

TALK FOOTBALL

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Theme: Taking it onto the Next Level with Simon Peter

We want to challenge them to take their lives as a whole (physical, spiritual, emotional, educational etc) onto the next level by considering together the Biblical character of Simon Peter. Peter went from being an unknown working class fisherman to becoming a famous leader in a global movement that we now know as Christianity. Therefore we shall look at 8 encounters recorded in the New Testament of the Bible highlighting what Peter learnt along the way as he made this transition.

Focus:

Follow (Matthew 4:18-20) Up our game through good mentors and role models

Openness (Matthew 8:14 -16) Up our game by letting others come into our lives

Opportunity (Mark 3:13-16) Up our game by taking chances that come our way

Truth (Mark 8: 27-29) Up our game by speaking out truth

See (Luke 9:29-36) Up our game by opening our eyes to grasp the significant

Knocks (Luke 22:31-34) Up our game by recovering from set backs

Invest (John 21:15-16) Up our game by looking out for and helping others

Lead (Acts 2:14-16) Up our game by taking the initiative to influence others.

The lesson resources provided on Simon Peter can be used either as a framework for a larger group talk or for a small group discussion time. Therefore the material provided should be adapted to the setting, audience age, experience and knowledge.

Week 1: Matthew 4:18-20 - Up our game through FOLLOWING.

Over the next 8 weeks we are going to look at the Biblical character of Simon Peter. He went from being an unknown working class fisherman to becoming a world famous leader in a global movement known as Christianity. So we shall look at 8 encounters recorded in the New Testament of the Bible highlighting what Peter learnt along the way as he moved onto the next level.

So in football terms ... **what are some of the great moves, dribbling skills we learn in football?** (e.g. Cruyff turn, the Ronaldo chop etc) or **who is your favourite football player and why?**

Yes we have players we love to watch and even try to copy some of their moves, skills and qualities so as to get better in football. What is true on the football pitch is true in life in that there are great people out there to get to know, to copy and to follow in order for us to get better at life.

Peter knew this as we can see from the Bible, ***“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.*”** Matthew 4:18-20

So Peter was just going about his every day regular business and this famous dynamic teacher, miracle worker says “Hey Peter come and hang out with me, come and follow me”. Wow, **can you imagine getting that kind of invitation from someone famous?** Ronaldo, Messi, etc say “hey come and hang out with me - let me change your life?” What an invitation and we read it was an invitation Peter could not say no to. He said yes to hanging out with Jesus, the greatest person ever to live. Peter chose to follow someone in order to fulfil his potential. As a result Peter would no longer be catching fish but he would be helping people reconnect with God. *(Speaker can give testimony about someone who helped in their life to kick onto the next level.)*

Challenge – So who are you hanging out with and following to get better?

On the football pitch ... who do you follow and copy? Are you listening well to your coach, is there someone from your team or another team who you can hang out with and can help you improve? Are you watching football on the TV and listening to the former pro players in order to learn?

Off the football pitch ...Who are you following? Who are the good, positive and helpful role models to follow and copy in your life who care for you and want to help you get better and fulfil your potential? A mother, father, older brother or sister, a teacher, coach, church youth worker etc. Find someone to follow and copy.

A smart person once said ***“You as a person reflect the people you hang out with the most”***. So who do you spend most of your time with? Are these people a good or bad influence in your life? Are they helping you grow and develop as a person to improve and fulfil your potential? Surround yourself with good people in your life to follow.

We as coaches have a special person we have chosen to follow and that person is Jesus. Yes just like Peter we have chosen to hang out with and follow Jesus ... **How can we hang out and follow Jesus today as he physically isn't with us like in Peter's day?** Well we have Bibles so we can read all about Him, learn from Him, understand Him and follow Him even today so can I encourage you to get a Bible and read it and if you need any help with getting a Bible or reading it please come and see me or one of the coaches. Following Jesus is certainly the best decision I made so may be over these weeks you like Peter want to learn from the best and follow Jesus.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thank you that you love us, you want the best for us, want us to grow and fulfil the potential you have put in each of us. Help us to see the good people you have brought into our lives to copy, follow and be our role models both on and off the football pitch. Help us to learn off them. Thank you for your Son Jesus, the best role model the world has ever seen, help us to discover and follow Him just like Peter did. Thank you Jesus. Amen.*

Week 2: Matthew 8:14-16 - Up our game through OPENNESS.

We are now on our second week of you taking your game onto the next level. Last week we looked at FOLLOWING = copying someone or having a role model, we will now look at OPENNESS. This is the idea of upping your game on and off the pitch by actually opening up to others, letting others into your life so that they can make a difference and help shape you so you get better and fulfil your potential.

In football terms we talked last week about copying the greats to master techniques such as the Cruyff turn, the Ronaldo chop etc. We also thought about our favourite football players, their moves, skills and qualities to see what we could learn from them to get better as well. However whilst these things are good, it is all at a distance and at an arms-length rather than being up close, mentor like, real involvement leading to real change and improvement in our lives.

Our study character from the Bible, Peter knew this and we see he let Jesus be more than someone to copy or follow at a distance, he let Jesus come up real close and even into his home. Listen to these words from Matthew 8: 14-16 ***“When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.”***

Peter opened up his home and his life to his mentor friend Jesus so that he could see real change. Peter’s mother in law was sick and Peter wanted Jesus to deal with the hurt that he and his family were experiencing so he let Jesus in to turn that painful situation around. As a result of the miracle there was a knock on effect as many in the neighbourhood were healed as well. So we can see this rolling out effect as our pain is healed many others are helped as well - *Speaker can give testimony about as they have received healing then others have benefitted.*

Challenge – So who are you opening up to and letting into your life to help bring healing?

On the football pitch ... **Is there an area in football where you think and feel you are struggling and need help?** Can your coach help with this or an older player or a friend? - We are here to help and want you to improve and develop in your game so please do ask if you are struggling and want to get better.

Off the football pitch ...**Is there someone you can open up to if you are struggling at home, school or amongst your peers? Who is there for you, who loves you, cares for you and wants to make a difference and bring healing where there is hurt and struggle? A mother, father, older brother or sister, a teacher, coach, church youth worker, a friend or one of us?** Don’t bottle it up, open up.

Of course we can’t guarantee instant healing miracles like Peter experienced in our Bible reading but opening up to trusted others can and does help. So as you think about your hurts, struggles and pain on and off the football pitch, is there someone to help? If there is, do open up and get them involved so that you won’t be held back in becoming the person you want to be.

We as coaches like Peter love to involve Jesus in our lives as well as other people. We find by praying i.e. talking to God about our hurts, pains and struggles, it really helps. There is nothing we can’t talk to Jesus about in our praying and so we find that opening up to God is a massive help for us to kick on and fulfil our potential. Just like we saw in our Bible reading the knock on effect of us experiencing God’s healing leads to others being helped and turned around as well - Pretty exciting stuff! So let’s be people who OPEN up to God and others.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you for the people you have given us in our lives to help us when we are struggling, hurting or in pain. Thank you also that we can turn to you with any of these things and look to you to bring healing and turn things around for us. Thank you that you are always there for us when we need you. Help us to be brave, to open up to others and to you so as to experience healing and transformation in order that we can kick onto the next level both on and off the football pitch and fulfil our potential in Jesus. Amen.

Week 3: Mark 3:13-16 - Up our game through OPPORTUNITY.

We have looked at FOLLOWING = copying someone or having a role model, OPENNESS with the idea of upping your game on and off the pitch by opening up to others, letting others into your life so that they can make a difference, help shape you so you get better and fulfil your potential. The next word is OPPORTUNITY which is the principle of taking your chances when they come your way ... both on and off the football pitch.

In football terms we know how important it is to take your chances, we know that often in football we only get that one chance to make that block tackle to save a goal, to make that killer pass, to shoot to score when there is the opening and if we are at a trial for a team that we give it our best and take that chance to be on the team. Opportunities don't always come along that often and so we have to take them when they do come our way.

Our study character from the Bible, Peter knew this and he had an opportunity to be part of a dream team. Listen to these words from Mark 3:13-17 ***“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), James son of Zebedee and his brother John...”***

Peter was asked by the Son of God to be part of an elite team to make a difference in the surrounding communities. It must have been great to have been picked but also scary as Peter was just an ordinary, young, uneducated fisherman, yet now he was to be part of God's team to preach, teach and take on evil spirits - talk about frightening and feeling out of his depth. Peter despite his fear and inadequacy took his chance. Life would never be the same again.

Challenge – So what opportunities do you have before you today, in this coming week etc?

On the football pitch ... Make sure in this week's practices and games you are positive and take the chances that come your way. Do take those opportunities to be better, to go the extra mile and make a difference on the pitch.

Off the football pitch ... **What chances and opportunities are there for you ... at school, at home, in your neighbourhood, amongst your friends ... what about even beyond here to move out of your comfort zone and travel may be on a church mission trip, to volunteer to do something that will push you and will make a difference to others? What invitations are coming your way ... will you take the opportunity and say yes?**

Peter could have stuck with a role model to follow and copy in Jesus, he could have just opened up his life and had a mentor but none of this would have counted for much unless Peter had taken the chance to say yes to the opportunity that pushed him out of his comfort zone. It was in saying yes that Peter would be tested, grow, develop and move into the extraordinary.

We as coaches like Peter have said yes to the invitation of Jesus to be part of His team. At times it has been pretty scary as we have been pushed outside of our comfort zone but also it has been a bit of an adventure that I am glad I said yes to (Personally illustrate an example of how saying yes to Jesus and an opportunity has impacted your life and others). If you want to know more about being on Jesus' team and saying yes to His invitation then please do come and chat afterwards. It's a pretty amazing invitation and offer that God wants ordinary people like you and I to be part of His team and take up opportunities to make a difference.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunities that come our way both on and off the football pitch. Help us to be brave and say yes to new adventures and invitations that come our way even if they may be a bit scary and outside our comfort zone. Help us to grow and develop as football players and people as we say yes to opportunities. Thank you for the greatest invitation in the whole world to say yes to you and be part of your team Jesus ... help us to make that decision to follow you and say yes to the opportunity you offer us. Amen.*

Week 4: Mark 8:27-29 - Up our game through speaking TRUTH.

We are now on our fourth week of you taking your game onto the next level. We have looked at FOLLOWING = copying someone or having a role model, OPENNESS with the idea of upping your game on and off the pitch by opening up to others, OPPORTUNITY which was the principle of taking your chances when they come your way and this week is TRUTH i.e. speak out, declare, tell and base your life on TRUTH.

In football terms it's important to speak out truth such as on the pitch shouting "Man On!" to warn somebody and talking to each other to help one another during the game. Also from the touch line, the coach needs to shout instructions based on the truth and make decisions based on the reality of what is happening during the game. Without changing tactics based on the truth, games are lost as poor decisions are made.

Our study character from the Bible Peter, was being asked to change his life forever in leaving behind being a fisherman so as to follow Jesus to help others. Therefore Peter knew he had better base this kind of life changing decision on truth in order to have a solid foundation. Listen to these words from Mark 8:27-29, ***"Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way Jesus asked them, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."*** Jesus asked his team about what people were saying about him and they said that people thought he was some kind of prophet but it was Peter who stood up and declared the truth by saying you are more than that Jesus, you are the sent one, the chosen one of God. By grasping the truth and declaring it amongst others Peter moved from just being a team member and into being a leader and captain as he established a rock solid foundation for his new life.

Challenge – So how is grasping truth and speaking it out going to help your life etc?

On the football pitch ... **What opportunities are you going to take this week to speak truth into your team mates lives? How is what you say going to be helpful to others? What truth do you need to grasp and declare about your football e.g. weaknesses, strengths, areas of improvement needed, attitude change etc in order to kick on?**

Off the football pitch ... **Where do you need to grasp truth and declare it to others at home, school, amongst friends in order to help others and yourself? Is there something you are going through where you need to face up to reality and deal with the truth of that situation so as to make good decisions so as to kick on to the next level?**

Peter could have kept quiet, kept his head down and gone with the flow of popular opinion but no he grasped the truth, he stood up, he stepped out of the crowd and spoke out truth. From that day on, Peter wasn't just part of the team, no he was a leader, he had stepped up to the next level because he based his life on truth and spoke up to declare it - Give an example of how truth and speaking it out has turned around either yours or someone else's life.

We as coaches like Peter believe Jesus not to just be a good guy, a good teacher, a miracle worker or a prophet but we believe the truth is that Jesus is God. Therefore He is someone we can base our lives on, He is a rock solid foundation for this life and the next because Jesus is not just some latest thing, teaching, philosophy but He is God, He is truth and so we can count on Him in anything and everything. I encourage you, base your life on the certainty of absolute truth in order to move onto the next level, base your life on Jesus.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thank you that knowing and speaking out truth is liberating. The truth sets us free and provides us with a wonderful rock solid foundation for our lives. Lord Jesus I thank you that you are truth, you are the most rock solid foundation that we can base our lives on. Help us to grasp the truth about you just like Peter did, help us then to act upon it, speak out, make good decisions and live a life based on the truth of you so that we can kick onto the next level both on and off the football pitch. Amen.*

Week 5: Luke 9:28-35 - Up our game through really SEEING.

We are now on our fifth week of you taking your game onto the next level. We have looked at FOLLOWING = copy a role model, OPENNESS = letting trusted others into your life, OPPORTUNITY = take the chances that come your way even if they are scary and TRUTH = declare, tell and base your life on the certainty of TRUTH. Today is SEEING ... Open your eyes to see what is really significant and important in life – Don't miss out.

In football terms it's important to play with your head up, eyes open so as to see what is really going on and to react accordingly. When we really see what is important on the pitch we can make that block, make that interception, mark that player, spot that pass to open up a defence, see the opportunity to shoot or change tactics to be more effective. Having this kind of eyesight and insight off the pitch can help us to up our game as well as we will make better decisions as we really see what is significant and important in life.

Our Bible character Peter got to see something significant but even he struggled to grasp the importance of what he saw and what he should do. Listen to these words from Luke 9:28-36 ***“Jesus took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.)While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him”***

Peter saw this amazing glorious transformation of Jesus where His heavenly body was unveiled from His earthly body and he meets and talks with 2 Old Testament heroes Moses and Elijah. Peter though wanted to honour Jesus alongside these 2 Old Testament heroes until the voice of God spoke and said no, this is my Son, He is the One, listen to Him. So it's possible to see but not really see or grasp or understand ... to move onto the next level you must really see!

Challenge – How can you improve your eyesight on and off the football pitch to really see?

On the football pitch ... **How can you improve in playing with your head up and get better in your on pitch decision making? How can you gain more insight into the game of football ... can you watch more football games, videos and interviews on the game?**

Off the football pitch ... **How can you improve your vision off the pitch? Are there things you can do to help you really see, to understand better, to perceive what is significant and important in life?** Can you read more (e.g. The Bible), learn more, pray more, get better people around you so that you can get more insight to make great decisions.

In our reading, God spoke to Peter to give him real insight into the significance of the moment and to direct him so as what to do. When we pray, read the Bible, go to church, listen to teaching and ask God for wisdom and insight then we can start to see what is important and make great decisions. When we hear from God then we truly start to see.

We as coaches like Peter believe it is God who can give eyes to see that which is important and significant and then He will help us make great decisions as a result of the insight we get from God. Give an example of how God has spoken to you and enabled you to truly see something significant. Be like Peter ... hang out with Jesus spend time with Him in prayer, church and reading the Bible and then you will be able to up your game as you really see.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of eyesight and help us on the football pitch to really use our eyes so that we can make great decisions whilst we play. Thank you also Father for the insight and wisdom you can give us off the football pitch, help us to spend time with you so that we really can see what is important and significant. Give us eyes to truly see as you do Jesus. Amen.*

Week 6: Luke 22:31-34 - Up our game through being KNOCKED down.

We are now on our sixth week of you taking your game onto the next level. We have looked at FOLLOWING = copy a role model, OPENNESS = letting trusted others into your life, OPPORTUNITY = take the chances that come your way even if they are scary, TRUTH = declare, tell and base your life on the certainty of TRUTH and SEEING so that you open your eyes to see what is really significant and important in life and not miss out. Today is KNOCKS ... because you can have all these other things in place but still you will be knocked down and have set backs so what will be your response to disappointments?

In football terms we know what it feels like to be knocked down ... physically it can hurt and it can be difficult to get up again. We know what it is to take knocks such as injuries, disappointments and set-backs such as not being picked for the team, not winning and being rejected. We also know what it is to be knocked back because of our mistakes when we miss that block or when we lose the player we should mark and they score. Or when we miss that big chance to play someone into score or we miss that chance to score ... it hurts.

Our Bible character Peter knew what it was like to be knocked down, to let others down, to have set backs and disappointments - Listen to these words from Luke 22:31-34 ***“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.” Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”*** Peter boasted to Jesus about how good he was and how he was willing to go to prison for Jesus and even die for Jesus when the enemy attacked. Yet Jesus knew better and was proved right as Peter let Jesus down, got knocked down and suffered the disappointment of failure. What a set back to our rapidly rising super star Simon Peter, he had experienced so much success and put some good building block principles in place and yet when it came to the big game, the big challenge ... he got knocked down and he failed.

Challenge – What failures, knock downs, set-backs or disappointments are you dealing with?

On the football pitch ... **Loss of form, loss of starting place, lack of development or shattered dreams because things haven't quite worked out the way you expected? Have you let the team down with that big mistake in the big game so you feel like a failure?**

Off the football pitch ... **Broken relationships (e.g. parent's divorce), broken dreams (school grades not good enough) or you have let somebody down by what you said or did or failed to say or do? So away from the football pitch are you struggling to get up after being knocked down?**

In our reading, we see that Jesus did not give up on Peter despite Peter letting Jesus down. Jesus said that He would pray for Peter and Peter would be restored and in the process help and strengthen others. So yes Peter was knocked down but he certainly wasn't knocked out as Jesus reached out and lifted up His fallen friend.

It's one of the things we as coaches love about following Jesus in that He does not give up on us. Yes we get knocked down, yes we have set backs, yes we have disappointments and yes we do fail but Jesus does not let go of us. Instead He is there for us, ready to help us, pick us up and restore us to even help others. *Give an example of how Jesus turned around and helped you up after a setback, knock down, failure or disappointment.* So yes let's not be people who are arrogant and boast about how great we are because probably a fall, a set-back a knock down awaits ... rather lets reach out to Jesus and trust Him to help you up and onward.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thanks you that you don't give up on us. We confess we fail, we fall, we get knocked down but you Lord Jesus are always there is pick us, help us up and take us no matter how many setbacks come our way. Thank you for not letting us go Jesus, thank you that despite being knocked down you can even help us to help others up both on and off the football pitch. Amen.*

Week 7: John 21:15-16 - Up our game by INVESTING in Others.

We are now on our seventh week of you taking your game onto the next level. We have looked FOLLOWING = copy a role model, OPENNESS = letting trusted others into your life, OPPORTUNITY = take the chances that come your way even if they are scary, TRUTH = declare and base your life on the certainty of TRUTH, SEEING so as not to miss out on the significant and important and KNOCKS as we looked at your response to disappointments and setbacks. Today is INVEST as we shall see that part of our getting up and restoration after knock downs is found in helping others.

It's easy in football when we fall, fail, disappoint or get knocked down to retreat and avoid others because we are embarrassed ... we would rather hide, go missing than face team mates, coach or supporters. So we may feign injury, sickness or claim to be really busy and can't practice or in a game we don't try the hard things we just go through the motions. Such actions do not lead to getting up and being restored. It is as we reach out to others and look to help them and be a true team player that we can find a way to get back up again and be the player we want to be.

In our last lesson we left our Bible character Peter on the floor as he had failed Jesus and disappointed himself and others around him but listen to the response of Jesus from John 21:15-16 ***"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."***

By the time of this conversation Jesus had been put on trial, falsely accused, wrongly sentenced to death, died on a Roman cross, been buried but gloriously 3 days later rose back to life again because He is the perfect Son of God. Now in His new resurrection life, Jesus is appearing to his friends and hundreds of others including fallen Peter. However there are no words of condemnation from Jesus, rather they are words of restoration, encouragement and direction. Yes Peter had failed but Jesus had not given up on him, rather he restores him and tells him to go and invest in others, take care of people and look after them ... an amazing turn around!

Challenge – How do you think you can invest in others, help them, take care of them and support them?

On the football pitch ... **Are some of your team mates struggling with an aspect of their game ... can you help them by practicing with them? Is one of your team mates struggling with failure, disappointment or injury ... can you visit and encourage them?**

Off the football pitch ... **Who is struggling in your family – perhaps a younger brother or sister with their homework, or your parents with all the work and jobs they have to do – Can you help? What about friends who are going through a difficult time, can you be there for them and come alongside them and help them?**

We all do a Peter as we all fail, fall and disappoint and so it's easy to judge and condemn others and sometimes ourselves in such difficult circumstances. However we would hate it if when we failed and got knocked down ... people laughed, sneered, judged and condemned us. **Isn't it so much better when someone comes along side to encourage and help us back up?** This is what Jesus does, He is not shocked by your failure, rather He longs to restore you, help you back up and one of the ways He does that is by asking you to invest in others. You will be so much better at helping others after you have been knocked down as you will be more understanding and able to empathize and sympathize rather than judging and condemning.

We as coaches are not perfect ... we fail, we fall, we get knocked down, disappoint God, others and ourselves at times. However we know Jesus does not give up on us and so we don't want to give up on you or others like you ... rather we want to help, invest and support you as you seek to move on to the next level both on and off the football pitch. Give an example of how Jesus has helped you do this. So let's be people who don't retreat or go missing either on or off the football pitch but rather lets experience restoration by investing in others.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you for the restoration you bring into our lives. Thank you that you don't retreat or give up on us when we fail but rather you are there to help restore us. Help us to receive your restoration King Jesus and help us to restore, invest, love and support others to experience moving on to the next level with you, others and ourselves both on and off the football pitch. Amen.

Week 8: Acts 2:14-16 - Up our game by LEADING in Others.

We are now on our eighth and final week of you taking your game onto the next level. We have looked at FOLLOWING = copy a role model, OPENNESS = letting trusted others into your life, OPPORTUNITY = take the chances that come your way even if they are scary, TRUTH = declare and base your life on the certainty of TRUTH, SEEING so as not to miss out on the significant and important, KNOCKS as we looked at your response to disappointments and setbacks and INVEST as we saw that in helping others we could be restored. Following on from investing in others, our final session is on Leading as we should seek to up our game by taking the initiative at the right time to influence and lead others.

Sometimes in football we can be just a player and part of the team but actually there are times especially when things are difficult on the football pitch (e.g. when losing or one player down) you need not just players but leaders in the team. Yes there is usually a captain, a recognised leader on the football pitch but more than one leader is needed who does not wear the captain's arm band who will at the right time and in the right way take the initiative and influence others.

In the last lesson, our Bible character Peter was back on his feet following a conversation with Jesus on helping others. Now we see from Acts 2:14-16 Peter takes the initiative and moves onto another level ***"Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.'"***

By this point in time, Jesus had ascended back up into Heaven but had not left His friends alone as His promised presence in the form of the Holy Spirit had come upon His followers. Suddenly there are signs and miracles and a crowd gathers to find out in Jerusalem what is going on. It is Peter who takes the initiative, takes the lead, steps up and explains to thousands what they were seeing and experiencing. Peter who was once scared of a servant girl now is standing up in front of thousands under the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit ... what a turnaround!

Challenge – What opportunities do you have to take the initiative and lead others?

On the football pitch ... **Are there times in a game when rather than hiding and going missing, will you be the one to step up and make that tackle, take on that challenge, look to take the initiative shout words of encouragement and drive the team forward?**

Off the football pitch ... **Can you take the initiative and lead at home, school or amongst your friends? Will you set the tone in getting a job done or volunteering for something and making sure it gets done right thus setting an example and influencing others?**

Football needs not just players but leaders to set the tone, be the example and influence others for good. This world of ours needs people to step up and lead, take the initiative, influence others so as to make it a better place. Peter in 3 short years went from being a follower to being a leader and remember when he started this journey for transition from unknown uneducated fisherman to a movement leader he was not much older than many of you. Therefore will you go on this journey of transition as well from follower to leader, from learning off Jesus to being empowered by His Holy Spirit to influence others and bring about change?

This is the kind of transition that has happened for many of us as coaches ... yes just guys and girls who loved their football but now through the leading of Jesus and the empowerment of His Holy Spirit we are able to lead and influence others both on and off the pitch through our coaching. This is why we are doing things like this to help create a new generation of leaders and game changers both in football and life.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thank you for the potential of these children and young people in front of me now. They are not just players but they are potential leaders who if they hand over their lives to you can make that transition from a follower to an influencer of others and be game changers both on and off the football pitch. Help them just like Peter to learn from you, to be brave and take the initiative to move onto the next level. For your sake and glory Jesus. Amen."*