

Who Am I...Team Player!

I Corinthians 12: 12-27

October 28, 2018

I want to share with you a great story about a team player coach. He is Will Healy. Anyone ever heard of him? He is in his third year as head football coach for Austin Peay University Governors! He took a team that had not won a game in a few years. In fact, they were 0-29. He has turned the Gov's team around to where they are now a winning program. They were 8-4 last season!

When asked about the turnaround success it is easy to determine that he is a team player and not a "me" player. He credits the coaches he hired and the great team players he recruited to the program. More than that there is a style to his coaching that has rejuvenated the team.

Instead of the old school of cussing and getting all in a players face when they mess up, instead of being a drill sergeant always yelling at the players, the young 33 year old Coach Healy, the second youngest head coach in college football, has a different approach.

Coach Healy focuses on 3 "E's": ENERGY... ENCOURAGEMENT... ENGAGEMENT. This is certainly a sharp contrast to many coaches who berate, yell and intimidate their players. He encourages his coaches to connect with the players on and off the field. He and his wife offer to babysit the children of his coaches one night a week so they can have date night with their wives.

He expects celebration after big plays. He encourages respect of one another and gives it to his players. He holds his team accountable without the demeaning language and embarrassment. Coach Healy, his staff and players are team players!

WHO AM I? TEAM PLAYER OR ME PLAYER!

Are you a fair-weather fan or true fan of your favorite team? Most of you know I am a Gator fan! Have been all my life! After yesterday's HUGE game against the DAWGS of UGA I'm still a Gator fan!

A team player vs. a me player. Let's start with the ME player. They are so easy to identify. This is the guy who when he scores a touchdown gets up and does the rip the shirt gesture or crosses his arms as to say, "Look at me!" Or he will flex the guns of his arms to think he is the strength of the team. UGGGGGHHHHH!!!!

Or after a quarterback sack he is the defensive brute who does his antics of "Look at me" with the eating from a spoon gesture to a prance or a throw down! UGGGHHHHH!

Look at me players annoy me! Even if they are players on the team I cheer for.

You know as well as I do that not a one of those ME players could do what they do without the team effort on and off the field. The next time one of those ME players draws attention to himself I wish they would instead ponder this: The coaches and assistant coaches who have trained and taught them. The support staff of water boys and girls, equipment managers, the student fans, the grounds crew, the cheerleaders, the band, the kitchen crew that cooks their meals, the professors who give them an education, the boosters who give generously so they don't have to pay tuition, the custodians who keep the clubhouse clean...I wish once a ME player would give this litany of thanks in a post game interview!

I love the TEAM players. They are the ones after scoring a touchdown simply hand the ball to the referee and begin to thank the offensive linemen for blocking and opening the hole. They are the ones who will take a quick knee and thank God who gave them the talent in the first place. They are the ones in post game interviews who give all the credit to their teammates. They turn the camera's focus off themselves and towards the team.

No matter the sport, World Series Baseball to recreational youth sports...teams need team players. Michael Jordan, one of the best basketball players said, "A great player can win a game but only a great team can win championships."
Who am I? A ME player or a TEAM player?

No matter who you are we are all a part of a team. We are not alone. We live in a community of family, work, friends and life. Are you a team player or me player on your teams in life? Is life all about you or all you able to give praise to the team? Me players are easy to identify on the playing field of life. They let you know about all they are doing and how wonderful they are at what they do. They will also turn the spotlight on their struggles and issues of life. They will hear your joy or concern and quickly turn the focus back on their joy or concern in life.

The Apostle Paul, who once was not on Jesus' team, was recruited by Jesus. He became a star player on Team Jesus. He started many churches. He authored 9 of the books in the New Testament. But never once was he a ME player. He was always about being a team player for Jesus.

We listened earlier to how he described the approach God takes in his Kingdom building team.

We are the "body of Christ!" vs. 12

The Apostle Paul compared the body of Christ to a human body. Each part has a specific function that is necessary to the body as a whole. The parts are different for a purpose, and in their differences they must work together.

In the human body there are 206 bones, 642 muscles, 79 organs and trillions of cells. These have all been created, recruited and placed in our body to work together. We are not one big eye or ear. In fact, how many of you woke up this morning and thanked God for your pancreas! It is unseen yet constantly monitors our blood sugar control and the metabolism of our body.

As the body of Christ we have all been uniquely created to come together to work for Jesus:

As team players for Jesus we must avoid two common ME errors:

1. Being too proud of our activities and abilities.
2. Thinking we have nothing to offer or give to the team, the body of Christ.

Instead of comparing ourselves to one another, we are called to use our different gifts, together, as a team, to spread the love of Jesus and to build His kingdom one life at a time.

There are three "R's" we need to implement with our team members at home, work, school, church or life in general.

1. Rely...we need each other. We need to be able to rely on each other.
2. Respect...we expect respect so we need to show respect to each other.
3. Relate...we are to connect with one another and be there for each other in the celebrations and the losses.

We are different but similar. vs. 14

Using the analogy of the body, the Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of each church member. If a seemingly insignificant part is taken away, the whole body becomes less effective.

Thinking your spiritual gift is more important than someone else's is an expression of spiritual pride, the ME player pride!

We are not to look down on others who seem unimportant and at the same time not be jealous of others who have impressive talents or gifts.

An impressive player may win a game but only a team will win championships.

As a team player we have to be careful that we don't allow our significance to get blown up into self-importance. vs. 19
Our significance only comes from being a team player.
Our importance is only found in our connection to the team, the body of Christ. vs. 20

Being a part of the body of Christ is not about *isolation* but about *relation!* vs. 22

We are put together, no matter what part of the body we may be, for the betterment of the body. We are many but one.

We are not to be fair-weather fans. No matter if we win or lose we are there for each other. vs. 26 If one of us is hurting we hurt with them. If one member scores a TD in life we all celebrate with them as a team.

Are you a ME or TEAM player? What is your response when a fellow Christian is recognized or scores a TD per se? Are you excited for them or jealous? Do you wonder why you were not recognized?

Oh it is easier for us to feel sorry for those who are suffering... thank goodness it's not me. It is easier to be sympathetic for a weakened player than it is to rejoice with the MVP teammate.

We have to be reminded who's the Coach...who is the Head of the Body. Christ Jesus!

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:15-16 NIV)

I want to share with you a team that gets this.

Every week a team comes together at the corner of Harvey and Grandview avenues. The team is called Destination Restoration... Community!

Let me share some stats from their play book.

Biketoberfest: 40 volunteers averaging 200 volunteer hours over 4 days = 800 hours!

Outreach: Each Wednesday averages 40 volunteers average 5 hours = 200 hours! Now add in the Mon. and Tues. prep time and you can easily add another 100 hours! Every week over 300 team player hours take place! There is not a single person who can stand in the end zone and take the credit! It is a team!!!

Worship: Every week an average of 70 plus gather to celebrate our oneness in Jesus. We have experienced an increase in player participation the past two months over last seasons Sept. and Oct. We are all important. There are singers, worship leaders, musicians, ushers, greeters, sacrificial givers/tithers, cross testimonies, children and worshippers.

There is no room for a "ME" in Community. Don't think what you do or who you are is all that goes on here at Community. We are a body connected and related to see the love of Jesus in others and to let others see the love of Jesus in us.

All that goes on here is a result of TEAM players. There is no ME in Community! We tell folks we are dysfunctional as individuals but very much FUNCTIONAL in Jesus, the Head of all we do here. We seek to be united in our purpose here at Destination Restoration, to restore individuals, rebuild disciples and release servants.

We celebrate today those 7 individuals who have made the decision to become team players, members of our community. They have already been using whatever gift God has given them to serve others. (I Peter 4:10)

We commit to them to rejoice in life with them and to be there for them when life is a struggle. Together we seek to be and to show the love of Jesus.

I use to coach Rec. League basketball for elementary age kids. One season I coached a team that didn't have a "Michael Jordan" skilled player. They were all average players. However, they were a team. They ran the plays I called. They celebrated with each other. They didn't whine if I asked them to sit the pine...the bench. That year we upset the perennial champs and were the S.E. Volusia County champs! They were a team.

A few years later I coached a team that had a player who thought he was the next Michael Jordan. He was a ball hog. He would not run the plays I called. He would get mad if his teammates didn't always pass him the ball. I remember calling a timeout during a game and told him to ride the pine, sit the bench. I didn't put him back in the rest of the game. Guess who gave me an ear full after the game was over? His agent...his mom!

Jesus calls each of us to be a team player for His team. He values each of us and the gifts or skills we bring to the playing field of life. Be open to His coaching, direction, encouragement and accountability in your life.

When the final seconds tick off in this game of life...there will not be a scoreboard to look up to and see if we had enough points to win. Instead, we want to have our coach say to us in our post-game interview, "Well done my good and faithful TEAM player!"