

Clark Kellogg Story

by **Phil Kratovil**

I grew up in a two parent home, the oldest of five. My dad has been a policeman for 36 years now in Cleveland. My mother, who died in 1994, was primarily a homemaker for the five of us. So our home was quite stable and I'm sure that had some impact as I look back. They were engaged and involved in our lives. We were a lower, middle class family if you have to put a label on it.

My dad had played sports all through high school. He excelled in track, football and basketball and had a great reputation. I started playing basketball with him in the backyard. From there I played at the local YMCA, leagues in my neighborhood and then in middle school, high school and college teams, and ultimately to the pros.

Our parents emphasized doing the right thing, being responsible and goal-oriented. So from an early age I always wanted to do well. Being the oldest kid motivated me to want to be somebody that other people enjoyed being around and playing with. I wanted to be successful as a basketball player.

I wanted to win and gain the accolades that come with that. I also wanted to enjoy the recognition that comes with doing something well. And once that starts happening then you want to repeat it. At an early age I showed an aptitude for basketball because at 6' 8" I was taller than everyone. I enjoyed the respect I achieved at being able to play with the older guys even though I was one of the younger ones.

I started playing organized basketball when I was nine years old, was drafted into the NBA at 21 but had to retire because of knee problems at 26. When you have dreamed of being a pro player and that dream is cut short prematurely it can be pretty difficult. But I had a good knowledge and passion for the game, so broadcasting seemed to be a great way to continue my career in basketball.

When I had to retire from the Indiana Pacers they told me that they would like me to stay in the organization. They were late in hiring a radio announcer in the fall of 1987, so they asked me to fill that slot. That was the beginning of my career in broadcasting.

I had grown up in a loving but disciplined family environment. We had moral values but there was no spiritual interest. There was a reverence for God, but there was no real commitment to knowing or following God. We tried to treat people right, doing to others as we would like them to do to us. We were responsible for our actions, being accountable for what we did. There were standards we lived by but there was no real faith.

But the adversity of my knee injury caused me to begin thinking about God and faith because for the first time the thing that had been at the center of my life for so long, namely playing basketball, was taken away from me.

Professional basketball at the NBA level is a whirlwind of activity. It's hotels, arenas and airports for eight months out of the year. You play four games a week; practice when you're not playing. When you're not playing or practicing you are traveling. So when you get pulled out of that kind of activity there is a little more time to think about what life is really all about.

Is there more to life than achieving goals and being successful? Is there a more overriding purpose? Those are the kinds of things you think about when life-altering circumstances arise. I was happily married, well respected in the community, was popular and had status. But I sensed that something was missing in my life.

About this time a friend and teammate invited me to participate in the chapel program that was taking place in the NBA in the early 80's. It was there that I heard that God loved me and that he



had a plan and a purpose for my life that went beyond playing basketball. I also discovered how he had become a man, been executed on my behalf to forgive my sins and was inviting me to enter into a personal relationship with him.

Now I have a foundation in my life that can't be shaken. I have a purpose that goes beyond what I do and achieve. God gives me a peace and a strength at the core of who I am. I view my life more as a stewardship than simply something to be selfishly enjoyed. I try to let God direct my life each day because he knows what's best for me and the world.

Whether you are a highly visible broadcaster for CBS or whether you are a journalist or a plumber or an electrician, the issues of life can overwhelm you at any time. But with God there to see you through the tough times, it makes a big difference. I love what I do and it's a well-paying job. But it isn't who I am; it's what I do. I think that is where my faith is most helpful, especially as it relates to the Final Four. There is so much excitement and visibility with my job that it's easy to get intoxicated and full of myself if I'm not careful. I try to keep in perspective what's really significant and important, which is my relationship with God and how I treat others.

Clark Kellogg has been a broadcaster for CBS Sports for the past seven years. He is best known for his basketball analysis with Greg Gumbel during the NCAA basketball tournament. He also spent seven years with ESPN and was the radio voice of the Indiana Pacers for three years