

The Leader: A Fresh Perspective

by **Frederick E Roach**

Last week, our Leadership Baylor class enjoyed "a fresh perspective" on leadership from Jim Clemons, coach of the Dallas Mavericks.

Clemons, recipient of five National Basketball Association (NBA) championship rings, had fantastic experience with two great teams -- the Los Angeles Lakers and the Chicago Bulls -- before he became head coach of the Dallas Mavericks about a year ago.

Baylor Health Care System enjoys a special relationship with the Dallas Mavericks, since they share our facilities at Baylor-Tom Landry Center. When introducing the coach, David Evans, manager of the Landry Center, said: "Not only has Coach Clemons been a great player and coach, he also was an Academic All-American as a senior at Ohio State."

It's obvious Clemons is a very sensitive and observant person. He shared meaningfully with those at his luncheon table, making them feel comfortable. When he began speaking, Clemons said the invocation touched on the topic of his talk. He used three words that he heard expressed in the prayer as important aspects of life. These words were "grateful", "relationships", and "purpose."

Clemons said how important it is to be grateful. The coach must know his Latin, because he said the word "grateful" comes from the Latin word for "grace." He reminded us that we all have a lot for which to be grateful. As a result of our gratefulness, we should show more graciousness toward others. An important reminder from an NBA coach!

Then the coach talked about the importance of relationships. The audience sensed how important his relationships were to him. He spoke of his family. He mentioned special relationships he has enjoyed during his coaching career. The Landry Center's Evans already had told the group Clemons was known as "the coach of Michael Jordan."

It seemed natural for our speaker to talk about purpose. He exemplifies a man who has lived life with purpose. We sensed it in the intensity of what he shared with us, and how he shared.

Purpose, he said, adds direction to life and keeps us moving on a path of personal enjoyment and success.

Let's move to some other ideas Coach Jim Clemons shared:

"Four Enemies Of Man"

1. Fear

"While fear is a natural enemy of man -- we can make it an ally," Clemons said. He pointed out that "fear keeps us from trying and robs us of future success." The fear can be because of past experience or uncertain expectations about the future. Growing up in North Carolina, Clemons saw small animals sometimes "freeze" in their tracks at night when they saw oncoming car lights. The result -- many dead animals. "Don't freeze when the lights hit your eyes," he said. Fear should be a force that generates positive action on our part!



2. **Lack of Clarity**

Here, the coach told us to "stay focused -- maintain your attention." This ties in to the need to maintain our vision -- to be clear on our direction. I liked his closing thought on the need to stay focused. "Don't tell me how rough the waters are, just bring the ship in safely," he said. "To not get lost, we have to know where we are... Don't rest on the plains of hesitation." At Baylor, our own leaders faced this challenge.

3. **Power**

It's interesting that a head coach in the NBA highlights the danger of power as "an enemy of man." Clemons said, "Use power to encourage others. Don't worry about who gets the credit." Power is important, he said. "The effective use of power makes it more meaningful."

4. **Time**

"Time is an enemy because there's "not enough for any of us," Clemons said. There's so much to accomplish and seemingly not enough time to deal with all the issues. "Use your time to gain knowledge and then turn your knowledge into wisdom," he said. Good uses of time include taking time to play, pray, laugh and give. That's good advice from a good man!