locked safe, and nothing is allowed out. Your heart becomes a private vessel that retains those problems, hurts, secrets and expectations of your players. Until you're allowed by them to share, you are just a sponge soaking up your players' confidence in you. As you have confidence and trust the Lord listening to you, it is very possible that players need a higher authority to guide them.

You need commitment beyond the match. Committing to your team and bringing them along side you, so you'll be serving God with your passion. This must be a consolidated by you effort to help them in their game and create an attitude that God's in charge and He is where your source for your strength comes. Growing your team and every player is your responsibility and must be your hearts' desire. As a coach let's see what is needed to be the enlarging of your team. So as we move into chapter 9 we're going to discover how we can develop and grow our players. You ready?

Mentoring and Enlarging Others

Ephesians 4:2-4 say, "Serve completely humbly and with gentleness; be patient, holding your brothers [players] up with the love of Christ Jesus. Make your every effort to keep unity and peace by the power of the Holy Spirit. There's one body and one Spirit to help you do this."

Chapter Nine

Growing Your Team Is Your Job

As a coach your role is to protect the unity of your team, so all your players are on the same page and in sync as they play together. Just as God wants you to be in harmony with Him, He expects you to create an atmosphere amongst your players so they'll think and respond almost as one on and off the field. Unity is the essence of the team. It provides the way for growing, not only

in the game of soccer but in the game of life. Unity destroyed by a lack of poor leadership or players who are not properly brought along by leadership means that your team will have a lack of levels of cooperation. Ask yourself, "Am I providing a Godly environment for my players? Do I provide an atmosphere where the development of healthy thinking and actions are perpetuated and can I be the encouraging leader for my players to live a more Godly life both on and off the field through my example and commitment?"

God wants your team to get along with each other. Your team is no different than the purpose God has for the Christian church. He wants them to be in one accord. Your team is like most church in our society. Some may know Christ; others may not or they just know about Him. In fact, you may be the only Christian on the team. If this is the case, you've got your work cut out and the challenge is before you. But you have the power of faith on your side, and with your passion God will empower you to do His purpose in your life. Because of Christ's death and the price He paid for you and your players, He's about helping you bring your players to Him. He'll not fail your heart's desires. If you can get your players unified, He will use this as a basis to grow each person on your team. One by one, a work will be done until He has those whom He has called. The tough part of reaching them and bringing them along in the faith is for you to know that you have to grow your team up and not just concentrate on winning matches. It will take an inner strength and peace that will be given to you by your Father, because this is what you know He wants you to do and you are going to do it with all your heart, mind, strength and soul.

Ephesians 4:2-4 tells us how we can accomplish this. The verses say, "[Coach] completely humbly and with gentleness; be patient, holding all your players up [not crushing them] with the love of Christ Jesus. Make your every effort to keep unity and peace by the power of the Holy Spirit. There's one body [your team] and one Spirit to help you do this." Verse 6 says, "There's one God who is our real Father, who is in control of everything

and does His work through and in all He created and planned." Your team is part of His plan, and He means business and will help you to be successful and to get the intended results.

The responsibility of growing your team lies with you as you search and find the ways God wants you to act and react to your players during your training sessions, team meetings, matches and time away from the soccer field. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7, God is speaking to us when He says, "These words that I am giving you today [and every day] are to be in your heart. Teach them diligently and repeat them to your players. Talk with them when you're on the soccer field and when you're just having a walk with them away from soccer activities and do it with planned or informal times from the morning until the time you fall asleep." As a coach I've learned that knowing what God's Word says is vital; memorizing Scripture, praying and giving love to your players are three ways that will impact you personally to grow your team. I was never too good at memorizing much, and it seems like the older I get the harder it becomes. But God wants us to make an effort to put some of His Word deep in our hearts and minds. Having made the fair effort to memorize Scripture, I found God to be amazing. Somehow-and I haven't yet found out how He does it, God recalls His words from my brain-damaged cells (from striking a ball for over 40 years) and allows me to recall His words when someone needs to hear Him. I get excited about that and want to memorize more passages.

Praying for your players works and gets results. Results come when you know how to specifically pray for each player. That means you seriously have to get to know each one and be part of their life so you'll know each individual needs. Prayer that is uniquely for them is so vital to share with God. God will answer these prayers and impact your players' lives through them. Prayer is to be done daily and with a wholehearted effort. In Jeremiah 29, we are told that God has a plan for everyone and we

don't get it until we pray and seek him with all our heart. That means you can also pray for your players because they are part of God's plan. God will listen to you when you pray for their needs on their behalf. Ask in His name, believing.

If you don't make an effort to care for and help your players, you are showing them you don't love them. One of our greatest gifts to them is our deep concern for them through our open expression to them, not only about improving their match play, but how you can help their personal lives develop. They have made your team because they are good at what they do. They are pleased to have been chosen by you to play for you. This is a good place to start. Don't blow it by disliking them after you've chosen them because you don't like a few things about them and the way they are fitting into your program. Romans 12:9-10 says, "Your love must be sincere and that you're to be devoted to each of your players in prayer." Keep talking to God about them. Good stuff will happen!

Remember. Build on continually loving your players, praying for them and knowing what they need to hear from you and from God's Word. Try focusing on some of the following ideas as you grow your entire team.

Create a common focus. When you are with your players, either working with them individually or collectively, focus on what they all have in common. Coaches know that in order to win matches, everyone, though different from each other, has a role they have to develop to succeed to blend together as a team. Each must think similarly, play with a team style and respond well together in success or failure, not to mention believe in each other. They have to be unified to be winners. As you coach, know that the threads that hold the team as one body are the players uniting together to be successful. The Bible speaks about this coming together. In Romans 12:4-5 it says, "Just as each of us [your players and you] have our own body with many parts and they all don't have the same function, so are we in Christ many from

one group and each member of the group belongs together." Verse 16 goes on to tell us that we're to live in harmony with each other. Take the role of leading your players as a group with a common destiny and goals that are achievable through your leading.

Be realistic about your expectations. As a coach you may have a huge gap between your ideal team and what your real team is. I remember at the beginning of one of my pre-season training camps I saw one my university teams play an inter-squad match. I knew we'd have a great season. We ended up 19-2-3. This was a great year for unity and growing a team. Success breeds success. The following year in pre-season I thought, "Wow another potential season," but with injuries and a few good players on the team who turned into bad apples, we wound up having a losing season. It was no fun and my expectations for the season never developed for the team and many of the players. It was one of the worst seasons of my career and for many of my players. As coaches, when our players can't reach our high expectations, we often become too critical by starting with individuals, and then when we don't win games, the team is next to go to your chopping block. Real expectations about your players from you as a coach are a necessity for team unity. The moment you start being unrealistically critical about abilities players do not yet possess, you're going to lose it with them.

They can read you and pick up the bad vibes and they'll struggle to perform for you at a level they're not yet ready to reach. Don't let your players become disillusioned with you, because you set a standard so high that they are discouraged to even put their boots on for practice. Be careful about setting your goals for your players and your team before you see them perform in several matches and spend time with them. Once you see what your team can do as a group, plan how you can best grow them as a team that will have success and enjoy the entire process together.

Choose encouragement over criticizing. It sure is easy to stand on the sideline and criticize individual players or your team, who are doing all the work for you. The pressures they face on the field are often overlooked by zealous coaches who only see their way or the highway. You may not think so, but your players are killing themselves for you and one word of discouragement can cause players to tune out of their role and tune on to thinking some pretty harsh things about you, rather than focusing on the match. If players are serving you and their team members and you're cutting them apart, you may be interfering with God's work in their lives.

When taking my USSF National C badge in the early 70's one of our coaches spoke on this same subject. I always remember he said, "You can attract more bees with one drop of honey than a huge block of salt". Kind words of encouragement go further than useless words of criticism. Romans 14:10 says, "Why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on him? You'll stand before God to be judged one day." Verse 12 says, "Each of us will give an account of his words and actions one day to God." What is God going to say to you about you? Are you a loving, non-judgmental coach?

I know personally that I was real hard on my players from the sideline in many games. Encouraging as well, but demanding. I sent mixed signals. I wish I had not coached that way. It confused my players too much. They saw me loving them with the passion of the game and not liking them because I was too strict. I believe we could have won more games had I not sent mixed signals. I think I know the answer before I get to give my account to the Lord. I hope He takes it easy on me. I'll just have to be prepared. I'm trusting God to be more loving to me than I was to my players. It's Satan's job to try to cause you to be a complaining and critical coach. Don't be into helping Satan do his job. Satan is the enemy, not your players. You need to fight him, not join him. Imagine the amount of time you've spent in the past in criticizing your team. That energy, used positively, could have been developed in unifying them. You

would have won more games. I've been there and done that.

When you make critical judgments about your players, six things immediately happen to you based on biblical principles:

1-You temporarily lose your fellowship with God.

2-You show your pride against God.

3-You show that you are insecure and not trusting God to help you get your job done through love.

4-You're held accountable and judged by God.

5-You harm the bonding of you to your players and team.

6-You're breaking God's heart.

Be a good listener. Refuse to listen to information that is full of gossip. Gossip is information passed on that will potentially destroy team unity. In Proverbs 26:20 it says, "Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down." Gossipers have one thing in mind; destruction of unity. Gossip kills like a pesticide does to erratic unwanted roaches. A gossiper plans out carefully how to hurt others and if not stopped right in their tracks, their words can kill the innermost parts of the emotions of a team or individual players. You need to squash these threatening messages and you certainly are never to be part of them and encourage hurting words. Your role is to listen to your players and team, and give words of encouragement and hope. Gossipers can't be trusted and they need to be strongly counseled and may have to be removed. They'll even gossip about you. In Proverbs 26:24 it says, "A malicious person disguises himself with his lips, because in his heart he harbors deceit." Verse 28 says, "A lying tongue hates those it hurts." Get out those pesticides.

Create the leadership on your team to be winners. Support the leadership on your team and mentor them to lead. Be that model they will choose to follow. Although all your players have a responsibility to get their job done and lead their part of the team, you have carefully chosen several key players on your side to help you lead and take responsibility to unify the team. Meet with them frequently to achieve and support their helping you and their teammates.

Practice conflict resolution. In Matthew chapter 18 we see that it's your responsibility to work out the faults of your players with them and come to an agreement. You may even want to bring others into the picture to assist you. Often small group meetings or entire team meetings can be used to work out individual or group problems. Sometimes its better when others point out a conflict that maybe happening with the team, rather than you have to do it. You'll be surprised how the person causing conflict will see a different picture about himself when the rest of team says, straighten up, mister. Verse 19 of this chapter says, "If two people come together and ask for an agreement, it will be done for you both by my Father in heaven. For several come together in my name, there I [God] will be doing it for them." Sometimes coaches go to a third party first, rather than directly to the player who needs to be spoken to. You're not very courageous or smart using this method. It only makes matters worse. You need to speak directly to the player you're upset with. This should be done as soon as possible.

Get yourself challenged to protect the unity of your team. Please God and put a solid effort into this part of your coaching duties. Early effort will keep your team on target and keep them unified. The truth is that your players are looking for love and a place to belong to express themselves to you and their teammates through the game. Each player wants you to care for him and he needs you.

Really, they are no different than family members in your household. Players commit to you not so much because they love the game, but because they want to play for you. What a great opportunity you have as a coach to nourish each player on your team, to bring about the unifying of each person you're coaching toward a common goal. Even greater is the opportunity when Christ is emphasized and players come to know Him personally and grow like the Man [Jesus] they want to play for. Your job is to image God through His Son to your players. The road isn't an easy one but with His help and your passion for the game, you can do it.

Serving the Master through sound Biblical methods to bring your players into oneness is what God has for your purpose. Once you start to move to a more complete commitment level to serve God you'll see impacting taking place in your program. You will have success beyond your imagination. It's here where you'll start to realize that your impacting others comes directly from the Lord. What is going to happen next is that Christ will turn your personal successes into significantly the lives of those in your sphere.

Are you ready to use your past successes for future significance for Christ? Our next chapter is simply about this. Thanks for staying in the game. One more chapter to go, my friend, and I hope you'll enjoy the last part of this journey. May I suggest that right now, you bow your head in prayer and re-commit your past successes to Christ, giving your Father God the credit for your success! Pray also that you be able to fully understand why He wants you to be more than successful and what His plan is for you to be significant for Him through your coaching. Praise His name and I wish God's richest blessing on the remaining efforts in soccer for Him. Be ready to be used in a great and mighty way.

You're Significant so You Can Serve

Romans 8:29a, 30, and 31b says, "For those He knew before you were born also predestinated to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, and you who He predestinated, He called, He justified and

glorified. If God is for you, who can be against you? God did not even spare His own Son for you, but gave Him up for you - how will He not also, along with Jesus, graciously give you all things."

Chapter Ten

Change Your Success into Future Significance!

Everyone has had some sort of success in their lives. It feels great being successful. It's supposed to. It gives you impetus, courage and a reason to be more successful. Why not? Success does create more success. Success is what we're to be about on this earth. We were not born into this world to be losers. That's not God's plan. Not to achieve success from our passions would be to reject God working in your life. He simply wants us to be very successful. Imagine God wanting us to not achieve success but rather have a lifetime of bad experiences from our efforts. The Bible is packed with one success story after another and a God who cares deeply to see His plan for you to succeed through you.

Your success may have started during your childhood, during your early school life, high school years, university life, in your married life or during the time of your employment career. Your success may have come from your cultural background, family, education, church life, community in which you lived, your job, from your marriage or from your parenting. Chances are you're a former soccer player or athlete and you've had success from your playing career. If you're coaching right now or have been, chances are you've had some success. So you've had success. Remember those times! You've succeeded in winning matches, impacted your players and been looked at by your school and community as being able to help others. You're a winner! Now what are you going to do with it? That's right, what are you going to do with your abilities to succeed? What do I mean? What are you doing with your success to be the significant person God intended for you to be? Let's define both.

Success is usually the result of a positive outcome of an event that you've experienced, through your efforts of accomplishment with designed steps, to achieve a purpose. In other words, you do something planned and you get results that make you feel real good about yourself. Think about it. Success for the most part is designed for or by you, it's personal and it's fulfilling.

Significance on the other hand is the potential you possess to be influential over others when you give your efforts in a special way that will have meaning or value to impact them. What you achieve will then render something desirable, valuable or useful to others. That means you'll find a way, take the time and have the guts to choose and follow your path in life to use your past successes to significantly impact the lives of others for Christ. Actually, the sooner you start being significant rather than successful, the sooner you realize that you're really on God's team and no longer succeeding for others or yourself. A much better way! Much better outcomes! Much better rewards await you!

Are you ready to move forward and allow Proverbs 3:6 and 13 to be your calling? Solomon here is saying that we are to trust and honor God. Verse 6 says, "In all that we do acknowledge God and He'll make your path (Coaching Soccer with passion and purpose) straight." Verse 13 says, "A person is blessed if he finds wisdom and then gains understanding from that wisdom." Having been successful, you have certainly been able to gain and grow your abilities to succeed at soccer.

There has to come a time when you take your passion to succeed and use it significantly in serving God and His purposes. Your path, my friend, is the passion that God gave you and He wants you to use it the rest of your dying days to serve Him. Are you willing to do it? Are you ready to make decisions that will not be based on the world's standards of succeeding, but on what you believe to be truly right through the very Word of God? Start making your decisions based on biblical truths and choices brought about by your deep faith and love for the passion for Christ and the passion for soccer; decisions that will bring those you serve to a great understanding about Christ and a maturing way to coach based on truth.

Are you willing to sacrifice your personal gains to be significant for the Lord Jesus Christ? It all boils down to this. If He is pre-eminent your life then what you're going to be about will only lead to significance. Are you ready for action, my friend? As we make that effort to walk through life being significant, we must stay the path He has charted for us, not the path we choose for ourselves.

If you're starting off making that commitment to be significant, do small steps for Him first. Don't try to do the overwhelming. Try being significant at a few small things for Him and see what happens. You'll soon be given a lot more to do.

In 2001 God pierced my heart with a soccer ministry called Global Soccer Ministries International. I had only a small vision for this ministry, but I had a deep love for soccer and Christ and I was passionate about bringing the two together to impact youth and adults spiritually. I didn't know where I would start and what the next steps were going to be. He tested me with a few small steps. I did a few small ones and got blessed seeing the success achieved because we used soccer to significantly impact others for Christ. It felt good to my innermost parts and I felt that the Lord wanted me to do more. I was feeling good so I told the Lord, "Let's go for whatever you want for me to do for you, but only give me a few of your signs so I can see you working when I look for results." Here's one of those success to significance stories.

In April and May of 2004 I went to Romania to help start a GSM program in the Transylvania region. I had met a youth pastor who love soccer and want to start a soccer ministry in his town. I had met him in 2002 while he was in the USA. We met and discussed the vision and passion I had for using soccer to reach others for Christ and he asked if we could do something together in Romania. I asked the Lord if this was what He wanted for almost two years. We decided to start a program in September of 2004 after my visit, but I arrived that April 2004, the psstor had about 40 plus youth players [non Christians] already playing and involved in soccer training, gospel outreach activities and he had eight Christian volunteer coaches who he personally trained spiritually to do soccer ministry. Needless to say I was thrilled. While there I did not expect the Lord would, through two weeks of outreach soccer activities and tournaments, bring to Himself over 150 youth and adults as Lord of their lives.

Anything I had been involved in with soccer before this trip was all about trying to be successful to win games. Nothing I had accomplished in my soccer career was as significant as this. Not even being when my teams were in the

NACC Division 1 Tournaments, which had always been my dream. The nearest thing that I had in helping bring someone to Christ was one of my college players, Wayne 'Mundy' Smith just after I got saved in 1984; a real true friend of mine and a man who loved Jesus. He even wanted me to baptize him, but when he went in the water I found out he couldn't swim too well, so he got saved twice that day! (Glad I had taken the American Red Cross Water Safety Instruction course in my day's college!)

The Lord was saying to me in Romania, "Paul this is what I've been waiting for you to be involved in with me. Your heart is now trusting in me, you're not leaning on what you know, but what I've given you to use for serving me and I'm going to make this your path so straight you'll be impacting others in a significant way for me." We have a saying in soccer when something powerful and great happens and it's, "That knocked my socks off me." When I saw the Holy Spirit impact those Romanian youth and adult players and I was hooked on what He wanted me do for Him and I'll never turn back. I was becoming a significant factor for Christ, not just a winner of games, but a winner helping win souls for Christ. Man that was impacting!

Keep in mind that you could be a Christian coach and have great success in this world. You can achieve something from nothing and receive great respect and honor from those around you. I've been there and done that several times. Success in man's eyes means achieving in and by the world's standards. It's seasonal and you live from one season to the next. You're living for each season. It's a moment in time and it's not lasting. These types of coaches see themselves serving their players, schools, communities and often their egos, although they might not admit the latter. They pray for wins, championships, for bigger budgets or to keep the ones they've got. They want more recognition for their sport, not to have the wife press them too much after a long day in the office and training sessions, and they even ask God to supply them with good forwards to score goals for them. It's all about their

succeeding, their being in control, their pleasures and wants. Have you ever done any of the above?

What soccer has to become for the Christian coach is about how God can help you reach success, achieve goals and purposes for His significance and not your own. Success in God's eyes for you is when you make a commitment to serve God wholeheartedly so He can work through you with the gifts He's given you so the outcome of your efforts will ultimately impact others significantly in the game for great spiritual purposes. *Worldly Coaches* know they are on a mission to serve themselves or someone else and its short term. *World-Class Coaches* know they are made for a mission and see that the outcomes of their successes are used to serve God significantly long-term and for a higher purpose.

A few years ago I had a coach come from England to one of my camps. For the sake of not using his name, let's just call him Peter. Peter was a great guy with a smile on his face—a good solid coach and a fine person. He played soccer most of his youth and a good portion of his adult life. He played nationally for his country and played on several top professional sides. After he retired from his playing career, he worked hard at getting his coaching badges and became a coaching educator in the UK. On the outside, Peter had a great career and a good future ahead of him. On the inside I believed he was hurting. He'd been through several marriages, through alcoholism and had carried a lot of baggage over the years, some of which was still evident. The result of Peter's life was that he was a worldly player and continued his career as a worldly coach. Compare Peter to a guy I met in Jamaica, whom we'll call Johnny. Johnny grew up in the ghettos of Jamaica, played at good standards of soccer, played for his national team, but got into the wrong crowd at an early age and was going down the tubes at a fast pace. In fact, you name it, he did it. He had women, drugs, alcohol, guns and anything his heart desired. He was a thief, robber, gambler, drug dealer and Johnny knew that he was bound to die from this type of lifestyle sooner or later. He had not

only plenty of enemies from the criminal world, but the police were out to get him. While in his late 20's he was walking by a church, and he shares in his testimony about how he was supernaturally pulled into the church sanctuary. He felt compelled to confess to God his lifestyle and ask for His forgiveness. He knew he needed to escape his worldly lifestyle and that day he did. He died to Christ, and today Johnny is involved in one of the largest Christian youth programs in Jamaica, married with a family.

What's the difference between Peter and Johnny? Johnny decided that any success he had with sports and the life he led had no significant value and he made a commitment to face the reality of working to be significant for Christ. Peter has believed that, although he faces daily struggles, his efforts can get him to a high level of success the world has to offer. The choices we make to be significant, like Johnny did, are what God really wants for us. Johnny's successes today are serving up platefuls of significance every day. Peter is still trying to be successful.

World class coaches become servants to those around them. Their significant work for Christ through their personal qualities and passion truly become their influence to serve and to teach not only the game but Christ through Biblical principles. These coaches are ready to be used by God and will boldly go before their players and the world to be significant. They glow with confidence and peace, having a joy about them that's contagious. Those having the opportunity to be around them, learning from them, being mentored by them and being prayed over will be impacted. These coaches let God be in control and His kingdom is being spoken about and taught through soccer for significance and not the personal success of the leadership.

God has given a mission to you and it's not an impossible job for you to achieve. He tells us that He'll never leave us or forsake us and His promises are real, true and justified. He wants you to significantly impact others. Most

successes we've had have been by the world's standards and have been based on our personal hard work. This is a natural part of success-work that is! God wants us to look past the immediate impact of success to a higher level of thinking, acting and repeating, that being impacting your players for His significance. We're to remain on this continuous and conscious journey from success to significance.

In Philippians 4:13, the key concept is that through Him (not ourselves) we have strength for success to be significant. You see, Christ gave up His life so that He could give life to you so that He could live His life through you. The Lord's promise in John 10:10b says, "I have come that you might have a great life and have it abundantly." We're on a journey and a process of growing that takes a lifetime, but being like Him your journey will happen. Romans 8:29a, 30 and 31b says, "For those [you and me] He foreknew [before you came to earth] He also predestinated [had a special plan for] to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, and you who He predestinated, He called, He justified and glorified you. If God is for you, who can be against you? God did not even spare His own Son for you, but gave Him up for you; how He will not also, along with Jesus, graciously give you all things." Wow! What a purpose, an empowering and a promise. Christ died for you, was raised to life for you, is with the Father right now and is interceding for you. This is true love and shows the successfulness of God's special plan for you and me. How significant is this? Verse 39 in the same chapter says, "In all the things we do, we are more than conquerors." Our journey is dependent on our faith in the living Savior.

Remember what our Lord told us, "Apart from me you cannot do anything." He wasn't joking. He really meant it and that why He said it. Our power to be significant comes from Him only. If you believe He's your Savior, then you'll believe in the reality of His Word. His words are true and they set you free to do His purpose and your passion. If you want to be freed up to do significant things for God, let His truth set you free! Stop fantasizing about

who you think you are, some-big-time coach who's on an ego trip. Just be that simple, humble character that shows grace and mercy to his players and is ready to die for being significant.

Well, are you ready to take your success to levels of significance? Are you ready to do what you've been appointed to do before you hit the turf the next time? What choice do we really have? When you think about it, it would be far better for us to move spiritually through life as God intended for us and grow in soccer knowledge to develop our passion to impact our players.

I know from personal experience that doing things my way was always harder and it hurt me and others in the end. My players really never gained what they deserved from me as a spiritual leader. I didn't rely enough on Him and make myself available enough to Him to have my purpose impact them. Believe me when I say, "His way is easier and less painful." If you're not sure, believe what God says about His great love and His purpose for you that He offers you throughout His Bible.

In Matthew 22:37-38 it says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like the first: Love your neighbor [players] like you love yourself." *Are you committed to doing this?*

John 13:34-5 says, "I give you a new command: Love one another. As I loved you do the same to someone else. By this you will be known by everyone to be one of my disciples [coaches]." *If you're His, are you mentoring?*

John 15:13 and 17 says, "Great love requires this, that you lay down your life for your friends [players]. This is my command: Love each other." *Is it about you and your record or about your players and their coming to know Christ?*

1 Corinthians 13:14 says, "Love is patient, love is kind. It doesn't envy, boast, be proud, be rude, be self-seeking, show anger or keep a record of wrong doing. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices in the truth." Wow! *Where do you fit in?*

Ephesians 4:2 says, "Be completely humble and gentle: be patient, bearing with one another [your players] in love." *Do you love your players enough to give up yourself to them?*

James 3:17 says, "Wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." *Is your knowledge of the game producing fruit that's significant?*

1 John 2:10 says, "Whoever [coaches] loves his brother lives in the light and there is nothing in him to make him stumble." *Are you tripping up your players?*

1 John 3:1 says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that He would call us His children." *Who do you belong too?*

1 John 3:18 says, "Let's not love with words from your mouth, but with actions and in truth." *Are you demonstrating the path He has designed for you?*

Proverbs 10:25 says, "When the storms have swept by and the wicked are gone, the righteous person will stand firm forever." *How firm is the ground you walk on?*

Are you letting the Scriptures test your walk and how God wants you to serve Him? Are you getting the point of what God's saying? Which direction are you going? Remember that His divine power has given us everything we need

for coaching. *All that you do and say is found in His holy words.*

The following is a true story that happened to me. I was in Jamaica as a guest coach, training players and helping prepare them for their final stages before their season started. My stay was almost up and we had only one more exhibition match to play in Kingston. The match just got underway when those of us standing on the sideline and on the field heard a horrendous car crash. It was shattering to our ears. Although several blocks away from the field, the crashed sounded like it was right close by to all of us. Thoughts ran through my mind telling me no one could have survived. And on the sideline the coaching staff and reserve players all verbally agreed with what my mind was experiencing. No one said anything at half time. Many were shocked and simply glad they were safe and alive as the crash rang out death. A few moments after the match had ended we noticed something on the bed of a tow truck. It was the crash car and it was totally destroyed. It didn't look like a car anymore, but rather a big mass of rubber, plastics and various metals in one big lump. I could only think, "What a disaster!"

Being the guest coach, I was asked to share a few closing words before I left to catch a plane to go to Montego Bay for a meeting and then back to the States. A few parting words! What could I say after such a crash? I managed to share a few coaching points, a few words of appreciation, but my mind was still on the life or lives that must have been lost in the crash. It was a full two weeks of coaching and I had been able to impact players not only in soccer, but God managed to make some significance impacting through me sharing spiritually with many players. With all the team and coaching staff gathered around, one guy asked if the team would ever see me again. I said, "Some would and some would not. It's like this, men. This morning the people in the car crash never knew what disaster they were facing today. They didn't know it would be the last day of their life on this earth. God's got a special plan for each of you and a great one. It's beyond soccer, my friends. It's His special design for you and it's your

choice. Those who follow Him on this earth will one day be with Him in heaven. That great promise is for you from God. Don't choose a road that will be your disaster and your ending. You just never know when your time is up."

In Philippians 3:7-14 it says, "But whatever was to my profit, I now consider a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ; the righteousness that from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His suffering, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow from my serving Him, to attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this yet or I have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of what for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I, the apostle Paul, do not consider myself yet to have completely taken hold of it, but one thing I will continue to do: Forgetting what is behind my life and straining toward what is ahead of me, I will continue to press on toward the goal to win that prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 1:6 and 9-11 says, "Be confident of this, that God who began a good work in you will carry it to completion until Christ Jesus returns. This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is the best, pure and blameless way [to coach], until He returns for you, filled with the fruit of righteousness that only comes through Jesus Christ; to the glory and praise of God."

Matthew 6:20-21 says, "Lay up for yourself treasures in heaven where thieves can't break in and steal from you. For where your treasure is invested, there will your heart be also."

Thanks for reading this book. *You're appreciated.* I trust you'll be able to

glean a few things from what God has shared with me over the years and that person God has purposed you to be for His glory.

Oh, by the way, I hope to see you on the fields of heaven, having received those prizes God has planned for you. I can't wait to hear a few of those earthly stories of how you pressed forward to change the success of your passion into significant purposes for Christ. We'll have plenty of time swapping stories back and forth.

For Thee not for me my God!

You Raise Me Up

When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary;
When troubles come and my heart burdened be;
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence,
Until you come and sit awhile with me.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas;
I am strong, when I am on your shoulders;
You raise me up: To more than I can be.

May the Lord bless you as you serve the King of kings and Lord of lords!

About The Author

Paul Banta has coached youth, university, and semi-pro soccer on both the national and international levels, winning more than six hundred matches since 1968. He has helped found and direct several youth soccer clubs. He is an international soccer coaching educator, speaker, author, and is the founder and president of Global Soccer Ministries International an International Soccer Outreach Program in Guatemala City, Central America and Kinston Jamaica WI, For over 25 years he director/owner of Coastal Carolina Soccer Camp and Academy, which has educated 1,000's of player, teams and their coaches.

GSM International operates ministry outreach soccer activities, camps, youth leagues, men's outreach teams, and coaching education programs in a Christian soccer ministry environment. This ministry provides mission trips for U.S.A. Christian high school and university soccer teams. Through GSM church youth and adult groups attend overseas mission trip opportunities and work with local GSM outreach ministries projects and play matches.

Paul has served internationally for the Antigua & Barbuda Football Association, Guyana Football Association, Romania Transylvania Football

Association, Jamaican Football Federation, and Football Federation of Belize as a clinician in national coaching courses. Through GSM International, he conducts coaching education courses and soccer symposiums in the countries where GSM is active and throughout the United States.

He has played soccer at the high school, club, college, semi-pro, and professional levels and holds C, B, A, and Y national licenses from the USSF. He holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in physical education. He is married to Joy and they have three sons—Stephen, Nathan, and Joel. He and his wife are enjoying their grandchildren, Ella, Ava, Dylan, Samantha and Parker.

For further information about Global Soccer Ministries International please go to our websites at www.GlobalSoccerMinistries.org and www.gsmguatemala.com

and www.gsmjamaica.com

and www.gsmsportsturf.com

About The Book

God created you for His purpose and with a special passion for soccer. He wants you to be passionate about using your life for Him. He designed you to know Christ as your Savior, and to accomplish great and mighty things that He has planned for you. ***Ephesians 2:10 indicates that, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”***

If you are going to do this coaching thing, know that God designed you to move forward alongside Him and under His authority. Satan hates you, the Creator, and His creation. He hates you so much that he’ll go out of his way to entrap you and then destroy you. As you bring together your passion for Christ and your passion for the game, God will enable you to significantly direct your players’ so that they play soccer and play the game of life better spiritually. God loves it when you use your passion and abilities to please Him.

All of this serving for a loving God can’t happen unless we surrender 100 percent of our hearts to Him on a daily basis. Surrendering to God allows your heart to receive the power of God’s love, grace, and mercy, which you in turn give away to your players as God gives to you. It’s always been about Him and His purposes, which He planned for you.

God created you for His purpose and pleasure, and He eventually will succeed through you where you normally fail on your own. He loves you that much. Are you ready for the challenge and ready to coach for Him by your side? ***Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength."*** He's ready for you.

Book Preview

Contrary to what the world might tell you, God loves you passionately, and He planned, designed, and shaped you for His purposes and for the work He planned for you to do while you're on this earth. Because God is about love, you were created and have been molded to coach for Him with passion—not for men, women or yourself.

God created you to have a growing knowledge of Him, coaching, and the game itself, so that, inspired by the authority of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, you can personally grow in the game of life. God created you for His purpose and with a special passion for soccer. He wants you to be passionate about using your life and gifts for Him. He had you created a set a plan for you to know Christ as your Lord and Savior, and to accomplish all that He has designed for you. He doesn't make mistakes. ***Ephesians 2:10 indicates that, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."***

If you are going to do this coaching thing right, know that God designed you to move forward alongside Him and under His authority. Satan hates you, the Creator, and His creation. He hates you so much that he'll go out of his way to entrap you and destroy you any way he can. As you bring together your passion for Christ and your passion for the game, God will be enable you to

significantly direct your players' lives so that they can play soccer better and play the game of life better spiritually.

God loves it when you use your passion and abilities to please Him before we please ourselves. But all of this serving of a loving God can't happen unless we surrender 100 percent of our hearts to Him on a daily basis. Are you ready to do this? Surrendering to God allows your heart to receive the power of God's love, grace, and mercy, which you in turn give away to your players as God freely gives to you. It's always been about Him and His purposes, which He planned for you. God created you for His pleasure, and He eventually will succeed through you where you normally fail on your own. He loves you that much.

Your role for God is to make a difference in others by serving them through soccer. You are not to just take from this world; you are to give something back by serving others. As you do this, you will be doing exactly what God set you apart and appointed you for. He has a very special job for you, one with holy outcomes.

It's all about God. It's always been about Him, the purposes He planned for you, and the passion He created in you to coach for Him and Him alone. **It's not about you.** He's a jealous God, and He is absolutely in control of His creation. That means you and me, my friend. You're to be in God's control and make your decisions based on what pleases Him and what He says in the Bible.

What are coaches saying about Coaching Soccer with Passion and Purpose?

*“This book, Coaching Soccer with Passion and Purpose/ has taught me the secret of being content in any and every situation. I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength. My prayer is that this book will become a companion to you in your daily walk with God and that it will offer you a resource for your Christian growth”. **Baris Johnson Senior Men's National Team of Jamaica Road to France Squad 98' World Cup- 41 National Caps Professional footballer.***

*“I recently went through a really hard time. I have been doing a soccer ministry for the last 4 years. I recently got married and I put this soccer ministry before my marriage, you can just imagine my story...I have repented and received God's and my wife's forgiveness. I feel ready to go back and be the man God created me to be an honorable husband and coach. I just finished reading your book, and it touched me in to my inner heart, and received even more healing through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for your book”... **Xan South Africa***

*“Coaching Soccer with Passion and Purpose is an inspiring, educational and encouraging resource for all coaches seeking to share their Christian faith through soccer. Paul's easy to read style and relevant applications will challenge coaches at all levels to impact their players to be successful both on and off the field. By emphasizing Christ first - soccer second, the book provides refreshing insights on how to coach soccer from a Christian perspective”. **Jim Spence, Founder of Sports Quest***

“I’ve recommended this book to several of my friends in coaching. I think many of us feel a tug on our heart to incorporate more of Christ’s teachings into our practices but don’t know when or how to do so. This book offers some great suggestions. It is easy to forget that we are here to be instruments of God’s work in our player’s lives as we begin to focus more and more on finding ways to win more games. This book is full of reminders about how Jesus wants us to coach and interact with our players both on and off the field. As I read, I could hear the author coaching me along. It is an easy read and very encouraging to the spirit”.

Twila Argo Kaufman Head Soccer Coach UC – Davis

“I found the book to be inspirational as well as informative. It was loaded with encouragement. Considering all that Paul has been through as a coach, it is amazing how much passion his book shows for the real reason we should all be coaching...Christ”. Wayne Quinlan, USSF National Coach High School and Club Coach

“I am hopeful that many non-Christian soccer coaches will have the courage and openness to read your book to discover for themselves the saving and enriching power of a personal relationship and accountability to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. I need him every hour, as the song goes, and tragically so many others do to, they just don’t know it. Maybe your well written book will help bridge that gap”. Steve Zanolini Brentwood (Tennessee) Power

Notes:

For Thee not for me my God!

For Thee not for me my God!