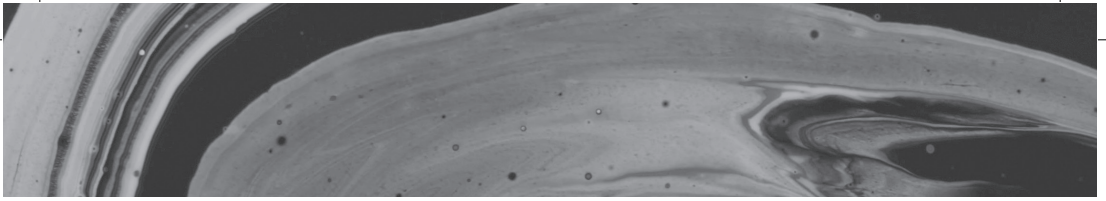




EVERY Edition

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Team Handbook: Every Edition
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THE FOUR



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 and John 3:16



2. SIN SEPARATES YOU

You cannot experience God's love when you ignore Him. People search everywhere for meaning and fulfillment—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



3. JESUS RESCUES YOU

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.

1 Peter 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8; Romans 5:8



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

PRAYER

You can place your trust in Jesus 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. Here is a suggested prayer:

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 that You are God and have forgiven all my sins by dying 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)



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.



TEAM STUDIES / 1

EVERY THING CHRIS RICH

INTRODUCTION

As a coach, the young athletes I work with are impossible to be disciplined sometimes. I say it like this, “You can’t be disciplined in some areas of your life and not in others.” As athletes, you are striving to be at the highest level. When you get into competition, every little detail, everything matters. We have seen it over and over in sports that at the highest level, the little details matter in deciding the outcome.

APPLICATION

1. What details matter in your sport?
2. Have you ever lost a game because of a small detail that got overlooked?

BRIDGE

Throughout my whole life I have been trained by great coaches who teach that every detail matters, and if you want to win a championship, you must pay attention to the details because the margin of error is razor thin. Think of Hebrews 12:1: *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.”*

I have found that as a follower of Christ every detail matters as well. Jesus calls us to be all in, and He cares about everything in our life even the things that seem small and insignificant. He cares because He is a Good Father. He cares what you’re going through, but He also cares about the sin that is holding you back in life.

1. What sin in your life is holding you back?
2. What is something that’s small to you that you need to rethink?

CONNECTION

1. What are the “small things” in our life that can derail us from our relationship with Jesus?
2. What are some disciplines you can put into your life that point you to Jesus?

DISCOVERY

1. If we, as Christians, paid attention to every little and big thing what would this show the world?
2. How would this change the way we live?

MEMORY VERSE

“And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.” — Luke 12:7

TEAM STUDIES / 2

EVERYONE ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

Take a moment to consider how many suicides you would run, stairs you would climb or push-ups you would do, if your coach made you pay a consequence for every time you had broken a team rule, short-cut a drill, made a bad play or otherwise failed the team. It's purely a matter of mercy that we're not paying those consequences today. It's evidence of your coaches' love for you and your teammates that we are sometimes freed from the momentary consequences of athletic failure. It's an even greater evidence of God's love for us that we are freed from eternal consequences of our rebellion toward Him.

APPLICATION

What sorts of consequences have you been required to pay for breaking team rules or cheating on a drill? (Check all that apply)

- Extra running Harsh critique Other
 Less playing time Nothing

BRIDGE

Ephesians 2:4–5 reads, *“But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!)”*

As competitors, we can break down Paul's message to the church in three ways:

1. God loves us so much that He sacrificed His only Son so we can be saved from death and sin.
2. Because of God's love for us, we are free, no longer bound by sin.
3. With Jesus, we can become new—our old habits and painful pasts hold no weight.

CONNECTION

1. God has shown you mercy in giving you life in Christ. How might your life be different without His having done that?
2. How does it feel knowing you are saved, free and new?

DISCOVERY

1. What are some of the failures for which your coaches gave you mercy and held back consequences from you?
2. Knowing that Jesus's love is for everyone, how does this change your perspective on loving your teammates and your rivals?

MEMORY VERSE

“So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it.”
— Romans 9:16



TEAM STUDIES / 3

EVERY WAY CHRIS RICH

INTRODUCTION

The saying “all roads lead to home” is not true when we look at Scripture. We know that the only way to the Father is through Jesus when He says, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* (John 14:6). But, I love that when Jesus came to make a way, He showed that He loved us in every way! I remember playing for a coach that I felt loved me in every way and cared about me.

APPLICATION

1. What does it feel like when someone loves you and cares for you as more than just a player?
2. What freedom does this give you when you are competing on the court?

BRIDGE

When Christ died on the cross, He made a way, and it is the only way to the Father. He also showed us He loved us by sacrificing everything to make a way. He gave up His life to show us He loves us in every way: *“For this is how God loved the world: He gave[a] his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16).

In loving us in this way, we are met with a decision. How will we live? As we talked about the freedom we have as a competitor when you know your coach loves you, knowing that Christ loved you enough to die on the cross for your sins should give us freedom to live in a way that honors and points to Him.

1. How does it feel knowing Jesus was sent for you?
2. Do you feel loved by the Father? Explain.

CONNECTION

1. When we know Jesus loves us in every way and has paid for our sin in every way, how does it transform the way we live?
2. How does it transform the way we compete?

DISCOVERY

1. If we, as Christians, lived in the truth that Jesus paid for our sin in every way how would it impact those around us?
2. What does it mean to you that you are loved in every way by God the Father and God the Son and that He wanted a relationship with you so much that He laid down His life for you? Write it down.

MEMORY VERSE

“This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.” — Hebrews 4:15-16

TEAM STUDIES / 4

EVERYDAY ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

As athletes, we are conditioned to perform at our best every day, every practice and every game. In every day we are called to our sport, our teammates should be by our sides, having our backs. In the same way, Jesus Christ never leaves us. And every day, He calls to something much higher than a scored point.

APPLICATION

1. Think about the drills you do as a part of your daily training for your sport. Which ones are most effective in developing your skills, your physical conditioning and your mindset?
2. Think about the drills you do as a part of your daily training for sport. Which ones are most effective in developing your skills, your physical conditioning and your mindset?

BRIDGE

When you perform your daily exercises and routines, do you include God? How would you arrange your daily schedule to make sure this happens? The apostle Paul wrote his friends in Ephesus about three such daily drills: 1. Put on every piece of God's armor. 2. Resist the enemy. 3 Stand firmly. These three daily drills were the foundation of the apostle's life, and they can be the same for ours:

"Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm." — Ephesians 6:13

CONNECTION

1. What are the various elements of God's armor, listed in verses 14-17, that we are challenged to put on and how can you put them on daily?
2. Who is the enemy of our souls? What would it look like to resist him?

DISCOVERY

1. As a team effort, how can you ensure that your comrades are competing for Christ?
2. What daily efforts can you make to ensure this happens?

MEMORY VERSE

"This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." — Joshua 1:9

TEAM STUDIES / 5

LEADERSHIP ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

The sporting world is full of talk about leadership, but it seems to struggle with how players should lead. Should they lead with power and intimidation? Should they lead with inspiration and motivation? Should they lead by example or how they speak? What would it look like to lead in Jesus's way?

APPLICATION

How do you respond to leadership by these various methods? Put a check mark by the ones that apply to you.

- Manipulation
- Motivation
- Encouragement
- Service

What are some ways of leading you think Jesus would not endorse?

BRIDGE

Jesus speaks directly about what His way of leading was not, and exactly what it was in Mark 10:42-45:

"So Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.'"

CONNECTION

1. What form of leadership does Jesus say is not for His disciples?
2. What does Jesus say is required to be first among your teammates?

DISCOVERY

1. What are some ways we can each serve our teammates today?
2. What privileges might it cost you to be first among your teammates?

MEMORY VERSE

"If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly." — Romans 12:8

BEING A TEAM PLAYER

SARAH FREYMUTH

INTRODUCTION

You can have the greatest talent on the field, but if you don't have a team-first mentality, your talent really doesn't amount to much. What coaches look for is someone who is "all in" for the team. Being a true team player means giving your all for the good of those around you, to work together and to reach an end goal.

APPLICATION

1. Where are you tempted to drift away from the team mentality and focus on your own goals or talent?
2. What does being a true team player look like? What would it take for you to get to that place?

BRIDGE

With God's team, we look to Jesus and His example of what it looks like to love and serve those around us. From His love and willingness to humble Himself, we are able to seek after the good of others, knowing Christ first loved us.

Jesus Himself shared the way to find a place in God's Kingdom: loving God and loving others. On the night where He would go to trial and then to the cross, what He wanted to most emphasize to His disciples was the team mentality: *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."* — Matthew 20:28

Jesus's command to us is to seek to serve our teammates, coaches and even our rivals. Our leadership mentality starts with serving.

1. What does it look like to be a true team player for Christ?
2. Is it easy for you to think of others' needs before yours, or difficult? Why do you think this is?
3. How might Jesus be asking you to serve your teammates today?

CONNECTION

1. What would your life look like if you made it a priority to serve others before yourself?
2. How can you make small steps in your prayer life to get there?

DISCOVERY

Servant leadership is the basis of loving God and others. How can your team serve together in your sport and community?

MEMORY VERSE

"God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another." — 1 Peter 4:10

TEAM STUDIES / 7

SACRIFICE SARAH FREYMUTH

INTRODUCTION

To become the best athlete possible, we all end up giving up—sacrificing—something to get us to where we want to be. Whether it's cutting out sugar or opting out of a Friday night hangout with friends because of an early morning game, we do what's hard for the sake of our sport.

APPLICATION

1. What does *sacrifice* mean to you?
2. When was the last time you sacrificed something as an individual that helped your team?

BRIDGE

For our faith to grow, we are often asked to sacrifice what's easy (living for self) for what's best for the sake of following Jesus (obeying Him so others may know God). In Old Testament biblical times, animal and crop sacrifices were offered to God as an acknowledgment of being right with God. In the New Testament, sacrifice was taken care of through the death of Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb, that forever gave us good standing with God. In response, we offer our lives—what we do, what we think about, how we treat others—as living sacrifices on a daily basis.

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"

— Romans 12:1

1. What can your team commit to sacrifice together this season? Less late nights? More team meals?
2. How can you hold one another accountable to what you commit to sacrifice?

CONNECTION

1. What will you do differently when it comes to giving God more of your time?
2. What will you do if God asks you to sacrifice more than you're willing?

DISCOVERY

Sacrifice means giving God something that means a lot to us in a loving tribute to our dedication to His place in our life. How can you take this loving attitude back to your team?

MEMORY VERSE

"The LORD is more pleased when we do what is right and just than when we offer him sacrifices." — Proverbs 21:3

TEAM COHESION CHRIS RICH

INTRODUCTION

I remember in 7th grade, I was on the best basketball team I had ever played on. We loved being around each other, we were talented and we worked extremely hard to be one on the court. We went 36-1. As we grew older, we had the same players in high school, but we never met our true potential because we let external things like relationships, parties, friends etc. get in between us.

APPLICATION

1. What does it feel like to play on a team who likes each other and plays as one unit?
2. On the contrary, what does it feel like to play on a team that doesn't get along and only cares about themselves?

BRIDGE

We live in a society now that wants us to be torn apart. We see this in every aspect from politics to sports. We see teams not reach their full potential because they can't come together.

As Christians, we play on an even greater team: “. . . so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other” (Romans 12:5). We get to go through life with an incredible team around us called the Church or other believers who help us to be our best. But, the world also wants to tear that apart, and it is so important that we stay unified. Paul wrote this many times throughout Scripture in his letters to the churches. Unity and cohesion among a team helps us reach our full potential!

1. What happens when a team comes together?
2. Do you feel this on your team? How can you make it better?

CONNECTION

1. When we come together as believers, what happens?
2. What does this look like to others?

DISCOVERY

A cohesive team is a powerful group who can go much farther than they could alone. The “Me First” mentality kills a team, but unity and cohesiveness allows us to reach the potential and intended purpose God has for us.

1. How can you develop cohesiveness and unity with other believers around you?
2. Explain at least three ways you can do this on your team.

MEMORY VERSE

“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.” — Acts 4:32

TEAM STUDIES / 9

CHARACTER RICK ISAIAH

INTRODUCTION

It is our goal as Christ-followers to become more like Jesus every day. On our teams, we are challenged to show our true character every day.

APPLICATION

When you lose a game, which option best describes your reaction?

- You get mad, pout and shut down.
- You lift up your teammates and encourage them to remember that it's just a game.
- Thank God for the opportunity to compete in another game with your team.

BRIDGE

Let's take a look at Abraham's journey as an example of building Christ-like character through obedience to God.

"The next morning Abraham got up early . . . Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about." — Genesis 22:3

God will often allow life circumstances to build our character. God wants to know if you love Him or the blessing He is giving you. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus says, *"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."* The world says that we should look out for ourselves, be the captain of our own destiny and be successful no matter the cost. God told Abram to sacrifice his one and only son. As a reminder, Abraham waited most of his life to have a child, he was 100 when his son Isaac was born. Abraham's character would be tested and refined as God gave him really challenging instructions. Abraham obeyed God, and because of that, God rewarded him.

CONNECTION

1. If God asked you to give up something you really love, like a starting position, would you obey Him?
2. How would you feel? Would you trust God through it all?

DISCOVERY

1. How can you ensure your character is Christ-like?
2. When your teammate falls short, how can you encourage them?

MEMORY VERSE

"And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart." — Ezekiel 36:26

TEAM STUDIES / 10

IDENTITY SARAH FREYMUTH

INTRODUCTION

When we know our role on our teams, it gives us confidence to perform well for our team. When we know our identity is found in who we are as God's children, it makes all the difference in how we live out our daily and athletic lives.

APPLICATION

1. Where do you find your identity?
2. Where have you found your identity in the past, and have you been let down by it?

BRIDGE

What if we were absolutely confident in who we are according to God? What if we took it to heart when He says we are His beloved, His chosen one and His child? Well, we can. We just need to look at the very beginning of things to see that God has intentionally set us apart with great intention. *"So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them"* (Genesis 1:27).

God made human beings in His own image. That's you and me. Designed and crafted by our Creator, to bear His being. If the world tries to make us into something that doesn't fit right in our souls, it's because it fits wrong. Before our team, coaches or even family, we stake our claim to identity as God's valued daughter or son.

1. What does being made in the image of God look like to you?
2. How could it look if you lived in this identity of being God's image-bearer on your team?

CONNECTION

1. How does being made in the image of God and being a team player go together?
2. What needs to change in your life to live confidently with an unshakable identity?

DISCOVERY

You are made in God's image and a child of the King. How can you share this joy with your team?

MEMORY VERSE

"See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!" — 1 John 3:1

TEAM STUDIES / 11

PURPOSE ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

One of the best things about our lives in sport is having clear results and well-defined goals. They're on the scoreboard and in the record book. One team wins; the other loses. One team finishes as champions; the others are further down in the standings. Purpose, on the other hand, is often less clearly defined, and a bit more elusive. If winning is your goal in sports, what is your purpose for competing? Can you clearly state your purpose? Is it possible that the purpose for sports could be even more important than our goals in sports?

APPLICATION

1. How have your coaches and your teammates stated your goals for this season?
2. How well do your personal goals fit in with your team's goals?
3. How would you state your purpose for competing in sport? Individually? Collectively?

BRIDGE

The apostle Paul had plenty of wins and losses in his life as a follower of Christ Jesus. His writing in Romans 8:28-29 provides some big-picture perspective: *"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."*

CONNECTION

1. How does the apostle see God's hand in both success and failure?
2. For whom does this passage say God is at work for good?
3. Toward what end is God working?
4. What does it seem is God's purpose in our lives, according to verse 29?

DISCOVERY

1. What are some ways you sense God is working in your life for your good and His purpose?
2. How could God work through failures, losses and weakness to accomplish His purpose?
3. How will you pursue God's purpose for your life, while also pursuing goals in sport?

MEMORY VERSE

"The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith." — 1 Timothy 1:5

TEAM STUDIES / 12

WORRY NATHAN BLISS

INTRODUCTION

Worry is like an injury. It can affect any athlete, no matter how talented, skilled or hardworking they are. Left unchecked, it forces athletes to slow down and, eventually, to stop competing.

APPLICATION

1. What are some things that you worry about? (Check all that apply)
 - Messing up in a big moment
 - Trying something new or challenging
 - Having others get upset with you
 - Losing
 - Not knowing how to do something
 - Other _____
2. Give an example of a time when you worried about one of these things. How did that negatively impact you?

BRIDGE

Usually, worry has little to do with our physical limitations and is often rooted in our hearts and minds. Worry stems from emotionally traumatic experiences or memories, believing negative and discouraging words and from playing negative thoughts over and over.

Read Philippians 4:6-7 below. God knows how damaging worry can be. Like a good trainer, God wants you to tell Him about the things that worry you so He can help you diagnose the symptoms and causes. God will then give you a treatment plan that includes focusing on thankfulness and His faithful love. God can also heal you with His peace and give you protection from future worry. But positive thinking alone won't accomplish this level of freedom. What we all need is a life that includes a growing relationship with Jesus Christ!

CONNECTION

1. What are some examples of God's past faithfulness in your life?
2. Share 2 to 3 things you will remind yourself to be thankful for the next time you begin to worry.

DISCOVERY

1. How can your teammates help one another remain positive when worry begins to creep in?
2. What's one thing your team will do every day to grow your relationship with Jesus?

MEMORY VERSE

"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." — Philippians 4:6-7

TEAM STUDIES / 13

RESPECT RICK ISIAH

INTRODUCTION

The world desires that we dismiss, demean and put down others to place ourselves above them. In some form or another, we've all felt it in our sport. But all that God represents is the total opposite of the world and what we sometimes experience during competition. Above anything else, God desires that we respect all people no matter the situation.

APPLICATION

1. Have you ever experienced trash talk on your field of play? How did that make you feel?
2. If you see a teammate disrespecting an opponent or another player, would you step in?

BRIDGE

There is a story of a college athlete who was asked to visit an elementary school to inspire and encourage the kids who looked up to him as a Division 1, college football player. The athlete walked into the lunchroom and spotted a kid who was sitting alone and chose to eat lunch with him. As you can imagine, this made the kid's day since he ate by himself every day. Even though he didn't have to, the college athlete saw value in this young man as a person.

In Romans 12:16, Paul encourages the church to see every human as worthy of our time, that everyone is of value in the sight of God. In essence, to respect all people. That gives us a simple definition of respect—to see all others as having value. Respecting others is the key to living in harmony, to keep pride out of our lives and off our teams. Like Paul shares in the following passage:

"Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!" — Romans 12:16

CONNECTION

1. How do you and your teammates treat the students in your school who are different from you?
2. Our behavior toward others can either make their day pleasant or unpleasant, what option would you choose?

DISCOVERY

1. What can you and your teammates do to honor everyone on your team?
2. Have you ever felt disrespected? What was your response?

MEMORY VERSE

"Jesus replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" — Matthew 22:37-39

DISCIPLESHIP ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

If you were to ask your coaches about their playing days, they would probably string together a long list of stories. Some of them would even be true, if slightly embellished. What may escape your notice is you are now writing similar stories for them, for yourself and for your teammates. There is a generational effect in our sporting lives as we learn from our coaches what they learned from theirs, and we pass along those lessons to those following us. This same generational effect has occurred among Jesus followers for almost two thousand years.

APPLICATION

1. What is the favorite sports story your coach has told you?
2. Tell us about one very important point of technique or strategy you have learned from your coaches?
3. Share with us one very important life lesson you have learned from a coach or mentor?
4. Are there some lessons you are sharing with your younger teammates or siblings?

BRIDGE

The apostle Paul wrote to his young protégé, Timothy in his first letter, *“You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.”* — 1 Timothy 2:2

CONNECTION

1. How many generations of Jesus followers do you see mentioned in this Scripture?
2. With what sorts of people does Paul instruct Timothy to share the things he was taught?
3. How do you determine who is a trustworthy person?
4. What sorts of people appear to be able to pass wisdom on to others?

DISCOVERY

1. Who are the people you are learning life’s most valuable lessons from?
2. What are some things you would like to pass on to the next generation of players in your sport?
3. What is there about your faith you would like to pass along to trustworthy people?

MEMORY VERSE

“Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.” — Hebrews 10:23

EXPECTATIONS ROGER LIPE

INTRODUCTION

Expectations are a powerful force in the mindset of a competitor or a team. Some are inspired by internal expectations of greatness and success. Others are imprisoned by external expectations from parents, friends, fans or coaches. Internal or external, expressed or concealed, our expectations have a strong influence upon our individual and collective performance.

APPLICATION

1. What are some of the expectations you and your teammates talk about?
2. What do you think people expected from Jesus in His time?

BRIDGE

Imagine you were Jesus, God in human form, with a mountain of expectations, internal and external. How would you handle that? How did He?

John wrote in his gospel about how Jesus dealt with varying expectations of Him in John 11:38–44:

“Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. ‘Roll the stone aside,’ Jesus told them.

But Martha, the dead man’s sister, protested, ‘Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible.’ Jesus responded, ‘Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory if you believe?’ So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, ‘Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me.’

Then Jesus shouted, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, ‘Unwrap him and let him go!’”

CONNECTION

1. What did Martha expect they would find after opening the tomb? Why?
2. Why would Jesus pray this way?
3. What did Jesus expect Lazarus to do?

DISCOVERY

1. How can you deal with others’, like Martha’s, poor expectations of you?
2. Who are some people, like Lazarus, you can free from their graveclothes of improper expectations?

MEMORY VERSE

“The hopes of the godly result in happiness, but the expectations of the wicked come to nothing.” — Proverbs 10:28

COMPETITIVE DRIVE AMBER JOHNS

INTRODUCTION

The competitive nature of driven athletes may seem counter to the Christ-like example we are called to live out. Competition is the foundation for all sports and is therefore unavoidable for any athlete. Striving for excellence is what motivates us to work harder, compete at a higher level and never give up.

APPLICATION

How would you generally define your competitive nature? Select the best option from below.

- My competitive nature is real but rarely a problem in how I relate to the rest of the world.
- My competitive nature has ruined a game of Monopoly or two, I sometimes struggle to tone it down.
- My competitive nature consumes me and cripples my ability to relate to others and God's purpose for my life.

BRIDGE

The parallels we find in Scripture can help us navigate our competitive edge and use it to glorify our Creator as a Christian competitor.

What if your competitive edge was God's way of creating you for *His* purpose?

"Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only person gets the prize? So run to win!" (1 Corinthians 9:24). Competitiveness does not equal sinful nature. In fact, your competitive edge can encourage excellence, direct your passion for Jesus and enhance your performance as well as those around you. The key to honoring God in competition is that we keep our eyes on *Him* so that He truly is our Audience of One (Colossians 3:23-24). Winning and losing can be a sanctifying process. Our competitive nature can be a pathway to excellence both spiritually and physically.

CONNECTION

1. How can winning and losing be a sanctifying process?
2. What does it mean to compete for an Audience of One as mentioned in Colossians 3:23-24?

DISCOVERY

1. In what ways could you use your competitive drive to bless your teammates?
2. In what ways can your competitive drive to enhance excellence in your spiritual journey?

MEMORY VERSE

"People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
— 1 Samuel 16:7

ACCOUNTABILITY CHRIS RICH

INTRODUCTION

When I coached high school football, we had a board up that showed every off-season weightlifting session and workout we had going on. When you came you got to put a check mark in the box showing you were there. This was an accountability measure, where players held each other accountable.

APPLICATION

1. How does having someone hold you accountable help you?
2. Is it better for a coach to hold you accountable or your teammates?

BRIDGE

As Christians, we often have things that we are struggling with that we cannot get through. It is often not until we invite someone into our life to hold us accountable that we see breakthrough in this. In Ezekiel 3:20, we are reminded to hold one another accountable. It's our jobs as Christ-followers and brothers and sisters in Christ.

"If righteous people turn away from their righteous behavior and ignore the obstacles I put in their way, they will die. And if you do not warn them, they will die in their sins. None of their righteous acts will be remembered, and I will hold you responsible for their deaths." — Ezekiel 3:20

I have two guys in my life that I ask to speak into every aspect of my life. When they see that I'm not aligning with what I am saying or claiming in the Bible, they check me. Sometimes accountability is painful, and I don't want to hear it, but it is always helpful.

CONNECTION

1. Write down two names of people you can ask to hold you accountable.
2. How can they help you overcome your sin?

DISCOVERY

Pride or shame often holds us back because we don't want people to know what we struggle with. This hinders us from growth and doesn't allow us to become more like Jesus.

1. Will you ask someone to be your accountability partner?
2. What steps do you need to take to ask them?

MEMORY VERSE

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." — James 5:16

INFLUENCE SARAH FREYMUTH

INTRODUCTION

As athletes, we're in a position that what we do or say has impact on our teammates and coaches. If we work hard and go the extra mile in practice, our coaches notice, and our teammates may be inspired to do the same. Whether we think we do or not, we have influence. We have the choice to use that influence for good or bad, for God's glory or our own selfish desires.

APPLICATION

1. Do you think you have influence on your team or community? Why or why not?
2. How might you use your influence to share Jesus with others?

BRIDGE

When we think of our influence, we can fall into the trap of being seen as the "influencers" people look to for wisdom and trendsetting. But Jesus offers a refreshing take on this that doesn't point to self but rather to others. Jesus used His position as teacher to share a new, servant-minded focus with the world. He used the influence He had to point back to God the Father and display over and over again His claim as God's Son, the Messiah. He invites us to live in His example: *"In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father"* (Matthew 5:16).

1. How does Jesus's example inspire you to seek the good of your teammates?
2. In what ways can you set an example of God's glory to others around you?

CONNECTION

1. How will you use your God-given influence to point others to a life in Christ?
2. What might need to change in your personal life and as a team to make this happen?

DISCOVERY

You have great influence to point others to God. How will you set a godly example of living for and speaking about Him to your team and community?

MEMORY VERSE

"Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity."
— 1 Timothy 4:12

TEAM STUDIES / 19

SPORTS AS A PLATFORM

RICK ISAIAH

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes we take our position and platform for granted. Regardless of the sport, as a member of the varsity team in your school or an elite team, you have an opportunity to make a positive impact, maybe even for eternity.

APPLICATION

As an athlete, you probably have a sense of pride and accomplishment that others look up to you. How does this make you feel: (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proudful | <input type="checkbox"/> Humble |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Thankful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better than non-athletes | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

BRIDGE

In Acts 16:25, we learn about Paul and Silas praying and singing hymns to God while in a pretty unfavorable situation: *“Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.”* Here, Paul and Silas use their platforms for something bigger than any earthly accomplishment. They use their platform to represent Christ.

Paul and Silas decided to use their platform for Christ when they could have been focused on their own problem of being in jail. God wants us to be a blessing where He has placed us. Paul and Silas decided that instead of being sad about being in jail, they would use their platform to encourage others. They decided to lift God up, which ultimately led to a miracle—they got out of jail and helped lead a guard and his family to Christ.

CONNECTION

1. As you think about the platform you have in your school, what could you and your team do to make a difference?
2. How can you use your platform as an athlete for Christ?

DISCOVERY

1. How does God want you to use your platform?
2. What concerns do you have about using your platform for Christ?

MEMORY VERSE

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” — Matthew 28:19–20

DEALING WITH CRITICISM

MICHELLE MALARA

INTRODUCTION

When we hear the word *criticism*, we think of an unfavorable judgement or an expression of disapproval. Critical words can hurt us deeply. These words can affect our mindset and even our performance. But, not all criticism is bad. Some criticism is designed to help you improve, but it sometimes can be difficult to accept.

APPLICATION

1. Have you heard this phrase, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me”? Do you believe this statement is true? Why or why not?
2. How do you feel when someone criticizes you?

BRIDGE

It may help you to know that some of the greatest people in the Bible endured criticism. Paul was an educated apostle and wrote most of the books in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 10:10, some of the Corinthians said, *“Paul’s letters are demanding and forceful, but in person he is weak and his speeches are worthless.”* Wow, that was harsh and hurtful!

Sometimes the person offering the criticism has a broader view of the situation. When you are given constructive criticism, it’s a great opportunity to improve yourself.

If you know the person has your best interest at heart, here are some ways you can respond:

1. Use self-control to not become defensive and fight back. It’s a normal reaction to give excuses or to blame someone else. Stay calm and quiet, listen and ask yourself, *Does this criticism reveal something that I can learn and grow from?*
2. Even if the criticism is not 100 percent true, there still may be a small nugget of truth that you should not ignore.

CONNECTION

Criticism can be hard to take even from people that love us. What did Solomon mean when he wrote, *“Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy”* (Proverbs 27:6)?

DISCOVERY

How can you mirror Jesus when you are being falsely criticized?

MEMORY VERSE

“If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise.”
— Proverbs 15:31

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-filled 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 Christ-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's 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?***



GET TO KNOW FCA

The Fellowship of Christian Athletes is touching millions of lives... one heart at a time. Since 1954, FCA has been challenging coaches and athletes on the professional, college, high school, junior high and youth levels to use the powerful platform of sport to reach every coach and every athlete with the transforming power of Jesus Christ. FCA focuses on serving local communities around the globe by engaging, equipping and empowering coaches and athletes to unite, inspire and change the world through the Gospel.

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

Integrity, Serving, Teamwork, Excellence



For general questions on FCA and how to find local FCA staff, visit FCA.org or call 1-800-289-0909

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GET INVOLVED WITH FCA



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Geared toward Christian coaches and athletes, Daily Impact Play is an email newsletter and social media outlet to engage, equip and empower readers to be stronger Christian competitors. Sign up at <https://www.fca.org/quick-links/daily-impact-play-other-e-newsletters> to receive Daily Impact Play devotionals every day or follow @fcaimpactplay and our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/thefcateam>.



YOUVERSION

In partnership with the YouVersion Bible app, FCA's reading plans plug you into God's Word with a competitor mindset and offers you a variety of topics that relate to you and where you're at in your spiritual journey as a coach or athlete. Start a reading plan today at <https://app.bible.com/fca>.



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