



Written By
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Once a year we, as your coaches, as you to take a knee so we can assess how we are doing at God's team in Northern Virginia. Usually, we have this all-important time more toward the end of the month, but since I'll be in Charlotte, N.C. next week finishing up a doctoral class, I thought it most prudent to talk to you before I left. That way when I return we'll be able to jump right back into our exciting study of the book of Daniel, which we launched last January. By the way, we'll be wrapping up our study of this great prophetic book in early February, so prior to my return to preaching on January 22, I'd ask you to read chapters ten and eleven. Doing this will make reigniting this pivotal and timely study easier for me, and for you.

Since we've been tied in to a sports motif for the last two years with our **GET IN THE GAME** and **BATTER'S UP!** giving program for the new building, I thought it natural continue that theme this morning by relating our team observations to an all-familiar chalk talk. If you've played sports, you know the value of the ol' chalk talk. That's when the head coach sits you down and talks about how you're playing, how play could be better, and what he foresees as you head back out onto the field. Before we dive into those three concepts, I'd first like to make a few practical team observations:

- If you are new to our team, meaning this is your first Sunday, then welcome. While this talk does not represent our typical Sunday morning sermon, it's so important for you to be here with us. Why? You'll find out what kind of team we are, how we play the game of life for God, and all of this will help you in your quest to find a local team to play on.
- If you are currently on our team, I need to bring a couple of practical items to your attention to help us continue to function well. One, as you know, this is a very large team, in fact, less than half a percent of churches in the United

States are over 2,000 people. With 3,000 people, we are, by God's providential will and movement, a statistical team anomaly. Because of our size and the limitations of our current team facility, it is imperative that team members take the shuttle from the Park N Ride on Old Keene Mill Road for our second and third services. We have three new and very comfortable shuttle buses, with some excellent, friendly, and timely drivers, so I encourage you to use the service in order to free up parking for new people. For those of you who are already committed to this important program, thank you. You are making an impact in the lives of others by your sacrifice. Second, since our seating in the main sanctuary is limited to 728 people, I urge our team members to consider attending the excellent live service broadcast in the Aud located on the east side of our facility. We have a live worship team leading here during the second and third worship services, and the sermon is presented in high definition on a large screen to make it feel like you are in the main worship center. For those who have made this your service, thank you. You've freed up seats for new folks. In 2017, we're going to need more of you to move to one of these venues or to start coming to our first service so we can continue to accommodate the growth the Spirit is bringing our way.

Now, with these practical team items out of the way, let's get to that chalk talk. As I said, we're going to zero in on two questions.

- How Are We Playing Well?
- How Can We Play Harder?

We'll treat our questions in the order presented.

How Are We Playing Well?

As I look back to the last half of play we'll call 2016, I must say, wow. We had two amazing quarters of spiritual play. In fact, we've played so well in so many areas, it's hard to address them all. I'll give it a shot, but if I miss an area (and I'm sure I will), it's not because I don't see it . . . it's because I've only got a brief thirty minutes for this chalk talk. So, what about those key areas of great play? I see seven areas that just get your coaches all pumped up. Four areas, you say? Yeah, I told you this is not a normal Sunday morning. Let's click down through them quickly.

One, the team plays for the coaches. Yes, I know, you ultimately play for the Lord. After all, you're the kind of mature team who understands and applies the words of another great coach, Paul, he uttered in an ancient chalk talk: ³¹ *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Corinthians 10). All play here is, by definition, directed to give glory and honor to the head coach, Jesus, our Savior. But because you understand the import of Paul's words here, you also understand the importance of following the leadership of your coaches. Based on what another inspired coach said in another chapter out of our play book, we, as your coaches take our job seriously:

⁷ Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith . . . ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13).

We, as your spiritual coaches have the *serious responsibility* to live in such a fashion our lives will be model for you to follow. We are deeply committed to this mandate from the Head Coach. Further, your responsibility is to follow godly leadership. Why? For one, your coaches will have to give account before the Head Coach regarding your field of play. Again, we, as your coaches keep this timeless truth ever before us. We'll have to answer to Christ one day regarding whether our team members followed them or not. For another, your faithful following brings joy to your leaders, which, in turn, is spiritually profitable for you. I think the implication is that you, too, will have to give account to God for how you played on the team. Paul certainly develops this motif in 2 Corinthians 5: 2,

⁹ Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5).

I say all this to say this: Thanks for being a team who follows the leadership and play calls of your coaches. Sometimes the game is tough and demanding, sometimes the decisions we have to make are not easy, sometimes we can't give you all the background information of decisions, but I'm just thankful you are the kind of players who play hard for your coaches. Yes, you ask us tough questions. Yes, you let us know how things are going in your area of play. Yet, at the end of the day you have a proven track record of going out onto the field as a team committed to the coaches Christ has placed over this local faith franchise. This means much to us who will answer to the Lord one day. So, thank you. As a sidelight, I think we all know this is one of the reasons why there is joy, peace, and unity among us. God certainly gets this glory.

Two, the team is committed to the playbook. Why are we committed to it? We know, based on the evidences from prophecy, archaeology, and so forth, that it is THE playbook of all playbooks, spiritually speaking. Since this is so, we know it contains the absolute truth for how to live to please God in this life. In a world in love with the untenable philosophical notion of relativism, this playbook is an anchor to the soul, it is light for the path of life (Psalm 119:105), it is the food for person who is spiritually hungry (1 Corinthians 3:1-2), it is the mirror that shows you the real you so you can, with God's help, make spiritual progress in maturity (James 1:23-25), and it is the sword to take on the false thinking of the Devil (Ephesians 6:19). We are, and always will be, people committed to THE playbook of God. We fearlessly teach it. We humbly submit our wills to its will for life and living. We show how it relates to life and our godless culture. We, as team members, don't just read Paul's profound words in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, we read them, believe them, and apply theme throughout ever level of our team:

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3).

The Devil's teams have their share of so-called playbooks, but none compares to this one for it is THE ONE, and we believe this with every ounce of our beings. I commend you for being a team who loves God's Word and who submits to it. Because of this, spiritual growth happens up and down our team, and, you guessed, it . . . joy, peace and unity thrive. Based on all this we have no intention of pulling back our love affair and respect for God's holy playbook, regardless of the darkness of our culture. If anything, they need the truth taught in this book.

Three, the team plays as a team. Ever played on a team with a couple of show boaters or ball hogs? I have. I played on a football team where the gifted quarterback would call plays in the huddle, we'd execute them at the snap, and then he'd run with the ball for all the glory he could get for himself. When that occurs team members start not wanting to play, they also start grumbling among themselves, and all this results in inferior team play. Here at BCC, I watch in amazement, as one of your coaches, at how you all use your spiritual gifting to advance the team, not yourselves. No doubt, you know and apply the mandate from the playbook as articulated by the late coach, Paul from Tarsus:

³ For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. ⁴ For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly . . . (Romans 13).

As we learn here, the Head Coach, Jesus, sovereignly gave you diverse spiritual gifts at the moment of conversion, and you employ them in a humble fashion, and all of this results in a unified, passionate, joyous team. You realize the play is not about you but about others. You realize what God has called you to do and you do it, consistently, dutifully, and selflessly. You also refrain from putting down other team members, or talking behind their backs. Nor do you vie for the more advantageous slots on the team. No, you follow God leads and play well as part of a team. I can't begin to say how proud this makes me as one of your coaches.

Believe me, I've seen churches in my pastoral career who didn't play well together. As a young church planter, I had an elder come up to me privately one day, one highly skilled as a Bible teacher, and he remarked, "You know, Pastor, of all the men on the Elder Board, only I'm really qualified to be an elder because I can teach." Yikes. He pegged the pride meter with that cocky comment. He also went on to sow discord on the team to elevate himself. I'm thankful we have mature, humble team members who know what God has gifted them to do and not do, and who do it with the team in mind. As I watch you play, I can't help but think about the words of Coach Paul again,

¹ Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy (1 Corinthians 4).

Paul says, to paraphrase, “Say, when you think about us, just think of us as just servants of Jesus.” In Greek, he calls his pastoral team *hyperetas* (ὕπηρέτας).¹ Literally, this unique word lexically denoted a lowly rower on a slave ship. In Paul’s day, Roman ships, called *triremes*, were powered, not by 100,000 hp Wartsila-Sulzer TRA96-C diesel marine engines, but by a group of slaves chained to their oars below decks. The job description for the rower couldn’t have been clearer: row. And everyone had to work in tandem. You couldn’t have one rower just sitting there because he was mad at another rower. You couldn’t have one rower mouthing off about how other-worldly his rowing skills were, either. No, your job was to just row. There was NO glory in this job. Nobody ever saw you. They only saw the result of your work, viz., positive movement forward. Amazing, isn’t it? Paul, as gifted as he was, classified himself and those he worked with as, really, nothing more than a lowly rower on God’s ship.

I can safely say after watching you over the last year, we’ve got a team full of some of the best godly rowers I’ve ever seen on a local boat. Again, you make me proud.

Four, the team really cares about the team. You can’t read through the New Testament part of God’s playbook and not bump into various “one another” commands:

- Love one another (John 15:17).
- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10).
- Build up one another (Romans 14:19).
- Admonish one another (Romans 15:14).

¹William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1035: **ὕπηρέτης, ου, ὁ** (Aeschyl., Hdt.+; ins, pap, LXX; TestBenj 3:8; EpArist, Philo, Joseph., Just.; Tat. 4, 2; loanw. in rabb.; freq. as t.t. for a governmental or other official) **one who functions as a helper, freq. in a subordinate capacity, helper, assistant** (e.g. a physician’s assistant: Hobart 88f; as adjutant: Arrian, Tact. 10, 4; 14, 4; the lictor beside the consul: Appian, Liby. 90 §424; the 20 senators with Pompey: Appian, Bell. Civ. 2, 18 §67; the priest’s helpers: Diod S 1, 73, 3; the assistant to the ἡγούμενος of a cultic fellowship: Sb 7835, II [I B.C.] Dg 7:2. John (Mark) as ὑπ. of Paul and Barnabas **Ac 13:5** (BHolmes, Luke’s Description of John Mark: JBL 54, ’35, 63–72; WHadorn, D. Gefährten u. Mitarbeiter des Pls: ASchlatter Festschr. 1922, 65–82; RTaylor, ET 54, ’42/43, 136–38). Of the attendants of a board or court (Diod S 14, 5, 1f and Appian, Bell. Civ. 1, 31 §138 of attendants of the court; Diod S 17, 30, 4 **παρέδωκε τοῖς ὑπηρέταις ... ἀποκτείνειν**; Maximus Tyr. 3, 2b), of the Sanhedrin (Jos., Bell. 1, 655 **παρέδωκεν τοῖς ὑπ. ἀνελεῖν**, Ant. 4, 37 **πέμψας ὑπ.**; 16, 232) **Mt 5:25** (Ael. Aristid. 45 p. 68 D.: ὁ δικαστὴς παραδίδωσι τ. ὑπηρέταις ‘deputies’); **26:58; Mk 14:54, 65; J 7:32, 45f; 18:3, 12, 22; 19:6; Ac 5:22, 26; GJs 10:1; 15:2.** W. δούλοι (as Pla., Polit. 289c [on this Collins 81–84, s. below]; Just., A I, 14, 1) **J 18:18.** Of a synagogue attendant (as prob. in the Roman-Jewish grave ins: RGarrucci, Dissertazioni archeologiche II 1865, p. 166 no. 22) **Lk 4:20** (ὑπ. as a title of cult officials: Thieme 33. Also Musaeus, Fgm. II Diels [Paus. 10, 5, 6]: Pyrcon as Poseidon’s ὑπηρέτης ἐς τὰ μαντεύματα; Dio Chrys. 19 [36], 33 ὑπ. τῶν τελετῶν; PLond 2710 recto, II [HTR 29, ’36, p. 40; 50]). Of a king’s retinue **J 18:36; GJs 21:2; 23:1f.** The apostles as assistants of Christ **Ac 26:16; 1 Cor 4:1** (Epict. 3, 22, 82 the Cynic as ὑπ. τοῦ Διός; Galen, Protr. 5 p. 12, 5 J.: Socr., Hom. et al. as ὑπ. τοῦ θεοῦ; Pythagorean saying: WienerStud 8, 1886, p. 278 no. 105 τὸν εὐεργετοῦντά σε εἰς ψυχὴν ὡς ὑπηρέτην θεοῦ μετὰ θεὸν τίμα=one who has benefited you spiritually, esteem as God’s helper after God; Sextus 319; Just., D. 57, 3). Believers gener. as θεοῦ ὑπηρέται (w. οικονόμοι [as 1 Cor 4:1] and πάρεδροι) **IPol 6:1** (cp. PGM 59, 3; 5 and Jos., Bell. 2, 321, Ant. 3, 16).—Also w. objective gen. of that to which services are rendered (Appian, Bell. Civ. 3, 41 §169 τῆς πατρίδος ὑπ.; Wsd 6:4) ὑπηρέται τοῦ λόγου *ministers of the word* **Lk 1:2** (cp. the role of a scribe Sir 39:1–4; PMather, BR 30, ’85, 28f). ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ὑπηρέται *servants of God’s assembly/church* **ITr 2:3.**—On the obscure οἱ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ὑπηρέται **B 16:4 s.** Windisch, Hdb. ad loc.—On the functions of the ὑπ. in Greco-Rom. Egypt, HKupiszewski and JModrzejewski, JJP XI and XII, ’57/58, 141–66; JCollins, Diakonia ’90, esp. 81–84, 173–75.—B. 1334. DELG. M-M. TW. Spicq. Sv.¹

- Greet one another (Romans 16:16).
- Have the same care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25).
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13).

And so on and so forth. These are not just words to you. They are commands from God and you evidence them on a daily basis. I know, I see you in action, playing hard for God. This might be a big team, but there is real love and compassion here.

- Those who face disease, sickness and death are not alone. They are surrounded by the loving care of real saints.
- Those who face troubled marriages are never alone, but have mature saints who love on them and seek to help them.
- Those who are feeling alone and cut off, have people who reach out to them.
- Those who need a call or a card hear from people who truly care about them.
- Those who need a meal have more food show up than they usually know what to do with.
- Those who are ashamed and desire to come clean from some besetting sin find saints who love and accept them and call them onward and upward in their walk with God.

If you're new here and you're thinking this is probably a cold, unfriendly place, then you don't know us. Love is here because people are in love with Christ. And because love is here, profound relationships are formed, relationships which will stand the tests of time.

In talking with our Tammy, our Children's Leader, this week, about what's going well in her area of the team, she wrote me this note:

- Every Sunday morning, one of our volunteers is greeted with a "breakfast" prepared by a sweet kindergartener. This routine was developed because she has connected with her teacher. He enjoys the weekly service with a smile!
- Frequently, we see teachers greeting former students in the hallways. Kids remain connected with teachers from their past classes. Recently, one of our girls was intent in stopping by her teacher's room for a quick visit before class. He kindly stopped what he was doing and asked this sweet 7 year old what was new in her world.
- After learning about some difficult family situations our volunteers cared for their kids by praying with them and writing them notes throughout the week. This not only encouraged the children but their parents as well. This was only possible because of the connection these kids felt with their teachers.
- After a scuffle between some boys, the leaders in one class worked to bring more than just a resolution. Instead they prayed with the kids and walked them through the forgiveness process. They followed up with parents and watched for the boys return to class so they could connect and ensure all was

well. They went beyond the necessary to make certain relationship was restored.

- We have a welcoming team of volunteers. Our adult & teen volunteers are always ready with high fives & side hugs!

See what I mean? See and sense the love? Children come to our wonderful children's program because they are loved and because our leaders develop real, lasting relationships with them. Here's a snapshot of one of our leaders in action:



For all of you team members who make it your habit to love team members, I must say that God is honored. Your actions are touching lives and making a difference in eternity.

Ah, there is so much more I could say about what's going well, like the generous nature of the team, the commitment to prayer, the desire to live sacrificially and put others' needs first, the willingness to defend the truths of God in a godless world, an inexorable commitment to world and local missions, and the passion for sharing the life-giving gospel of Jesus, the Christ; however, for the sake of time, I must move on because halftime is about over and we've got to get back into the game. So, the next question I'd like to address before we hit the field is a logical outflow of the first one:

How Can We Play Harder?

Yes, we can always play harder and better. We can't take the cleats off or put the helmet down until we see Christ, and we, most definitely, can improve as a team because no earthly team is perfect, right? Since it is of a premium, allow me to click through four key areas where we can, and should, play harder.

One, worshippers need to move to workers. Many new people have come to worship with us in 2016. Eighty-three of them actually took the *Discover Burke One Shot* class and became formal members of our team. We still have twelve more waiting to finish the membership process from 2016, so that, really means ninety-five new folks are certified (or about to be certified) team

members. By the way, there is another *Discover Burke One Shot* class on January 29th. Sign up details are in your bulletin, and I'd encourage you to come and check us out. For all of you, regardless of whether you just joined the team, or you've been enjoying what the team offers, I must challenge you to, as a follower of Christ, to purposefully move from being a worshipper to being a worker. As I said a few moments ago, while referencing Paul's words in Romans 13, all players on God's eternal and local team have been given spiritual gifts to be used in the body. The body is enhanced when you serve as Christ served (Mark 10:45), selflessly and sacrificially. You grow, too, spiritually speaking, when you are obedient with your service. So, as we look at another year before, I think the challenge is clear. May this be the month where you pray this prayer: "God thank you for guiding me to this church. Thank you for how you have ministered to and spoken to me. Now, I ask you to show me where you want me to touch lives for eternity. And, yes, I'll start talking to key coaches so see where I might be used by you."

Just in case you might need some insight into where needs are, just consider these salient facts:

- Our children's ministry has a volunteer pool of 300 people, and it takes 220 people per Sunday to impact children for Christ. And even if you say that working directly with children is not your thing, don't forget there are many places you can serve where you support those who have a direct impact.
- The High School ministry needs fifty people to run effectively. Just 29 people are needed on Wednesday nights to build relationships with teens around small group tables. Junior High and Quest (5th-6th grades) needs 20 servants each to run effectively.

And these stats don't even take into account all the people needed for sound, lights, video camera operators, singers, musicians, greeters, and so on. The point is, there is a place where God can use you and I'd challenge you to make this year the year you get plugged in.

Two, bigger buy-in is needed for the new facility. As many of you know, based on our explosive growth over the last eight years, we are currently positioned to break ground on a new worship/office/classroom facility at the end of this year. The overall project will cost right at \$15 million, and so far we've raise right at \$5 million for the worthy and pivotal endeavor. Combined with monies we already have on hand, we are positioned to move comfortably forward; however, our projected goal for our **GET IN THE GAME** and **BATTER UP!** giving drive was \$8 million. We are, therefore \$3 million below what we'd like to see as we begin construction. For those who've stepped up the plate and have given in a profound and sacrificial fashion, I thank you for being obedient to what God has laid upon your heart to do. Knowing that God calls all of His people to live generous lives toward advancing His kingdom purposes (Proverbs 11:24-25; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8; 1 Timothy 6:18-19), I have but one question to those who are considering how God wants you to give this year to the building program: What would a generous, sacrificial gift really look like in your life? You take that up with God in prayer and wait expectantly for Him to show you. And when you decide what that figure is, make sure you pick up a special giving card from the church office.

Three, more people need to move from the large team to a small team. Translated, God desires for you to get plugged into a small group. Mark this well, God is all about small groups. How do I know this? Because the Trinity is the ultimate small group, is it not? When the Lord walked

among us, think of how much time He invested in those twelve disciples. Talk about an amazing small group to be part of. These two examples merely underscore that God knows the value of community, and He has wired us for community, whether we're introverted (you know who you are: interacting with people drains your energy, prefers thought and ideas above people, gets confused by multiple conversations, prefer to relax alone or with just a few people, tend to think before you speak, experience your mind going blank in groups or under some type of pressure, you hate feeling like you're rushed) or extroverted (you know who you are: interacting with people pumps you up, you prefer people interaction over that of ideas, you love multiple conversations, you prefer to relax with others, tend to speak without thinking, you have no trouble talking, you thrive in a pressure cooker environment). Furthermore, the larger the church the more important it is for the people to be in a small group. Why? Because the pastoral staff can't be as close to you as they can be in a smaller church environment. Been there. Done that.

What is the value of being in a small group? Let's state that differently: What's the value of being in Life Group? That's what we call small groups at BCC? Let me list the benefits:

- Friendships are forged here.
- Care for others occurs.
- Accountability for godly living becomes a reality.
- It is just fun getting together with people who love God.
- You'll discuss tough topics.
- You'll get a chance to dig into the Bible at various levels.
- Your marriage will be strengthened as you get close to people who've done marriage right for many years.
- You'll learn how to move to deeper levels in following God as you get close to really mature saints.
- The spiritual transformation which occurs in the small group becomes a light to the community, and it also brings power to the church body.
- You get exposure to people who can't wait to pray for you and your needs.
- You'll find strength from the team for life's storms.
- Wisdom will flow your way for key decisions you'll eventually face.

Need I go on? I'm sure you get the point.

Currently, we have 55 Life Groups, consisting of 625 people. We have three new groups which are forming, and we have 17 groups looking for new people to join them. Ideally, based on our adult worship size of 1,800 we should have, at least, 900 people in these all-important groups. I know great things can happen in your life as you're seated in a row facing forward in a worship service; however, there are some even more amazing things which can occur in your life when you're sitting in someone's home in a circle full of people in search of knowing Christ and caring for Christ's people. My challenge this year, therefore, is to reach that 900 figure mark. It will bring spiritual health to your life, and to the life of this church, so what about it? Wouldn't you say it's time to get connected? I would. On January 22, we'll be having *Linked-In Life Groups* in the Main Lobby of the worship center after our morning services. This is a unique opportunity to talk to leaders of open groups, ask questions, and find a group for you.

God has richly blessed us in so many ways over the years, and we thank Him for that. A new year with new opportunities is now before us. How can we not be excited knowing that He is, most certainly, with us? Our Adversary is at work, seeking to undermine the work of God all over the place, but God has put Him on notice. Spiritual life can now replace spiritual death because of the person and work of Jesus. Light will replace darkness. Truth will triumph over evil. And the gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church. Why? Because Jesus is with His Church. Therefore, this is a year where we say that faith overcomes fear, where boldness overcomes quietness, and where we, as His local church, live, like never before, like the church to His glory and honor.