

THE HOLY BIBLE

Containing the
Old and New Testaments

New Living Translation™



Fellowship of Christian Athletes

TEAM BIBLE

HOLMAN[®]

BIBLES

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WELCOME TO THE BIBLE!

GOD'S MESSAGE

You hold in your hands the most powerful book ever written. Countless lives have been changed by it. Numerous authorities have tried to ban it. Some godless people have burned it. And many Christians have died to preserve it. Why has this book had such a huge impact on people? Because this book, the Bible, is the very Word of God. It came from God Himself—He is the author. Over hundreds of years, He chose certain individuals to write down exactly what He wanted to tell humankind. This process is called “inspiration.” One of Jesus’ closest followers, Peter, wrote, *“Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God”* (2 Peter 1:20–21).

Although these authors wrote in Hebrew or Greek, their words have been carefully translated into many languages. So today we can read God’s message in our own language—modern English.

GOD'S MESSAGE FOR TODAY

In 2 Timothy 3:16–17, the apostle Paul reminded his student, Timothy, that *“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.”* This is still true today, even though the Bible was written hundreds of years ago. Its message is timeless, personal and powerful because it comes from God. Millions have discovered that the Bible speaks to their deepest needs, and people from all over the world turn to God’s Word daily for words of comfort, encouragement, hope, inspiration and guidance. There they find satisfying answers to life’s most perplexing questions and difficult problems.

The Bible, however, is more than just an answer book for life’s problems. It is also made up of exciting adventures, inspiring stories, beautiful poetry, convicting messages and the hope-giving life story of Jesus Christ.

MANY BOOKS, ONE MESSAGE

The Bible may look like one book, but it is actually 66 rolled into one. 39 books make up what we call the Old Testament, and 27 make up the New Testament. God used many authors—as many as 40—over a time period of many centuries to write the 66 books of the Bible. This makes each book unique. But even though each book has its own style and character, each one contributes to God’s life-changing message. What is that message? Through the Bible, God makes it clear that He loves us and has a plan to save us from the destructive power of sin.

GOD'S MESSAGE FOR YOU

What is God’s message for you? Read this amazing book carefully, looking for how God worked in the lives of people many years ago. Then, look deeper to discover the timeless truths that can be applied to the lives of people today. Look for ways that God’s timeless truths apply to you.

How does He want your life to change? As God speaks to you through His holy Word, do what you know He wants you to do—obey Him. James 1:22–25 says, *“But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.”* Welcome to God’s life-changing message for you. Welcome to the Bible.

A NOTE TO READERS

The *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation (NLT), was first published in 1996. It quickly became one of the most popular Bible translations in the English-speaking world. While the NLT's influence was rapidly growing, the Bible Translation Committee determined that an additional investment in scholarly review and text refinement could make it even better. So shortly after its initial publication, the committee began an eight-year process with the purpose of increasing the level of the NLT's precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007 and 2013.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for our translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today's readers as the original texts did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for studying, devotional reading and reading aloud in worship services.

We believe that the New Living Translation—which combines the latest biblical scholarship with a clear, dynamic writing style—will communicate God's Word powerfully to all who read it. We publish it with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the Church and the world in a fresh, new way.

The Publishers
January 2013

THE FOUR



POINT 1 / GOD LOVES YOU

God made you and loves you! His love is boundless and unconditional. God is real, and He wants you to personally experience His love and discover the purpose of your life through a relationship with Him.

Genesis 1:27; John 3:16



POINT 2 / SIN SEPARATES YOU

You cannot experience God's love when you ignore Him. People search everywhere for meaning and fulfilment—but not with God. They don't trust God and ignore His ways. The Bible calls this sin. Everyone has sinned.

Sin damages your relationships with other people and with God. The result: you are eternally separated from God and the life He planned for you.

Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Isaiah 59:2

THE FOUR



POINT 3 / JESUS RESCUES YOU

Your sin does not stop God from loving you. Because of God's great love, He became a human being in Jesus Christ and gave His life for you. At the cross, Jesus took your place and paid the penalty of death that you deserve for your sins.

Jesus died, but He rose to life again. Jesus offers you peace with God and a personal relationship with Him. Through faith in Jesus, you can experience God's love daily, discover your purpose and have eternal life after death.

John 3:16; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Romans 5:8



POINT 4 / WILL YOU TRUST JESUS?

God has already done everything to show you how much He loves you. He offers you fulfillment and eternal life through a relationship with Jesus Christ. This involves agreeing that you are sinful, accepting God's forgiveness and turning away from your sins and toward God.

You choose to trust Jesus when you believe and confess that Jesus is Lord and surrender your life to Him. Are you ready to place your trust in Jesus?

Romans 10:9-10; John 1:12; Revelation 3:20; Ephesians 2:8-9

THE FOUR

RECAP

GOD LOVES YOU

SIN SEPARATES YOU

JESUS RESCUES YOU

WILL YOU TRUST JESUS?

PRAYER

You can receive Jesus Christ right now by faith through prayer.

Prayer is talking with God. God knows your heart and is not concerned with your words as much as He is with the attitude of your heart.

You can begin your relationship with God with a prayer like this:

Dear God, thank You for loving me and wanting the best for my life. I have lived my life for myself and done things my way, and I am truly sorry.

Jesus, I believe You are God and have forgiven all my sins by dying on the cross and coming back to life again for me. I trust You and ask You to be Lord of my life. I surrender my life to You. You are my God, my Savior and my Lord. Let me experience Your love and Your good plans for my life!

Amen.

KNOW YOUR POSITION

Too many people make the mistake of measuring the certainty of their salvation by their feelings instead of the facts of God's Word. In Jesus Christ you have a new life. See what God's Word says about your new position on His team.

I am a **new creation** in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20)

I have **everything** I need for life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3; Ephesians 1:3)

I am a **witness** for Christ and am His **workmanship**, created for good works. (Acts 1:8; Ephesians 2:10)



THE FOUR

I am **loved** and accepted completely in Christ. (Ephesians 1:4-6; Romans 8:39)

I am **indwelt** by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 John 4:4)

I am **forgiven** and **free** from condemnation. (1 John 1:9; Romans 8:1-2)

I have **eternal life** in Christ. (John 5:24; 1 John 5:11-13)

Trust God! Put your faith in His Word, not in your feelings:

I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. — 1 John 5:13

FOUR DAILY EXERCISES

JUST AS PHYSICAL GROWTH DEMANDS PHYSICAL EXERCISE, SPIRITUAL GROWTH AS A CHRISTIAN DEMANDS SPIRITUAL EXERCISE. TO BUILD SPIRITUAL MUSCLE, HERE ARE FOUR DAILY EXERCISES:

1. SEEK CHRIST

Spend time every day reading God's Word and devoting time in prayer.

"They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth." — Acts 17:11b

"I praise you seven times a day."
— Psalm 119:164a

2. SHARE CHRIST

Share Jesus every day through your words and actions.

"Every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: 'Jesus is the Messiah.'" — Acts 5:42

"We are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us."
— 2 Corinthians 5:20

3. LEAD OTHERS

Lead others by serving as Christ did. Every day die to self and yield complete control of your life to Jesus Christ.

"The greatest among you must be a servant." — Matthew 23:11

"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me." — Luke 9:23

4. LOVE OTHERS

Take every opportunity to show others around you that you love them.

". . . and to love my neighbor as myself." — Mark 12:33b

"You must warn each other every day, while it is still 'today.'"
— Hebrews 3:13a

Do these exercises and you will grow strong in your Christian life and be an effective member of God's team.

For further questions:

Contact us at 1-800-289-0909 or fca@fca.org.

Contact your local FCA office at fca.org in the "Quick Links" section.



PURSU

T E A M B I B L E

PURSUE TRUTH ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, truth is a concept that seems to be constantly undergoing redefinition. Some people will say it's a constant, unchanging set of facts. Others will say it is to be understood relative to one's point of view. Still, others will say truth is something to be experienced in a relationship with a person. So, how does God define truth?

APPLICATION

1. Which of the statements below best describes the sports culture's view of how truth is understood?
 - An objective set of facts.
 - God's expression of reality.
 - A spectrum of personal opinions.
 - An expression of one's point of view.
 - My understanding at the moment.
2. Which of the statements above best describes your view of how truth is understood?

BRIDGE

Some people in Jesus' day were pursuing truth. He spoke to them in John 8:31-32, *"Jesus said to the people who believed in him, 'You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"*

CONNECTION

1. What does Jesus say is the mark of His true disciples?
2. How would a team remain faithful to Jesus' teachings?
3. What does Jesus say are the results of remaining faithful to His teachings?

DISCOVERY

1. How could a team go about a daily process of remaining faithful to Jesus' teachings?
2. How would knowing the truth shape your team's sporting experience?
3. From what sorts of issues could knowing the truth free you and your teammates?
4. How would being free affect the way you relate to your teammates?

MEMORY VERSE

"Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth." — John 17:17

PURSUE LIFE ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

Many people in the sporting world pursue winning at all costs, believing it will bring fulfillment and richness of life with it. If they were honest with us, they would confess that their approach usually provides nothing of the life they pursue. The pursuit of a rich and satisfying life cannot be measured with a stopwatch, a tape measure, a scoreboard or in dollars and cents.

APPLICATION

1. What sorts of things do people in sports pursue thinking their achievement will make them rich?
2. What are some things your teammates pursue for fulfillment, only to find the results to be destructive or even deadly?

BRIDGE

Jesus clearly defines the difference between His purpose as the Good Shepherd and the purpose of His enemy in John 10:10, *"The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."*

CONNECTION

1. What expressed purposes of a thief does Jesus list in John 10?
2. How has your team experienced the thief's purposes in life?
 - The thief steals _____ from our team.
 - The thief kills the _____ of our team.
 - The thief destroys _____ in our team.
3. What does Jesus say is His purpose as the Good Shepherd?
4. How has your team experienced Jesus' purpose in life?
 - Jesus gives our team richness in life through _____.
 - Jesus gives our team satisfaction in life through _____.

DISCOVERY

1. How can we help our teammates avoid the thief's purposes of stealing, killing and destroying our pursuit of life?
2. What are some ways we can work as a team to experience Jesus' purpose of giving us a rich and satisfying life?

MEMORY VERSE

"Jesus replied, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'" — John 6:35

PURSUE TEAM ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

Great teams know how to work together. They also know teamwork does not happen accidentally; it must be pursued. Those teams also understand their various teammates have a wide range of personalities, gifts, motivations and skills. How well do you know what best motivates your teammates?

APPLICATION

1. Which of these expressions best motivates one of your teammates?
 - A pat on the back?
 - A verbal challenge via Zoom?
 - A kick in the pants?
 - An encouraging word by text message?
 - A shout of, "Come on!"
 - A _____?
2. Which of those listed above brings out your best on the field of competition?

BRIDGE

The writer of Hebrews had great insight for how to Pursue Team. In Hebrews 10:24-25, we read his thoughts: *"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near."*

CONNECTION

1. What is the intended outcome of thinking of ways to motivate one another?
2. What does the author say is the purpose of their meeting together regularly?
3. What might these people have done when they met together to motivate and encourage one another?

DISCOVERY

1. How much time have you invested in thinking about ways to motivate your teammates to be their best?
2. How can meeting together regularly serve to help us motivate and encourage our teammates to be their best?
3. What are some things we can do when we meet together to motivate and encourage one another?

MEMORY VERSE

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble." — Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

PURSUE MISSION ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

You've probably heard players or coaches in a post-game interview say something like, "We're on a mission. We intend to win a championship and every day we pursue that mission." A mission is a good thing for a team to have, but it's of little value if the mission is not strongly pursued.

APPLICATION

1. Who determines and expresses your team's mission?
2. How well, on a 1 to 10 scale, would you say your team has committed to the mission?
3. Could each team member confidently express your team's mission?

BRIDGE

Just as He was about to ascend from earth to Heaven, Jesus gave this mission to His disciples. *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

CONNECTION

1. Why would it be important for the disciples to receive the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill their mission?
2. Why would Jerusalem be mentioned first in this list of places for their pursuit of mission?
3. Where was Samaria and why would Jesus mention it by name?
4. What part of the world would the disciples think of when Jesus said, "the ends of the earth"?

DISCOVERY

1. How could we experience the Holy Spirit's power as we pursue our mission of sharing Jesus with others?
2. Who are the people in your Jerusalem, those closest to you that you connect with daily?
3. Who are some people or groups you're acquainted with but who are not as close to you as family or teammates?
4. Who are the people beyond your normal life experience who Jesus may lead you to share the Gospel with?
5. What are some places that seem very remote but Christ may have us pursue as our mission?

MEMORY VERSE

"So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" — 2 Corinthians 5:20

SACRIFICE ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

Think about some of the things you sacrifice for your life in sports. Consider the hours you spend at practice, the miles you have put into training, the blood, sweat and tears you have invested in being a part of this team. Is it worth it? Are you and those you love pleased with your sacrifice?

APPLICATION

1. Check the boxes of the things you have sacrificed to participate in this sport:

- Time
- Sleep
- Pain
- Family time
- Relationships
- Weekends
- Meals
- Other _____

2. On a 1 to 10 scale, 1 being little and 10 being completely, how pleased are you to have sacrificed those things?
3. On that same scale, how pleasing do you think your sacrifices are to those who love you?

BRIDGE

"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him." — Romans 12:1

CONNECTION

1. What sorts of things would have been given as sacrifices in the ancient world?
2. Would those sacrifices be living or dead things?
3. Why would God find the offering of our bodies as living and holy sacrifices to be acceptable and worshipful?

DISCOVERY

1. Consider the sacrifices you make daily in your sporting life. How often are you conscious they are holy and acceptable to God? When are you most aware of this?
2. How could we, as a team, be more purposefully conscious of making our training, practices and competitions expressions of worship to the Lord Jesus?

MEMORY VERSE

"And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God." — 1 Peter 2:5

IDENTITY ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

When you ask members of a sports team, “Who are you?” it usually prompts replies like, “We are a (insert sport) team; we are the (insert team name); we are the (insert conference name) champions” or similar expressions of identity. Is that all there is to identity in sport or could there be a source of identity much deeper and more secure for us?

APPLICATION

1. How does your team identify itself? Check all those that apply.

- By sport
- By school
- By mascot
- By achievements
- By program history
- By personality
- By style
- By something else

2. How much did your answers vary among your teammates?

BRIDGE

In Ephesians 2:10, the apostle Paul used the following words to describe the identity of believers in Jesus: *“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”*

CONNECTION

1. Why would Paul say we are God’s masterpiece?
2. What has become new in people who are in a relationship with Christ Jesus?
3. What might be some of the good things God has planned for us long ago that we can do now?

DISCOVERY

1. When you think of your team, do you see it as a masterpiece?
2. How would it change your team’s attitude if you saw yourselves as God does?
3. What are some good things God has planned for you to do with your masterpiece teammates today?

MEMORY VERSE

“Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God’s people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God’s mercy.” — 1 Peter 2:10

FAITH ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

What do you believe to be true, even though you cannot prove it? Which of your teammates would you trust with your most valuable possessions? When do you act upon a teammate's commitment, even with no guarantee of performance? Each of these can be expressions of faith. Think about how often people in sports act because they believe in their coaches and teammates. Faith is a daily exercise for sports teams.

APPLICATION

Dictionary.com lists the following definitions for *faith*. Which one most closely fits your understanding?

- Confidence or trust in a person or thing
- Belief that is not based on proof
- Belief in God or in the doctrines or teachings of religion
- Belief in anything, as a code of ethics, standards of merit and so on
- A system of religious belief

BRIDGE

The writer of Hebrews defines *faith* this way in chapter 11 verse 1, "*Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.*"

CONNECTION

1. What did the original audience of Hebrews hoped for when reading that passage?
2. How can faith make evident the unseen things for which we trust God?

DISCOVERY

1. What do you and your teammates hope comes out of your season?
2. How can you exercise faith, active trust in each other and in God while pursuing your hopes?
3. How will your team express its faith in trusting God for things you cannot yet see?

MEMORY VERSE

"Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory." — Romans 5:2

COMMUNITY ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

Sport teams experience community in a way most people can seldom even imagine. The shared experiences, the depth of commitment and the hours spent in pursuit of a common goal to build a strong community among teammates. The values embraced by those in that community will determine whether their team is healthy, strong and honorable or if it will be full of envy, cheating and selfishness.

APPLICATION

1. What would you say are some values that shape the life of your team?
2. What are the key activities of your life as a team that builds a healthy community?
3. Describe some situations that could have ripped apart your team's sense of community.

BRIDGE

In Acts 2:42, we read a description of the community experienced by the early Church: *"All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer."*

CONNECTION

1. What does it mean that believers were devoted to the matters listed? How would they express devotion?
2. What might these people have experienced as fellowship? (Hospitality, working together, sharing possessions or all the above?)
3. What is it about sharing meals and praying together that builds community?

DISCOVERY

1. How does your team build community as you train under your coaches' teachings?
2. What are some of the most enjoyable moments you have together as a team?
3. How can you be sure to embrace the goodness of sharing meals with your teammates?
4. Write down three things your team can pray for that will strengthen your community.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

MEMORY VERSE

"So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other." — John 13:34

ANXIETY ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

Though we often project an image of bulletproof confidence and swagger, many of us in the sporting world are consumed with anxiety. We worry about matters beyond our control and how it could affect our performance. We worry about the ability of our opponents and the game plan our coaches give us. We even worry about the integrity of the officials and the weather conditions. Anxiety never makes us better and often diminishes our experience in sport.

APPLICATION

1. What are some of the things that produce anxiety in you and your teammates?
2. What do people around you do to manage their anxiety?
3. How many of those things are helpful and how many make matters worse?

BRIDGE

The apostle Paul, writing from prison, encouraged his friends in Philippi with these words from Philippians 4:6-7, *“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”*

CONNECTION

1. How could praying about everything overcome our feelings of anxiety about anything?
2. Why would Paul encourage his readers to thankfully ask God for their needs?
3. How does God’s peace surpass understanding and guard the hearts and minds of believers?

DISCOVERY

1. How and when can we pray together to overcome our anxiety and to build our faith?
2. What are some things our teammates need and how can we pray with thanksgiving for them?
3. How do you anticipate you will experience the peace of God overcoming your anxiety?

MEMORY VERSE

“You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!” — Isaiah 26:3

GOAL SETTING SARAH ROBERTS

INTRODUCTION

Someone once said, “The trouble with not having a goal is that you can spend your life running up and down the field [or court] and never score.” We play sports because we have a team and individual goals—like goals to be in the starting line-up, score or win. Everyone plays the game, but a person with goals plays the game on purpose.

APPLICATION

1. Why is it so important for your team to set goals in your sport?
2. What does the statement, “A person with goals plays the game on purpose,” mean to you?

BRIDGE

God also desires for us to live this life and play the game we love on purpose. This means setting short- and long-term goals as Christian competitors. The author of Proverbs 24:27 writes, “*Do your planning and prepare your fields before building your house.*” Planning, preparation and goal-setting are key components to building a program, building a team and having a successful season.

CONNECTION

1. Why are planning and preparation important before you start building anything?
2. Read Proverbs 21:5. What is the difference between hard work and short cuts?

DISCOVERY

1. In your planning and preparation for the upcoming season, what are your team goals?
2. Write down three individual goals.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

MEMORY VERSE

“*May he grant your heart’s desires and make all your plans succeed.*” — Psalms 20:4

LEADERSHIP SARAH ROBERTS

INTRODUCTION

Legendary coach, John Wooden, coached the UCLA Bruins to 10 national championships including setting the NCAA record for 7 of those 10. Coach Wooden always held practice at 3:00 p.m. sharp, but each day before practice, he would sit courtside at 2:30 p.m. in case any of his players wanted to discuss anything personal, academic or athletic. He said, "The most powerful leadership tool you have is your own personal example." Coach Wooden led the way with his example of serving and caring for his players.

APPLICATION

1. Who in your life sets an example of servant leadership?
2. Who on your team has shown leadership by their positive example?
3. How does Coach Wooden's example encourage you in your leadership?

BRIDGE

As the Son of God and Savior of the world, Jesus knelt before His disciples and washed their feet, all 12 of them. He washed the feet of one denier, one betrayer and 10 deserters because He wanted to teach us how to lead with unconditional love and sacrificial service. In John 13:14-15, Jesus says *"And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done for you."* Jesus knew how to set the best examples as a great leader.

1. What does Jesus' example say about His leadership of His disciples?
2. How does Jesus' leadership example differ from the world's?

CONNECTION

With our words and actions, we all set an example. We must decide what example we are going to set.

1. Why are words and actions so important as a leader?
2. Who are examples of great leaders and who has influenced you?

DISCOVERY

1. What example do you want to set as a leader on your team?
2. Write down some action steps you need to take to set a positive example on your team.

MEMORY VERSE

"Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God." — Ephesians 5:1-2

HANDLING CRITICISM SARAH ROBERTS

INTRODUCTION

Newspaper, social media and message boards can be both exciting and heartbreaking as an athlete and team. We can find ourselves excited at the praise when we win and devastated at the criticism when we lose. Someone wise once said, “Don’t let people’s compliments go to your head and don’t let criticism get to your heart.” Compliments and criticism can be either helpful or harmful based on how you handle it as a team.

APPLICATION

1. How do you handle compliments and criticism as a team?
2. How can both compliments and criticism be helpful and harmful?

BRIDGE

The apostle Paul was being taken to Rome as a prisoner for sharing the Gospel of Jesus, but his ship wrecked and they landed on the island of Malta. Paul was helping build a fire and was bit by a snake. The people of the island said, “*This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice will not allow him to live.*” But Paul didn’t die. “*And after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god*” (Acts 28:4-5). People called him both murderer and a god, but Paul didn’t let compliments go to his head or the criticism go to his heart. Paul wasn’t focused on what people said but who God created him to be; therefore, he went on sharing about the good news of Jesus to others.

CONNECTION

1. What does Paul’s experience with the people of Malta teach you?
2. If we just focus on people and not God, how will that affect us as athletes?
3. When we are grounded in who God says we are, how can that help us with compliments and criticisms from people?

DISCOVERY

1. What do you need God’s help with most? Handling compliments or criticism?
2. Write a prayer thanking God for who He made you and ask Him to help when you get compliments and criticisms from people.

MEMORY VERSE

“The LORD is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.” — Psalm 28:7

PURPOSE NATHAN BLISS

INTRODUCTION

Why do you do what you do? Another way to ask that is, What is your purpose? Knowing your ultimate goal provides continuous motivation and helps teams determine what actions and decisions are necessary to achieve the desired outcome. Without a fixed purpose, teams are likely to get distracted or develop ineffective, unfocused habits.

APPLICATION

1. What purpose is your team working toward?
2. What are some daily habits you've developed that help you accomplish your purpose?
3. What are some habits or practices your team needs to break to help you achieve your purpose?

BRIDGE

Paul and his team were often accused of having bad intentions or impure motives by their opponents. They also suffered persecution, trials, imprisonment and hardship. Paul was constantly reminding those he led of their purpose and how that purpose guided their actions. He wrote that God gave them:

The courage to declare his Good News to you boldly, in spite of great opposition. So you can see we were not preaching with any deceit or impure motives or trickery. For we speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts. — 1 Thessalonians 2:2-4

In this way, Paul reminded his team of the true purpose of their goals and motives.

1. Why was it important for people to know that Paul's purpose in preaching the Gospel was to please God not to please people?
2. How did knowing their purpose help Paul and his team when they faced opposition for their beliefs?

CONNECTION

1. Are your team's goals and motives pleasing to God? Give reasons for your answer.
2. At the end of the season, how will you and your team know you were successful? What specific outcomes will you point to?

DISCOVERY

1. Work as a team to develop a purpose statement for your season.
2. Write down 2 to 5 weekly stepping-stone goals that will help you accomplish your purpose.

MEMORY VERSE

"So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing." — 1 Corinthians 9:26

SPORTS AS A PLATFORM NATHAN BLISS

INTRODUCTION

Without a doubt, our world loves sports. Sit in the bleachers—or even a living room—during any sporting event and you will soon find yourself surrounded by frenzied fanatics behaving like their actions directly determine their team’s success. Communities hang on the words of local sports heroes as if their lives depended on reading the latest posts. In this sports-crazy world, your team has a tremendous platform that can be used to bring glory to God.

APPLICATION

1. What are some ways you see coaches and athletes influencing your culture or community?
2. What are some positive and negative consequences to our culture’s focus on sports?

BRIDGE

Jesus taught that it was important for disciples to use their platform to bring glory to God. Matthew 5:14-16 says,

You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

As a disciple of Jesus, you are like the lamp. Your sport can be the lampstand that allows you to impact more people, but only if you choose to let your light shine rather than hiding your faith from others.

1. List several reasons why believers might be tempted to hide their light or their faith from others.
2. In what ways is sharing your faith with others like giving them light in the darkness?

CONNECTION

1. Tell a teammate how something he or she did glorified God.
2. What coach or athlete has had the greatest impact on your life? How?

DISCOVERY

1. What are some good deeds your team can do in your community this season to demonstrate your faith to others and bring glory to God?
2. What are 2 to 3 ways your team will remind one another to use your sport to turn people’s attention toward God rather than yourselves?

MEMORY VERSE

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.”
— Matthew 5:14

TEAM COHESION NATHAN BLISS

INTRODUCTION

Team cohesion occurs when members of a team decide to stick together rather than allow obstacles or individuals to infect the team with selfishness and spread division. Teams that are determined to work together toward a common goal will often defeat opponents that have more talent or resources but don't perform as a team.

APPLICATION

1. Name a time a united team defeated a more talented opponent.
2. When your team faces challenges, do players remain unified and take actions that benefit the team, do individuals begin to look out for themselves? Give an example that backs up your answer.

BRIDGE

A common theme in many of the apostle Paul's letters to churches was the need for team cohesion or the need for the believers to stick together. Paul knew that unity requires effort and commitment but is necessary if believers want to imitate Jesus. He also knew that one of the quickest ways to hinder a team's effectiveness is for individuals to allow division and selfishness to pull them away from the team's goals. He told the Philippian church that they could *"make [him] truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too"* (Philippians 2:2-4).

1. Why was it important for people to see the believers act like this toward one another?
2. Give examples of how Jesus modeled this behavior.

CONNECTION

1. Who has demonstrated this attitude for your team, making sure cohesion increased and division decreased?
2. How can your team's unity help you represent Jesus to those who see your team?

DISCOVERY

1. List several ways you can build cohesion on your team. Choose one to work on this week.
2. What are several threats to team cohesion to watch out for this season (i.e., selfishness, jealousy, losing and so on)? How will you respond when you encounter these?

MEMORY VERSE

"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."
— John 13:35

SIGNIFICANCE CHRIS RICH

INTRODUCTION

Significance is defined as “the quality of being worthy of attention; importance.” It is so hard in sports to understand that, no matter what, you are of great significance. And too often we find our significance in the scoreboard and stats.

APPLICATION

1. As an athlete, what are some things you find your significance in?
2. How does your significance change when these “things” change?

BRIDGE

The idea of significance implies worth, which immediately makes us think of cost. What do we cost? First Corinthians 6:20 tells us “*you were bought with a price.*” That price, we know from Scripture, was the life of God’s only Son, Jesus. We know that our significance is worthy given the price that has already been paid. It is finished and there are no returns or exchanges.

As an athlete, your significance has nothing to do with your performance but has everything to do with Jesus’ performance on the cross. He was willing to come, live a sinless life and die for our sins. God, the Father, was willing to pay with the life of His Son so we may experience eternal love and comfort. What worth we have in His eyes.

1. What do you believe your worth is?
2. How does knowing God’s sacrifice and the price He paid for you change this?

CONNECTION

1. When you feel significant in the eyes of the Lord, before you ever walk into competition, what does it do for your play?
2. How would sharing this with your teammates encourage them?

DISCOVERY

1. Who on your team needs to hear this?
2. How will you make sure that everyone on your team knows their worth and significance to you and God?

MEMORY VERSE

“For God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.”
— 1 Corinthians 6:20

INFLUENCE CHRIS RICH

INTRODUCTION

People who have a significant influence in your life, good or bad, stick with you. Influence is one thing that as athletes we should never take for granted. Older or professional athletes influenced me on my work ethic, on my character and on everything I did. As competitors, you have the opportunity to influence those around you whether on a small or large scale.

APPLICATION

1. Who has influenced you as an athlete and as a person?
2. What were the characteristics that led them to influence you?

BRIDGE

The greatest influence we can have on those around us is by sharing the Gospel. I recently watched Jonathan Isaac share the Gospel during a post-game press conference. The situation was charged, but Isaac handled it with grace.

In my own life, I lost one of my high school best friends and it was devastating. But I remember my teammate sharing the Gospel with me and at that moment, it changed my life. We are called to use our influence to reconcile people back to Him just like Jonathan Isaac and my college teammate did for me. Paul calls this the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5). He tells us that *“God has given us the task of reconciling people to him”* (2 Corinthians 5:18).

1. Can your influence be negative? What are some examples?
2. What have you shared in the past that may have influenced others?
3. Where can you use your influence to share the Gospel?

CONNECTION

1. Who on your team or in your life do you use your influence to share the Gospel with?
2. Where are places you can enter the Gospel into the conversation?

DISCOVERY

If you feel like you have been wasting your influence, write out some ways in which you intend to use the influence you have as an athlete on the following audiences:

- Coaches
- Teammates
- Opponents
- People in the community
- Younger athletes or teammates

MEMORY VERSE

“And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.” — Colossians 3:17

COMPETITIVE DRIVE CHRIS RICH

INTRODUCTION

I have recently been watching a lot of draft coverage and often times we hear the critique of athletes around two things, their “motor” or their “competitive drive.” Both of these refer to a vehicle and, as many of you may have experienced, a vehicle without a motor or a drivetrain isn’t going to get you very far.

APPLICATION

1. What are some situations as an athlete that cause you to lose your drive?
2. When you lose your drive what does it feel like? What changes when you feel like you have no competitive drive?

BRIDGE

As followers of Christ, we should have the highest level of competitive drive with a motor that never stops. If we truly believe that, like Paul says in Colossians 3:23, we play for an Audience of One and no matter who is in the stands or where you are playing or who you are playing against, you know your Audience (God) is always watching. Carson Wentz, the quarterback of the Philadelphia Eagles, made this his mantra throughout his day-to-day practice or game. Wentz believes that his competitive drive is based on pleasing the King of Kings, the loving Father.

1. Have you ever seen someone with a relentless competitive drive? What stands out?
2. Have you ever thought about the fact that the One who created you and gave you your talent and ability is watching and cheering you on?

CONNECTION

After Kobe Bryant passed away, we heard so much about Kobe’s inspirational words and insightful perspectives on life as a successful, competitive athlete, specifically in his book *The Mamba Mentality: How I Play*. I always admired Kobe because of his competitive drive. After his death, I began thinking about what the Mamba Mentality looks like as a follower of Christ. As Christians, our competitive drive should only look to honor the One who created us and gave us the talents and abilities we have.

DISCOVERY

1. What does it look like to have competitive drive when no one is watching?
2. What ways do you need to give your everything all the time?

MEMORY VERSE

“Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.” — Colossians 3:23

CHARACTER CHRIS RICH

INTRODUCTION

My college football coach used to always say, “What you do in the dark will always come to the light.” This statement serves as a powerful reminder for all of us. Our character must be who you are all the time!

APPLICATION

1. What are some places in your sport where you have seen someone’s true character come out?
2. Have you ever been put in a position where your true character was tested? What happened?

BRIDGE

In Titus 2:7-8, Paul reminds Titus that his character must be shown *“in all respects.”* He continues to tell him the importance of being a good role model and a representation of good works so his integrity and sound speech are seen by the people around him. And as a leader, people are watching at all times.

Likewise, this is true of athletes too. Your character can be a great encouragement to all those who watch you play and succeed in your sport. But more important, you have an opportunity to model the character of Christ through your sports, on your team and in your communities.

1. What does it look like to model the character of Christ on your team and in competition? Paul gives us good examples here.
2. How does this look different than the character we see modeled in the world?

CONNECTION

1. Looking at what Paul says in Titus 2:7-8, is there anywhere you are lacking in modeling the character of Christ?
2. How different would it look if you modeled this character in all respects?

DISCOVERY

Does your character look the same in the dark as it does in the light? Character must be modeled in all respects as Paul reminds Titus. Are there some things you need to change in your life to model this?

MEMORY VERSE

“And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching.” — Titus 2:7

CONFIDENCE CHRIS RICH

INTRODUCTION

Confidence is a difficult, tricky thing to master. You can tell when a player has it, and you can tell when they don't. But, the hardest thing is helping a player regain their confidence. It is a great mystery! We can gain confidence from many places or things, but unfortunately confidence, like so many things can be stripped in an instant

APPLICATION

1. Where do you find your confidence? Check all that apply.

- Past success
- In your training
- From teammates or coaches' words
- In your talent
- From parents or other outside sources
- Other

2. On a scale of 1-4 (1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest) where do you rate your confidence?

BRIDGE

What if we had a confidence that could not be shaken, one that was like an anchor and wouldn't let you be moved? The Apostle Paul in the Book of Philippians reminds us of something that never gives us incredible confidence. Paul begins by telling the Church in Philippi that they can have great confidence in that fact that God began a good work in them at the very beginning. This should give us great confidence because the God who created the world started a good work in us when He created us: *"he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 1:6).

1. How does it make you feel that when you were created God was starting a good work?
2. Does this confidence ever change? Does it have anything to do with you?
3. What hope does this give you, that God will (not might) carry it through to completion?

CONNECTION

1. If everyone on your team had this kind of unshakeable confidence Paul talks about, what would it mean for you?
2. If your confidence was in something (like Jesus) that is always trustworthy and wholesome, how would this change your mentality?

DISCOVERY

What can you do to gain your confidence from the Lord who is steadfast?

MEMORY VERSE

"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." — Philippians 1:6

STARTING LINE: MASTERING THE BASICS



Every sport requires players to learn fundamental skills that set the foundation for excellence. At times, the basics can be unexciting and unglamorous. They can even be difficult to learn. But in any sport, mastering these basics is always the key to success.

1. What three basics have you mastered in your sport or your position?

2. What has motivated you to work on the basics? How has this helped your performance?



STARTING LINE: MASTERING THE BASICS



Much like fundamental skills in sports, a core set of basics will guide you in living a life focused on Christ. FCA identifies three areas of basic training essential to a successful endurance run with God.

BASIC 1

STUDY GOD’S TRAINING MANUAL—THE BIBLE

Each sport has its training manual or training program to develop excellence. For the disciple of Jesus or follower, the Bible is like a rule book, playbook and training manual rolled into one. Its inspired words come from the heart and mind of God.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Hebrews 4:12.

- 3. From 2 Timothy 3:16-17, list four benefits of reading and studying the Bible. What are some specific ways these benefits might equip you and impact your life?

- 4. Why do you think Hebrews 4:12 describes the words of God as “alive” and actively “powerful”? How does the Bible differ from other books?

The Bible has power because it’s God’s words. It contains definite truth about God, life, who we really are, our mission and destiny and the condition of our individual hearts. Its message is simple, yet deeply powerful. Studying the Bible may feel like studying a complicated playbook. At times, it might seem confusing and overwhelming, but the Bible is a living and active resource so God can reveal new insights each time you open it.

STARTING LINE: MASTERING THE BASICS

BASIC 2

STAY IN CONSTANT COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR LIFE COACH—PRAY

Whether we play a team sport or compete individually, success on the field, court or arena becomes increasingly difficult without a mentor, coach or trainer to guide us. The same is true in our lives. We need to meet personally with God through direct communication—prayer.

Read Matthew 6:5-15.

5. In Matthew 6, Jesus gives us a model for communicating with God. What attitude should we have when we pray (vv. 5-6)? What should we avoid doing (vv. 7-8)?

6. Rephrase Jesus' prayer (vv. 9-13) in your own words, noting specific things for which Jesus prayed. How might sincerely praying those things impact your life and your relationships with others?

Prayer is a powerful tool that can change your life and the lives of those around you. Prayer is about sharing your heart with God and allowing Him to speak into your life. Learn to relax and be totally open with God. Learn to slow down long enough to listen for His voice.



STARTING LINE: MASTERING THE BASICS

BASIC 3

LOCK ARMS WITH A WINNING TEAM—FIND A CHURCH

As athletes, we must depend on the support of others to reach our competitive goals. A church is a supportive team focused on serving God. From the beginning, God has always put people together with different talents, abilities, life experiences and strengths.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

7. What does Paul tell us about the importance of teamwork in the church (vv. 12-20)?

8. What attitudes should we exhibit to others in the church (vv. 21-26)? How can this create unity and make the church more effective in impacting the world for Christ?



Keep a daily routine of prayer and Bible reading just like you follow a basic training schedule in your athletic life.

9. How will taking time to talk with God and reading the Bible each day make you a better athlete, teammate, student, friend, son or daughter or brother or sister?

HOW TO SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY

A personal testimony is simply sharing what God has done in your life. One of the most effective ways to prepare your testimony is to ask three questions:

- 1. What was my life like before Jesus?***
- 2. How did I meet Jesus?***
- 3. How has my life been since accepting Jesus?***

The key is to share your story.

Tell your story of how you came to know Jesus personally.

TESTIMONY EXAMPLE:

WHAT WAS MY LIFE LIKE BEFORE I MET CHRIST?

I learned some things about God growing up, but I never really understood what it meant to have a personal relationship with Him. My life was basically hopeless.

HOW DID I COME TO KNOW CHRIST?

When I was at FCA Camp, I realized Jesus paid the penalty for my sins when He died on the cross even though He didn't need to die since He was sinless. He rose from the grave and now offers me forgiveness of my sins and eternal life with Him in Heaven. He also offers me abundant life! All I have to do is surrender my life to Him and have faith in what He has already done.

WHAT HAS MY LIFE BEEN LIKE SINCE?

I know what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and it is the best thing that ever happened to me. My life is full of hope now!

Now, you try it. Work through the three key parts below, write your testimony in your own words, and practice sharing it. Yours might be long and exciting or short and sweet. It is important to focus on what God has done, not on what you did wrong in the past. Feel free to use more paper if you need to, but remember, keeping things simple is always best.

THREE KEY QUESTIONS TO EVERY TESTIMONY:

- 1. Where were you before Christ?***
- 2. How you came to Christ?***
- 3. How you have grown in Christ?***

ABOUT FCA

The Fellowship of Christian Athletes is touching millions of lives . . . one heart at a time.

Since 1954, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes has been challenging coaches and athletes on the professional, college, high school, junior high and youth levels to use the powerful medium of athletics to impact the world for Jesus Christ. FCA focuses on serving local communities by equipping, empowering and encouraging people to make a difference for Jesus Christ.

VISION: To see the world transformed by Jesus Christ through the influence of coaches and athletes.

MISSION: To lead every coach and athlete into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and His church.

VALUES: Our relationships will demonstrate steadfast commitment to Jesus Christ and His Word through Integrity, Serving, Teamwork and Excellence.

Fellowship of Christian Athletes:

8701 Leeds Road • Kansas City, MO 64129
www.fca.org • fca@fca.org
1-800-289-0909



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COMPETITOR'S CREED

I am a Christian first and last.
I am created in the likeness of
God Almighty to bring Him glory.
I am a member of Team Jesus Christ.
I wear the colors of the cross.

I am a Competitor now and forever.
I am made to strive, to strain,
to stretch and to succeed
in the arena of competition.
I am a Christian Competitor
and as such, I face my challenger
with the face of Christ.

I do not trust in myself.
I do not boast in my abilities
or believe in my own strength.
I rely solely on the power of God.
I compete for the pleasure of
my Heavenly Father, the honor of Christ
and the reputation of the Holy Spirit.

My attitude on and off
the field is above reproach -
my conduct beyond criticism.
Whether I am preparing,
practicing or playing;
I submit to God's authority
and those He has put over me.
I respect my coaches, officials,
teammates and competitors
out of respect for the Lord.

My body is the temple of Jesus Christ.
I protect it from within and without.
Nothing enters my body that
does not honor the Living God.
My sweat is an offering to my Master.
My soreness is a sacrifice to my Savior.

I give my all - all of the time.
I do not give up. I do not give in.
I do not give out. I am the Lord's warrior -
a competitor by conviction
and a disciple of determination.
I am confident beyond reason
because my confidence lies in Christ.
The results of my efforts
must result in His glory.

**LET THE COMPETITION BEGIN.
LET THE GLORY BE GOD'S.**

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THE
OLD TESTAMENT

THE
NEW TESTAMENT