

CAN THE BODY OF MESSIAH USE SPORT TO TRANSFORM NATIONS?



One of the strangest teaching that has come out of the church is the idea that we should avoid all things that;

- ❖ Are not filled with Biblical activity
- ❖ Are likely to open us up to the world system
- ❖ Are likely to build the “old man’ instead of the spirit man.

We are called to be set-apart ... This does not mean that we should withdraw from the community, but rather that we should live in the community revealing a different set of value and principles—and in so doing, reflecting God’s GLORY.

So the question can then be asked:

- ✦ Can the Body of Messiah learn from the world of sport?
- ✦ Can the world of sport learn from the Body of Messiah?

God’s WORD is not a collection of verses that we quote at random. Instead, God’s WORD is a ream (a large quantity of) of principles and values that we are expected to understand and apply in daily life.



Now there is no doubt that sport can have major negative aspects to it.

- ☹ Huge ego’s
- ☹ Extreme bad behaviour and violence
- ☹ Anger outbursts
- ☹ High levels of frustration when things do not go well
- ☹ Unacceptable use of alcohol

But what would you say if I told you that some of the most successful sports teams are building their results on the back of Biblical Principles?

1. Firstly, does that not show the church that it has the best-ever model and that we should be using it more ourselves?
2. Secondly, should the church not use this to gain traction amongst people who have no concept / value for God?

Is this not one of the most powerful tools to take young people off the streets and teach them ‘life lessons’ in sports language, which can then be converted into Bible language later?

Such people now have developed a strong character, they have a Biblical value system as well as an understanding of community - even though they are not yet believers - would they not more easily accept the WORD OF GOD when they hear it for the first time ?

It does not matter which sport we are talking about - rugby, football, hockey, etc. You see, we need a **team**, and we need those players to work **together** for the **vision**.

In the Body, we have as principle the fact that each individual must choose to become sons / daughters of Abraham in their own right in order to be included in the Covenant, BUT God's plan is not about the individual people, but about the **team** ... only in this He calls the team — the Tabernacle of Living Stones.

However, take note ... **we have the same principles at play.**

- ✦ The sports team
- ✦ Individuals that are equal in value but unique
- ✦ Each one has a specific role to play
- ✦ Each one has specific duties and responsibilities to handle
- ✦ Each one has a specific position in the field
- ✦ And it's only as a combined unit that they can play well and win.

Let's now turn this into Bible language:

- ✦ Every single person is **equal** before God's Eyes (Paul says it well: neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female)
- ✦ Each person has **talents** that they have been blessed with (Jacob blesses each tribe uniquely in the field of expertise that they will dominate in)
- ✦ Each person has been blessed with a set of **Gifts** that determine where he / she will flow in the field of ministry
- ✦ Each person is "**called**" to **serve** in a unique space within the Body (we see this in the description of the formation of the camp and we see it in the description of us humans fitted together as arms / legs / feet / toes, and so forth, in a Body)
- ✦ Each person is meant to be part of a bigger whole; a **community** of priests who are joined together in this Living Stone Tabernacle.



NOW LET US LOOK AT SOME OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF WINNING TEAMS

I will define the important attribute in sport, but not spend much time defining their methods, and so forth, but then focus on the counter point within the Body of Messiah.

a) We have Coaches

- ✦ Every team has a coach / manager.
- ✦ One thing is true ... the coach can do whatever he wants during the week; he can pick the best team of the week, BUT, once the players get onto the field, they are faced with many different tests,
- ✦ Then the coach no longer has any influence.

The church calls this “COACH person” father / dad / mother / mom.

(i) Fathers create a learning environment:

- ✦ Fathers listen to the Voice of God
- ✦ Fathers identify the gaps in the ability and then set plans to close those

Fathers are on the lookout for incremental change → the steady growth path ...coaches will have the players kick at the goal thousands of times and will see very little improvement each day, but will know that the experience will build a foundation of faith for the “big moment”.

Deuteronomy 6:1-3 “Now this is the command; the statutes and the judgments (precepts) which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, so that you might do (follow, obey) them in the land which you are crossing over (the Jordan) to possess, ²so that you and your son and your grandson may fear and worship the Lord your God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect], to keep [and actively do] all His statutes and His commandments which I am commanding you, all the days of your life, so that your days may be prolonged. ³Therefore listen, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly (in numbers), as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one [the only God]! ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and with all your soul and with all your strength [your entire being]. ⁶These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be [written] on your heart and mind. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children [impressing God’s precepts on their minds and penetrating their hearts with His truths] and shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand (forearm), and they shall be used as bands (frontals, frontlets) on your forehead. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Deuteronomy 6:10-19 “Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore (solemnly promised) to [give] your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give you, [a land with] great and splendid cities which you did not build, ¹¹and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn (excavated) cisterns (wells) which you did not dig out, and vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are full and satisfied, ¹²then beware that you do not forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹³You shall fear [only] the Lord your God; and you shall serve Him [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect] and swear [oaths] by His name [alone]. ¹⁴You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, ¹⁵for the Lord your God who is among you is a [f]jealous (impassioned) God [demanding what is rightfully and uniquely His]—otherwise the anger of the Lord your God will be kindled and burn against you, and He will destroy you from the face of the earth. ¹⁶“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah. ¹⁷You shall diligently keep [foremost in your thoughts and actively do] the commandments of the Lord your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. ¹⁸You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, so that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the Lord swore to [give] your fathers, ¹⁹by driving out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has spoken.”

This learning environment contributes in both the world of sport and the spiritual community to:

- ✿ A sense of belonging, different views / opinions need to be accommodated and blended into the team
- ✿ The ability to create a common understanding of our response to difficult topics; we need to accept that views are different, but nevertheless we should be able to work together.
- ✿ The willingness to seek a peaceful solution that benefits all concerned.

(ii) Fathers create leaders with integrity

I have indicated earlier ... coaches can do what they like in the week, but on match day, they have no real influence.

It is much the same for fathers ... we have been entrusted with young lives for a short while; essentially we need to have set the foundations in place by the age of 12-13 and built a strong enough bond that will allow you to help them mature.

If we force children to be followers, they will never get trained to:

- ✦ observe the changing environment;
- ✦ evaluate various options;
- ✦ make informed choices and
- ✦ have the courage to implement a plan.

We have a responsibility to create leaders:

- ✦ Fathers transfer ownership to the child
- ✦ Fathers define accountability frameworks → give children a space to manage
- ✦ Fathers teach the child the value of trust
- ✦ Fathers build confidence levels (you see, if fathers do not act like this, if they enforce / retain absolute control, if they never allow mistakes for the value of the lessons learnt, then they remain **micro-managers** and not fathers)
- ✦ Fathers eventually must empower their children, take them through rigorous training, and then step out of the way and let them try on their own

In the sport world, they call this 'passing the ball' ... only those on the field can run with the ball.

(iii) Fathers teach leaders to be able to discern Godly character

The birds on migration, such as the **storks** that fly from Poland, over Israel, down to Africa and back again, are an example for us to think about:

- 🐦 they will fly in formation ... the big "V-pattern"
- 🐦 The leader sets the pace
- 🐦 Anyone tired drops to the back
- 🐦 Those refreshed, fly up to take the lead
- 🐦 While inside of that family / formation they are protected

BUT ... others birds will want to join (and only those who stick to the rules can fly in the group).

We should not distance ourselves from new people simply because we do not know them, or they appear different, without checking their credentials:

- ✦ And by that, I do not mean their skill levels / ability ... there are giants in every field of achievement (the world tends to think that success = character
- ✦ But they may lack one essential thing ... Godly character
- ✦ We need to teach our children how to identify Godly character traits
- ✦ In sport, a man's character is of greater value than sheer talent.
- ✦ You see a man's ego (lack of character) will come in the way of team results; whenever there is the possibility of achieving short term personal glory.
- ✦ Those players will destroy the team.

Sowing the seeds of good character



There are many believers who have great ‘one-man shows’ and because the moment is all about them / their opinions, their heart will be far from that of the “Bride of Messiah”.

b) We train under pressure

- ✦ The Bible is clear ... every single story that is told has a message, none more so than the Exodus.
- ✦ The children of Israel are delivered from Pharaoh BUT they must still learn some hard lessons.
- ✦ We are not promised a life of leisure; we are warned that we will face trials and tribulations (which makes some of the current church talk of a special bloodline that carries no scars, highly dangerous)
- ✦ We will go through the wilderness ... that’s where we learn to handle STRESS

We cannot produce a harvest of weaklings / mummies boys.

Fathers that care, will make sure that once they have identified the child’s gifts, they will analyse the strong and weak points in relation to that particular set of gifts. They will then train the child using repeated actions in order to build the strong attributes.

However, they will also not neglect to find opportunities to create tests / tasks that will help them overcome their fears / concerns on the “weaker” attributes.

In every sports game, the coaches are forever drafting up new ideas / moves / settings, and so forth. For example: in football we can have a structure of 3-3-4-1, or we can have 2-4-4-1.

These differences, together with new “set-pieces” and a uncertain timing of the substitution of players, means that each team needs to be ready to adapt at all times.

An uncertain / unexpected event can cause the bravest heart to fear / close down ... we need sons / daughters to be ready to face that challenge, or any challenge that presents itself in life

We need to teach children to handle stress by building their emotional intelligence.

The Bible shows us a man who was coached by his father in ways that built his self-confidence and allowed him to take "Hebron". His name is **Caleb** and his daughter **Achsah**. (**Judges 1.12-15**)

Judges 1:12-15 *"And Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will even give him my daughter Achsah as a wife." ¹³Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, captured it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as a wife. ¹⁴When she came to Othniel, she persuaded him to [allow her to] ask her father [Caleb] for a field. Then she [rode up to Caleb and] dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you want?" ¹⁵She said to him, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me the land of the Negev (South country), give me springs of water, too." So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs."*

c) We deal with the old-man; we learn to be humble

- ✦ we are born as **equal**
- ✦ we are born as **unique** individuals with a variety of gifts deposited in us by God
- ✦ BUT our pride and the adoration of others at our performance (in sport or ministry) soon causes us to want to be put on a pedestal and be treated as special.

2 Chronicles 7:14 ... *"and My people, who are called by My Name, humble themselves, and pray and seek (crave, require as a necessity) My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear [them] from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land."*

Proverbs 11:2 *"When pride comes [boiling up with an arrogant attitude of self-importance], then come dishonour and shame, But with the humble [the teachable who have been chiseled by trial and who have learned to walk humbly with God] there is wisdom and soundness of mind."*

I would think that it is not necessary to talk to this topic too much, so I will note the value system built into one of the world's best rugby teams.

No-one is too important not to do the menial things in life ... this team will expect two people, from the most to the least "capped" man, to pick up the broom and clean the change-room before they leave → that's humility.

- 👤 One of the major advantages that the sports field has, which is missing in the business and the ministry world, are some life lessons.
- 👤 For example, the game lasts 80 minutes ... whatever you could have done should be complete in that time

- ☞ The scoreboard does not lie; whatever the result recorded, is history and there is nothing you can do to change it
- ☞ These lessons help us to deal with the ego / old-man.

d) We embrace our “calling”

Many people try to predetermine what strategic direction a child will take; the labelling “doctor” / “lawyer” and so forth, become words that determine a child’s progress.

- ☞ God has a plan for our lives.
- ☞ He wants to share that plan with us if we ask Him (fathers help their children walk down this road)
- ☞ If we hear that plan, we can still choose to walk on another path.

But the fact remains ...

- ✦ We will be measured by God’s expectation,
- ✦ We will be measured by the team (family / community) that we live with,
- ✦ We will be measured by our own expectation of our abilities.

And it's only when all three measurements are positive and pointing in the right direction, that we will have peace. As soon as we understand our “position” in the field and it’s VALUE to God, then we will embrace that calling.

Exodus 3:4 *“When the Lord saw that he turned away [from the flock] to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”*”

While we strive in a wrong calling, we will remain the fish outside of the water !!!

- ✦ In the sports domain, people spend years preparing for the possibility of succeeding, in the sports domain a calling could be in a particular sport or activity that will make you a man of the moment personality.
- ✦ If you are able to live to the expectation of the fans, but do so in a manner that is pleasing to God, you will be happy.

e) We teach children to bring a sacrifice

These words sound quite serious and in a sense they are; but it is not about a physical sacrifice ... **it is all about understanding the principle of sacrifice.**

Anything that has been sacrificed, **knows that it takes absolute commitment.**

Our belief system requires that absolute commitment. Too many times people make half-hearted commitments and then go on to enjoy the world system.

“Bring up your children in the training and instruction of the Lord.”



- Ephesians 6:4

- ☛ In the sports area, absolute commitment is an absolute requirement.
- ☛ Most of the top sportsmen / women have been practicing their craft since they were very young.
- ☛ They would also have had to overcome physical hardship through injuries and emotional hardship when the coach overlooks them.
- ☛ It's this dedication to success that drives them on; to do so, we require dedication to live out a value system and principle that does not necessarily align with the world system.

In the Heavenly system, the hardship are different, but in no way less severe ... it could be rejection or persecution, so the call to make a real sacrifice, is loud and clear.

Mark 15:21 *“They forced into service a passer-by coming in from the countryside, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to carry His cross.”*

Consequently, just as sports teams have rituals / badges / mementoes and an internal language, so too must the Body of Messiah have an equivalent.

- ☛ Only our memorials are memories of victory after a tribulation:
 - an altar of prayer built out of desperation /
 - a celebration at one of God's Feasts /
 - a memory bank of images collected from a journey through Israel.
- ☛ Keeping the Feasts of the Lord, in whatever way that you do, is a rehearsal of an event that we have high expectation to experience, especially for His return.

f) We plant trees that we will never see bear fruit

- ✦ Every successful team has been built on the foundation of the manager / players who went before them, teams present a 'face' that reflects the past culture at the club / country.
- ✦ Players that are currently in form reflect not only that past glory, but also work hard to leave the image of the club / county at a higher standard.

In the Body of Messiah, the same is true:

- ☞ Father Abraham sets a standard in hospitality, perseverance
- ☞ Father Isaac sets a standard in sacrifice
- ☞ Father Jacob sets a standard in family dynamics
- ☞ Father Paul sets a standard transformational thinking into the spiritual realm.
- ☞ We, in the Body today, must leave a **legacy**
- ☞ We do not know what will happen with the seed that we plant, in the words and action that we role-model. But God says a harvest will be produced ... so even if I cannot see it, I must continue to plant a tree of faith.

CONCLUSION

- ❖ The successful teams of the sports-world use Biblical principles to build a strong family-related type structure and always build on the concept of legacy.
- ❖ We can take this same structure into the community, use the same "sports" words, but go about building Godly character in communities who would otherwise openly reject the Bible.
- ❖ At the same time, we should look seriously at the structures that the church has used up to now, to see if we should not revise these and produce improved results ... most importantly, church leaders should know that their role is to "lift-up" the community to ensure that they can "reflect the Glory of God to the best level that they can.

PAUL TELLS US ...

1 Corinthians 9:24 *"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run [their very best to win], but only one receives the prize? Run [your race] in such a way that you may seize the prize and make it yours!"*

2 Timothy 4:7 *"I have fought the good and worthy and noble fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith [firmly guarding the gospel against error]."*

Hebrew 12:1 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [who by faith have testified to the truth of God’s absolute faithfulness], stripping off every unnecessary weight and the sin which so easily and cleverly entangles us, let us run with endurance and active persistence the race that is set before us,”

We MUST run the race !!!!



SHALOM
שלום