

TALK FOOTBALL

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Theme: Pray, Play, Say. Colossians 4:2-6

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (NIV)

Ambassadors Football is part of a network called the International Sports Coalition and active in the ReadySetGo global sports outreach movement. This movement (website <http://readyssetgo.ec/en>) is passionate about taking the Gospel to the World of Sport and helping sportspeople connect a life of faith to their sport. A mantra of ‘Pray Play Say’ (An introductory video can be found along with many other resources at <http://readyssetgo.ec/en/resource/prayplaysay>) has been developed taken from Colossians 4:2-6. Pray Play Say gives a simple framework to understand how we can honour God in sport.

1. **Pray:** The first thing to do, to connect sport and faith in our lives, is to pray about it. In Colossians 4:2-4, Paul instructs us to devote ourselves to prayer, so we shall look into what prayer is and what we pray for?
2. **Play:** God wants to be involved in all aspects of our lives including our playing and related relationships, both on and off the pitch. Colossians 4:5 instructs us to be wise in how we treat people, and so we shall look at this through legendary coach John Wooden’s Wisdom material
3. **Say:** The ability to speak well is important both on and off the football pitch, and Colossians 4:6 encourages us to have appropriate conversations full of grace so we will look at what this means and looks like inside and outside of our club.

The questions and information provided is there for you to use and adapt (probably too much material and questions for a 5-10-minute devotion but better to have too much to cut than not enough!) as you think most appropriate and relevant for your team, their age, experience and understanding.

Ambassadors Football’s vision is to serve the local church, inspiring and equipping it to build Christ-centred relationships through football. We pray these resources help you as you share Jesus through football. If you have any comments or feedback, please contact us at gb@ambassadorsfootball.org.

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Week 1: Communication

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the importance of communication can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

How important is communication in football and why?

Who are the main people you need to talk with and listen to in football?

It is this talking and listening relationship between the players and the coach we want to focus on today so ask the team

Why is it important you talk, listen and communicate well with your coach? *Answers may include, to learn, clarify, express feelings, any problems like injuries/sickness that could hold you back in the game etc.*

Having a good talking and listening relationship of communication with your coach can be incredibly helpful making a difference on the football pitch in terms of the way you play, as an individual, and a team. Also, in your relationships, and in your growth and development as a player. It's also important off the pitch as you have someone more experienced and knowledgeable to talk to and listen to, to help you in things you face, not just in football but with what's going on at school, at home or with friends. Having someone to talk to and listen to you can be a real benefit for you.

The great news is that you don't just have a coach to talk to, but you have God as well. God loves to listen to you no matter where you are or what you are going through. There is nothing that you can't talk to God about.

When we talk to God what is it called? **PRAYER.** Sometimes we make prayer sound very religious and something we perhaps only do at church. All it is really, it's talking to God wherever and whenever ... it's like having your own phone to talk to God directly any time you want. Sometimes for a long time or sometimes just for a quick chat or text message saying you need His help.

Listen to these verses from Colossians 4:2-6 and tell me how many times, the writer Paul (a church leader from 2000 years ago) mentions communication or prayer?

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Yes at least 5 or 6 times and prayer specifically is mentioned 3 times ... **do you see how important and helpful it is to pray and to talk to God?** Talking with God helps us connect our life with God, it brings the resources and help of Heaven here into your life here on earth ... that's why it is so great! You have a Father in Heaven who you can talk to any time and any place. *(You may at this point want to give an example of your experience of prayer and how it helped you.)* So, over the next few weeks, we'll be looking more closely at prayer from these Bible verses we just read today.

So, anything you want to talk to God about today about your football?

What about anything you want to talk to God about today off the football pitch? Maybe something at home or school, something you are worried about or something you are thankful for or you know of someone who needs help or a situation that is difficult?

You may start the team off by sharing something you are talking to God about. Depending on your team you may want some team members to pray about the things mentioned and/or you can pray for the things the team shared.

To finish, remind the team that talking to you as a coach is good and perhaps confirm your commitment to them to listen about things on and off the pitch. Say you will try and be available as much as you can but you can't always be there. Talking to your parents, teacher or friends may be good but they can't always be there, BUT your Father in Heaven is always there for you, ready to listen, so pick up your phone to Heaven and talk to God as often as you can, whenever and wherever you want.

Week 2: Devotion/Commitment

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the importance of devotion/commitment can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

Today I want us to focus on devotion as a team and so the big question is

What is devotion or what does it mean to be devoted to something? Answers may include commitment, focused on, dedicated, set other apart to concentrate on, to be engrossed by, a priority, something of supreme importance etc.

What does being devoted to your football team look like, can you give some examples? Answers may include turning up on time, working hard in practice, doing drills and exercises properly, listening well, eating well, sleeping well, watching/reading/listening about football to learn and develop, extra practice at home etc. Perhaps give some negative examples as well.

Why is devotion important for a football team? Answers may include fulfilling potential, better performances, more wins, better team work, success, stronger/better friendships on the team etc.

Being devoted to the team and each other can make a real positive difference on the football pitch in terms of the way you play as an individual, as a team, in your relationships, in your growth and development. As a coach, you can share an example of what devotion looks like for you and the difference it makes so that the team can see being devoted, committed and focused is good.

Last time we talked about the difference good communication and prayer in particular can make.

Can one or two of you remind us of what is prayer? Talking and listening to God about anything, any time any place like having your own direct phone line to Heaven.

Listen to our Bible verse reading for today from the first part of Colossians 4:2, what does the writer Paul (a church leader from 2000 years ago) want us to be devoted to?

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”

Yes PRAYER, devote yourselves to talking and listening to God about anything, any time and any place. So be committed to talking to God, be focused on talking to God, be dedicated in talking to God, set time aside to talk to God, concentrate on talking to God, be engrossed by talking to God in prayer.

Why could having this kind of devotion to prayer be helpful in your football and your lives? Answers may include asking for God’s help in games, with discipline, for support of team mates who are having a tough time, for help at home or school, to give thanks for good times both on and off the pitch.

So what would being devoted to prayer look like for you? *Perhaps you can give some examples from your life on why prayer is important for you and how you show your devotion to prayer* Answers may include talking to God when you first wake up about the day ahead, talking to God last thing at night before you go to sleep, asking for God’s help during the day, when you hear of a bad situation or someone hurting you, talk to God about it, thanking God for food at meal times etc.

What other things could be good to be devoted to? Answers may include working hard at school, obeying parents, taking care of people, reading your Bible, going to church youth group etc.

So many good things we can be devoted to grow and develop and fulfil our potential and make a difference for good in this world. Further value can be added to all these things if you are devoted to prayer.

Quiet reflection time (may even be helpful to have pens/pencils and paper or their phones so they can write something down) **So what one thing can you do this week to be more devoted to? Prayer / Football / Something else important in your life?**

After some quiet reflection time perhaps ask if anyone wants to share what they are going to do? Perhaps you can also share what is the one thing you are going to do to be more devoted to prayer, football or something else important in your life.

Depending on your team you may want some team members to pray about the things mentioned and/or you can pray for:

- a) The players to take positive steps to be more devoted to their football and the team*
- b) The players handle well other important things in their lives*
- c) The players to take at least one positive action step this week to be devoted to prayer.*

Week 3: Be Watchful

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the importance of being watchful, eyes open and staying alert can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

In what situations during football do you have to have your head up, eyes open, being alert and watchful? *Answers may include for defending, to spot danger coming, to see a pass and team mates etc.*

Why is it important in football to play with your head up, eyes open, being alert and watchful? *Answers may include helps you to see the big picture, better opportunities for other players than you, to get instructions from your coach, to see danger from opposition to prevent a goal etc.*

It is this idea of heads up, being watchful and alert we want to focus on today, so ask the team. Being alert and watchful can be incredibly important to be a game changer/winner on the football pitch. It could be the difference between winning and losing because you can see:

- The space in front of you to run into to get that shot off.
- Your team mate in a better position so you can provide that killer pass.
- The opposition player making a run off the ball and so you can cover them and block them from scoring.
- Your coach changing tactics that will mean a different approach to overcome the opposition.

So what can you do to be more watchful and alert on the football pitch? *Answers may include not switching off when the ball is out of play, constant looking around the pitch to see where you can make a difference, looking up and around before you receive a pass etc.*

Having your head up, being watchful and alert is not just helpful in football but off the pitch as well with what's going on in your life at school, at home or with friends. Being able to see what is going on can be a game changer in your life. Last time we talked about being devoted to prayer as one of the benefits of prayer is that it can help us be watchful and really see what is going on in our lives and in this world.

Can one or two of you remind us of what is prayer? *Talking and listening to God about anything, any time any place like having your own direct phone line to Heaven.*

Listen to our Bible verse reading for today from the first part of Colossians 4:2, as the writer Paul (a church leader from 2000 years ago) says (use both NIV and Message versions) to be watchful and alert as you pray

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” (NIV)

“Pray diligently. Stay alert, with your eyes wide open in gratitude.” (MSG)

Why would he say that, why should we be watchful? *Link answers to life from what you discovered from asking the same question about football e.g. see danger, helps us be better prepared, helps us to see opportunities, helps us look out for others, helps us see what God is saying and doing.*

Being watchful in prayer is almost like putting on spiritual glasses because as you pray you see things from a different perspective. As you pray, God can give you insight on potential dangers you face in life, He can help you see solutions to your problems, He can provide openings for you that you might never see unless you took the time to pray with your eyes wide open. *Perhaps you as a coach can give an example of how God has done this for you.*

Being watchful and alert as you pray can be a game changer in your life at school, home and amongst your friends

How can you be watchful at school, home and/or amongst your friends and how can we pray to help with this?

Answers may include being better prepared and organised for school, opportunities to help at home, avoiding some dangerous habit your friends may be getting into etc.

What can we pray for today as we want to be watchful and alert? What can we pray for to help us be more watchful?

- a) On the football pitch and with our team?
- b) At home, school or amongst our friends?

Depending on your team you may want some team members to pray about the things mentioned and/or you can pray for them.

So today and in these coming days both on and off the pitch, let's keep our heads up, be watchful and alert in order that we can be game changers in football and life.

Week 4: Gratitude and Being Thankful

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the importance of being thankful (e.g. with a drill that means players need help from other players) can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

What are you thankful for with your football? *Answers may include team mates, win at the weekend, coach, talent, strength, speed, opportunity to play, opponents to play against as football can be boring without someone to play against, referees etc.*

Why do you think it is important in football to be thankful and grateful? *Answers may include it is so much fun, a great way to make friends, builds good team spirit and relationships, keeps us humble etc.*

What could happen within our team if we are not thankful and grateful? *Answers may include we become arrogant, it's not so much fun, poor team spirit, players leave, we play more as individuals rather than as a team, dissatisfaction as we focus on what we don't have rather than what we do have etc.*

It is this idea of being grateful and thankful we want to focus on today, as we want to be a team that is fun, is friendly, has a good team spirit, is humble rather than nasty, arrogant, unfriendly, dissatisfied or selfish.

Listen to our Bible verse reading for today from Colossians 4:2, as the writer Paul (a church leader from 2000 years ago) says when we pray we should be thankful

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." (NIV)

Can someone remind us of what prayer is? *Talking and listening to God about anything, any time any place like having your own direct phone line to Heaven.*

Why do you think it is important that when we talk to God we are thankful and grateful? *Answers may include that it stops us just having a shopping/help list for God, it helps us to focus on what we have rather than what we don't have, it keeps us humble and appreciative etc.*

Apart from football, what are you thankful and grateful for today? *Answers may include friends at school, family, food on the table, a house to live in, a healthy body so you can play, church youth group, God for who He is and what He has done for us etc. **Perhaps you as a coach can give an example of what you are grateful for today.***

How do you think we can be a lot more thankful to God and to others both on and off the football pitch? *Answers may include focus on what we have rather than what we don't have, take the opportunities to thank people/God when you have a good experience (or even a bad experience as it is often in the bad experiences that we grow), be intentional about thanking certain people often your parents etc.*

Perhaps go around and ask each player on your team to say a short one sentence 'Thank You' prayer to God about either something/someone on or off the football pitch.

Today let's be a thankful team both on and off the field as we celebrate the good things and people God has given us – Think of one person you are going to specifically thank in the next day or so and go and do it!!

Week 5: Creating and Taking Opportunities

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the “importance of creating and taking opportunities” can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

What opportunities do we get when playing football? *Answers may include an opportunity for a killer pass, to score goals, to clear the penalty area, to take a penalty, to play in a big match etc.*

Why is it important in football to take the opportunities that arise? *Answers may include difference between scoring a goal and conceding a goal, difference between winning or losing a match, difference between being a successful team and a struggling one, difference of playing at an elite level or not etc.*

So how can we create more game changing opportunities in football? *Answers may include concentrating, playing with your head up, good decision making when under pressure, being confident, trusting in the skills you have learnt, carrying out the coach’s instructions, showing courage etc.*

Some opportunities in football you can create as a player or as a team but other opportunities you can’t control or create, they just happen and come your way so what are some examples of these types of accidental opportunities? *Answers may include the bounce of the ball, a mistake by the opposition like miss-control or a misplaced pass, a deflection, a penalty or free kick given by the referee etc.*

Opportunities do come up in football, sometimes you create them as an individual or as a team and sometimes opportunities just come our way accidentally. Either way opportunities are potential game changers and can be the difference between winning and losing a game. So, the issue is not so much how the opportunity came up but it is more about you as an individual, you as a team taking that opportunity when it arises to be the game changer.

The early church leader, the Apostle Paul grasped how important opportunities were in life as he asked for the Colossian church to pray for opportunities in his work. Listen to our Bible verse reading for today from Colossians 4:3 – **What does Paul ask prayer for?**

“And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.”

Answer of ‘an open door for our message’. We will look more closely at the message Paul talks about next time but for today let’s focus on that praying for open doors, praying for opportunities to make a difference.

Can someone remind us of what prayer is? *Talking and listening to God about anything, any time any place like having your own direct phone line to Heaven.*

Why would Paul ask for God’s help with opportunities? *Answers may include looking for those ‘accidental’ opportunities that we can’t control, eyes to be open to the opportunity to make a difference, he doesn’t want to miss out on any opportunity that comes his way etc.*

Paul even though he was a great church leader knew he still needed God’s help to create and take opportunities in life to make a difference for good. *Perhaps you as a coach can give an example of an accidental opportunity that came your way when you prayed about something.*

What opportunities should we pray for in life to make a difference for example at school, home and/or amongst your friends? *Example answers may include doing well in exams/tests, helping by volunteering, inviting people to church youth group, being a friend to someone in trouble etc.*

These things are only really an opportunity if we take that chance when it comes our way so let's not hesitate or hold back when an opportunity comes our way to make a difference for good both on and off the football pitch and let's pray for more such opportunities.

Depending on your team you may want some team members to pray about the opportunities mentioned and/or you can pray for them. Pray for:

- a) Courage and good decision making on the football pitch to make and take the opportunities that come up.
- b) Courage and good decision making at home, school or amongst our friends to take and make the most of the opportunities that come our way to make a difference for good.

A wise man once said- ***"The more I pray the more coincidences happen."*** Let's be a team that prays for God given opportunities and takes them both on and off the pitch.

Week 6: Clarity – Being clear in what you say

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the importance of clarity and being clear in what we say can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

What happens in football when instructions are not very clear? *Answers may include lose because we fail to implement what the coach wanted, conceded a goal because we didn't mark up at a corner, or didn't line up a wall well at a free kick or our team mate got tackled because we failed to warn them about opposition pressure etc.*

What happens in football when instructions are very clear? *Answers may include we all know our jobs, carry out responsibilities of who and how to mark the opposition, tactics to be used to win the game, understanding what the refereeing is looking for etc.*

Why is clarity and clear instructions and communication so important? *Answers may include prevents goals being scored, loss of possession, carry out best tactics to win the game, everyone knows their place and what they are doing, prevents confusion and chaos on the field etc.*

It is this idea of being really clear in what we say is what we want to focus on today as it is a game changer both on and off the pitch, both in football and in life. Sometimes in the speed and chaos of the game and life things can be confusing and we can struggle to make good decisions. Therefore, sometimes we need someone to come alongside us and speak clearly to us to break through the confusion and chaos we can face so that we can make good decisions both on and off the football pitch.

Listen to our Bible reading for today from Colossians 4:3-4, as the writer Paul (a church leader from 2000 years ago) asks for prayer that he may proclaim clearly the mystery of Christ **Can someone remind us of what prayer is?** *Talking and listening to God about anything, any time any place like having your own direct phone line to Heaven.*

“And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.”

What do you think the mystery of Christ is? *Answers may include who Jesus is, what He has done and why He has done what He has done etc.*

The mystery of Christ is the Gospel. It's good news because of Jesus leaving Heaven 2,000 years ago and living a perfect life here on earth. Dying a criminal's death on a cross yet rising back to life again 3 days later, before ascending back to Heaven, means we all can have life, eternal life, everlasting life and life to the full. It is a mystery how God could die to bring life to all different types of people including you and me, as long as we choose to respond rightly to Jesus and believe on Him and follow Him.

Why could this message about Jesus be confusing? *Answers may include, uncertainty over why did Jesus have to die, uncertainty about whether Jesus is really God, unsure of how we should respond to Him, where does it fit in with all the other religions and philosophies in the world etc. Perhaps you as a coach can explain how you came to understand who Christ is and what He did for you.*

Who are good people to have around you when life gets a bit confusing? *Answers may include parents, grand-parents, teachers, good friends, church pastor or youth leader etc.*

Explain how you as a coach are there to help bring clarity both on and off the football pitch. Yes, to help make things clear for when playing football but also to help make things clearer concerning faith, God, Jesus and life in Him so if the team want to know more and want clarity, do encourage them to ask and speak to you as their coach.

It would be good to pray for God's help to bring clarity, clear instructions both on and off the football pitch. Do pray specifically that the Lord will help you be clear in your instruction and in helping the team understand and respond rightly to Jesus.

Week 7: Act Smart

So far in our sessions as we have looked at Colossians 4:2-6 as we have focused on PRAY but now as we move to verse 5 we want to shift the focus on the way we PLAY as God wants to be involved in all aspects of our lives including our playing and related relationships both on and off the pitch. Colossians 4:5 instructs us to be wise in how we treat people and so after an initial introduction to wisdom in this session we shall look at acting wisely through legendary coach John Wooden's Wisdom material.

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the "importance of good smart decision making" can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

What does it mean or look like to play smart in football? *Answers may include good decision making, training well, following the coach's instructions, keeping things simple etc.*

What does it mean or look like to play dumb in football? *Answers may include giving the ball away needlessly, taking stupid chances in defence, being selfish with the ball, not working hard in training, not getting enough rest/sleep etc.*

What difference does playing smart make in football? *Answers may include difference between conceding a goal or not, difference between retaining the ball or not, difference between being fit to play or not etc.*

Playing with our heads as well as our feet is really important in football as it will often be the difference between winning or losing games. You can run more, have the ball more, win the ball more etc. but you can throw away all that hard, physical effort by failing to play smart. Thinking better, making good decisions, and acting on those smart decisions, is something we want to emphasise both on and off the pitch in this team. So as to help us with this we are going to look at wisdom over the next sessions.

Wisdom is something the early church leader, the Apostle Paul emphasised in his teaching. Listen to our Bible verse reading for today from Colossians 4:5 Paul has been asking for prayer a lot in our verses but now it is the time for action, smart action, wise actions.

"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity."

So, what is wisdom? *It is the ability to make good, right, smart decisions and act upon those decisions even if it is tough, hard or difficult.*

Why does Paul say, 'Act Wisely' and not just 'Be Wise'? *Answers may include that it is only through action a positive difference can be seen or experienced, smart decisions are not enough unless put into practice etc.*

Paul particularly emphasises to act wisely towards outsiders e.g. it's not enough to talk a good game but there must be action to really make a difference, actions are needed not just words to impress people or impact others and create opportunities to go further with people. *Perhaps you as a coach can give an example of how smart wise actions have impacted other people.*

Can you give some examples of acting wise/smart off the football pitch, maybe at home or at school or amongst friends? *Answers may include not just saying 'No' to drugs but staying away from people who use them, doing homework before playing on the X box, listening and obeying parents rather than doing your own thing etc.*

As a Christian based team, we want to act wisely towards others, what might this look like? Answers may include respecting referees, not trash talking opponents, being grateful to those who help out around the team etc.

Depending on your team you may want some team members to pray about acting wisely, perhaps:

a) Playing smarter on the football pitch.

b) Acting wisely off the football pitch especially when it is tough, hard or difficult.

In our following sessions we are going to look at specific areas where we can be smart and wise in our actions so that we can be more successful both on and off the football pitch.

Week 8: Be Industrious - Work hard as Individuals and as a Team

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the benefits of working hard can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

Who runs the most in football and why (You may even have some fun on who runs the most in your team)? Answers may include attackers because of all their running off the ball, midfielders as they cover ground at both ends of the field, attacking full backs with all their overlapping runs etc.

When are most goals scored in a football match and why? Usually in the last 10 minutes of games most goals are scored because players are mentally and physically tired, so mistakes are made, or energy levels are low so difficult to cover opposing players etc.

What can we do as a team to reduce the number of goals we concede towards the end of games? Answers may include work harder in training, do extra running outside of training, find ways to push ourselves further, more sleep to concentrate better etc.

If we want to be successful as a team, there is no substitute for hard work which includes both your physical condition and your skill levels. Better performances and worthwhile things will come if we work harder both as individuals and as a team. If we train harder off the pitch and out work other teams on the pitch during games, then we can exploit the weaknesses of the opposition we face week by week. Knowing that you have probably out trained and out worked your opposite number will give you greater confidence in games. Being industrious and working hard is acting wisely and it is a smart way to play.

In our last session we were encouraged by the church leader from 2,000 years ago, the Apostle Paul in the Bible passage in Colossians 4:5 to act wisely. One of the books of the Bible where there is a lot of wisdom is the book of Proverbs, and so over these next sessions we are going to look at a proverb to play smarter and act wiser. So here is our proverb for today:

“All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk only leads to poverty.” (Proverbs 14:23)

If we train and work harder as individuals and a team what could be our profit or reward? Answers may include better performances, more wins, less losses, more satisfaction, playing at higher levels etc.

Imagine what we could achieve if we all decided as individuals and as a team to train better, work harder in games, take care of our bodies, were smarter in our preparation for games by the rest we get, the food we eat and the mental sharpness we develop through focusing properly

What can you work hard at specifically to be in the best condition possible for games? Answers may include doing extra running outside of training, going to bed earlier, watch more games to be mentally sharper etc.

In the Proverb we just read, it says mere talk only leads to poverty, what does that mean for us as football players? Answers may include action speaks louder than words, not being disciplined, being easily distracted away from beneficial things to help our training, being late could lead to more losses, dissatisfaction, embarrassment etc.

We cannot change the past but are we prepared to work hard from now on? Mere talk won't change our situation, but hard work will help so that our lives won't be impoverished and less than what they should be.

What is the one aspect a) in football and b) outside of football that you need to work on in order to achieve more?

Give the players time to reflect on this and maybe if brave enough one or two may want to share something or they could write something down. Maybe you as the coach commit to something to work harder at to help the team and share it with the team (Good for accountability!!).

We have all been given talent by God, but we do need to work hard to make the most of the talent we have been given. We have to choose if we will be industrious or not, to work hard or not as individuals and be committed in our work ethic as a team, for only then will success come.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, help us to be people who choose to work hard both on and off the football pitch. We thank you for the talents and abilities you have given us inside and outside of football. Help us to make the most of these talents so that we can fulfil our potential as individuals and as a team. It is often so easy just to be lazy or talk a good game and not put the effort in so help us to have the motivation to work hard to be the best that we can be. Help us with this starting today, for this week, for this season and the seasons to come. For your sake and glory King Jesus. Amen.*

Week 9: Act wise and smart by being Friends

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the “importance of friendship and strong interconnected relationships” can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

Why do you think having strong friendships within our team is crucial to be successful? *Answers may include builds a stronger team, desire to help/support each other, listen better, sacrifice ourselves for one another etc.*

How can we make friendships stronger within our team? *Answers may include social times together, having fun times in training, working hard together etc.*

True friendship is based on mutual respect, esteem and devotion one to another, in other words we sincerely like each other. Most successful teams have a family atmosphere, there is a sense of belonging and acceptance and team mates genuinely like each other. Therefore we want our team to be a place of friendship where both in football and life you can thrive. So having good strong friendships within our team is the wise smart thing to do in order for us to grow and develop as individuals and as a team.

Would someone remind us of what is wisdom? *It is the ability to make good, right, smart decisions and act upon those decisions even if it is tough, hard or difficult. Deciding to be a good friend is a right and smart decision even if circumstances are hard and difficult.*

In our last session we looked at a proverb from the Bible in order for us to act wisely and behave in a smart way. So here is our proverb for today on friendship:

“He/She who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.” (Proverbs 13:20)

The proverb encourages us to choose our friends wisely so **why are getting right friendships important for us to be successful in life?** *Answers may include good friends influence us in positive decision making, good friends will support us, love us and back us up, good friends can push and challenge us to be better etc.*

Reflection time ... **who is your best friend and how do they help or distract you from being the best you can be?** *Perhaps you as the coach can give an example of this in your life and/or see if any of the team wants to share some specific examples.*

True friendship is about putting the needs of others first:- **What would that feel or look like if we did this as a team?** *Answers may include we would encourage rather than criticise each other, we would focus on the good in others rather than promoting ourselves, we would be thankful to each other etc.*

True friendship within a team means that this team is a safe place to try new things, express ourselves and even make mistakes: - **How do we respond as a team when somebody makes a mistake in our team?**

Friendship is key in all walks of life. We all need good friends around us and this team needs us to be close in order for us to thrive and be successful. If we can get our friendships right here within our team then we truly will be a team, but it will mean putting others first before ourselves e.g. forgiving others when they make mistakes. True friendship is great, but it will cost.



Jesus Christ is the best friend you could ever have in life as He forgives our mistakes, supports us, loves us, wants us to be ourselves and express ourselves. He wants us to be with Him forever whether we are having a good or a bad day a good football match or a bad one. Jesus is the pinnacle, epitome and highest standard of friendship as He paid the price to restore friendship with you by going to the cross and paying the price for your mistakes and failure.

PRAYER: *Father thank you for Jesus, the best friend anyone of us could ever have. Father thank you for my other friends as well. Thank you that we have people around us including our team mates that want the best for us. Help us to choose our friends wisely so that we can have a group of friends around us that can inspire us and motivate us to be the best we possibly can be, both as individuals and as a team. Amen.*

Week 10: Act wise and smart by being Loyal

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the benefits of being loyal or standing alongside one another can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

Who do you think are the most loyal people in football? Answers may include coach (as they turn up every week), parents (as they get their kids to training/games), players (as they have to work hard in training) or fans (as they never change their club support) etc.

What does loyalty look like for our team? Answers may include commitment to training/game days, we back each other up on the pitch, we honour our coach, we thank our parents for driving us around and enabling us to play etc.

How does loyalty help us as a team? Answers may include it builds trust within our team, it's an expression of our friendship for one another, it provides confidence for the future etc.

Loyalty to yourself, to the team, to the football and to one another is a smart wise thing as it is a key foundation for us to be a successful team.

Would someone remind us of what is wisdom? It is the ability to make good, right, smart decisions and act upon those decisions even if it is tough, hard or difficult. Deciding to be loyal to your team mates especially when it is tough and difficult is a wise, smart thing to do.

In our last session we looked at a proverb from the Bible in order for us to act wisely and behave in a smart way. So here is our proverb for today on loyalty:

“A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17).

Loyalty involves loving at all times and in particularly in hard times so how does this look when:

- We are 3-0 down at half time?
- A new player arrives at our team?
- You are dropped or substituted?

Reflection time ... **who is there for you when you need them most? Who goes the extra mile for you?** *Perhaps you as a coach can share who is your 'go to' person and why ... perhaps if appropriate some of the team may want to share as well.*

In our last session we talked about Jesus being the best friend we could ever have, and one of the reasons for this is because He is faithful, loyal, never leaves or forsakes us or gives up on us either when things get tough or we fall or fail. He can always be your 'Go To' person and that's why we spent quite a few sessions looking at prayer as He is always there for us.

Loyalty seems to be a value we see less and less in football today. Wouldn't it be great to be a team who counters this trend by being a team that is loyal to one another? Loyalty is key to us becoming a successful team. Loyalty is choosing to love one another when it is hard and difficult and when your team mates need it the most. This is when your loyalty really counts so let's be team players who are loyal to one another when it really matters.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus the faithful loyal One and thank you that you are a God who is faithful and loyal and loves us at all times. Help us to be loyal friends who go the extra mile for our team mates when they need it most. Amen.

Week 11: Act wise and smart by Co-operating and working as a Team

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the “importance of co-operating and working as a team” can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance

What is the most important position on the team? *Answers may include goalkeeper, striker etc. but the true answer is all positions are the most important positions as we need each other to function well as a successful team.*

What happens if one position (e.g. strikers) thinks they are more important than other positions within the team? *Answers may include disunity, laziness, blaming others, jealousy etc.*

We have to have team spirit, so that we all attack as a team and defend as a team e.g. How can strikers help us defend better as a team? *Answers may include high pressing, closing down defenders, cutting off full backs, running off the ball and getting into space to give defenders passing options, coming back for set pieces such as free kicks or corners etc.*

Within our team, what can we do to look out for each other as team mates so that we can function well as a team, how can we co-operate and work better as a team between different positions and alongside each other within our positions as goalkeeper/defenders, midfielders and strikers? *The better we co-operate and play together as a team both in defence and attack, the more successful we will be as a team and the more we will enjoy playing.*

Would someone remind us of what is wisdom? *It is the ability to make good, right, smart decisions and act upon those decisions even if it is tough, hard or difficult. Deciding to be a good team mate and friend is a right and smart decision even if circumstances are hard and difficult.*

In our last session we looked at a proverb from the Bible in order for us to act wisely and behave in a smart way. So here is our proverb for today on friendship:

“Those who are kind will benefit themselves but those who are cruel will bring ruin on themselves.” (Proverbs 11:17)

The proverb encourages us to be kind to one another which is a form and expression of co-operation, friendship and team work. **How do you feel when someone does something unexpectedly nice for you?** *Answers may include surprised, loved, appreciated, encouraged, feel good etc.*

So what could we do for each other as a team to improve our cooperation on and off the pitch? *Answers may include looking out for each other, working hard together, covering each other’s backs etc.*

The Proverb warns us that acting in a cruel way or being selfish or self-centred will lead to ruin both for us as individuals and those around us which could include our team, **What can we do within our team to reduce selfishness?** *Perhaps you as the coach can give some examples of this in your life and/or see if any of the team want to share some specific examples.*

Reflection Time ... **what is more important for you – the team winning even if you play badly or playing well yourself even if the team plays badly?** Your honest answer to these questions will reflect on the amount of kindness, co-operation and team work in your heart. **What can you do this week to improve this attitude?** *Perhaps you as the coach can give some examples of this in your life and/or see if any of the team want to share some specific examples.*

If we want to have a good team then we need to be able to cooperate and work well as a team. We looked in previous sessions about the importance of friendship, loyalty and sacrificing ourselves for one another ... all this is expressed practically in our ability to co-operate with people both on and off the football pitch. No one person is greater than the team. We cannot act independently within a team or in life, we need to be interdependent with others to function well at our best and achieve more. An African proverb says - ***"If you want to go somewhere fast then go by yourself but if you want to go far then take someone else with you"***. We want to go far as a team so let's make sure we bring one another with us.

The greatest team the world has ever seen is God ... As you read your Bible you will see the wonderful co-operation and team work of the Father, Son and Spirit working together to be God and fulfil God's purposes here on earth. God wants to co-operate with you and wants you to be part of His team as well.

PRAYER: *Father help us to learn from everyone including you. Help us to value everyone the same just as you do so that we can co-operate better with others and be better team players. Help us as a team to grow in co-operation both on and off the football pitch. Amen.*

Week 12: Act wise and smart by being Enthusiastic

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the benefits of being enthusiastic can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

Why do you love football and why is it exciting for you to play? Answers may include love scoring goals, end to end excitement, everyone can play, lots of ball contact, continual action, tackling people, individual expression etc.

How do you feel when you score a goal or make a great block or clearance? Answers may include exhilaration, satisfaction, so happy, party with my team mates etc.

What motivates you to keep coming to football training? Answers may include love playing, love being with my team mates, love improving and getting better at the game etc.

I as a coach don't particularly want to have to keep motivating you as a team. My desire is that you as players have that inner drive, that inner conviction, that self-motivation to train, play hard, to work at your game, to press and push yourself. I want you to be excited about coming to training and to play. If you are enthusiastic about the game, then you will work hard both at practice and in matches. Enthusiasm or excitement to play and work hard are smart wise things as they are the basis for us to be a successful team.

Would someone remind us of what is wisdom? *It is the ability to make good, right, smart decisions and act upon those decisions even if it is tough, hard or difficult. Deciding to be enthusiastic about and during practice as well as during games is a smart wise thing to do.*

In our last session we looked at a proverb from the Bible in order for us to act wisely and behave in a smart way. So here is our proverb for today on enthusiasm:

"A labourer's appetite works for them and their hunger drives them on." (Proverbs 16:26)

The proverb talks about having an inner hunger so **what drives you on to perform well and succeed both in Football? and in Life?**

How can you show enthusiasm when?

You are playing in a position that is not your favourite?

The team has conceded a goal and is losing?

Training gets tough?

You miss an easy chance to score, block or clear the ball?

What are you excited about achieving this year, what goals have you set yourself that you are enthusiastic about:

(a) In football?

(b) Life outside of football e.g. at school or in your spiritual life?

You as a coach might want to share also some of the goals you have set this year both for football and life off the pitch to inspire the team.

We have a God who is extremely enthusiastic about us as people. He is so enthusiastic that he sent Jesus to come to earth 2,000 years ago and even die for us on a cross so that we might be restored back to friendship and relationship with Him ... talk about enthusiasm especially in doing something that you don't want to do and is so hard but that inner drive drove Jesus to do whatever it took to reach you and me. My hope and prayer is that you will



show this kind of enthusiasm in your football, life outside of football and for Jesus Christ as well ... if you want to know more, come and chat to me afterwards.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, help us to be just like you ... that is enthusiastic and full of life. Help us to demonstrate that enthusiasm when we come to practice, when we play, when we do the hard things in the game, when we are at home, when we are at school, and when we are amongst our friends. Help us with the goals we have set this year as individuals and as a team. Thank you for your love and enthusiasm for us in Jesus. Amen.*

Week 13: Act wise and smart by being Focused

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the “importance of concentrating and being focused” can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

What can be a distraction for you when you play football? *Answers may include parents on the touchline, other games going on, opposition talking, bad calls from the referee, breaks in the game when the ball is out of play, mistakes you have made, anger etc.*

What can be a distraction or temptation off the football pitch to prevent you playing at your best? *Answers may include too much screen time late into the night, unhealthy eating/drinking habits, being lazy and not keeping fit, unhealthy friendships that could lead you astray etc.*

The opposite of being distracted or tempted is being FOCUSED - **What does it mean to be focused and why could it help your performance and our team?** *Answers may include focus means resisting distraction or temptation, staying on track and concentrating.*

Focus and concentration will help us to do our jobs on the football pitch. Cut out silly mistakes, reduce the number of poor decisions we make. This will help our team concede less goals, press the ball better in right areas as a team, create more opportunities, get more shots off on target and hopefully lead to better results.

Would someone remind us of what is wisdom? *It is the ability to make good, right, smart decisions and act upon those decisions even if it is tough, hard or difficult. Deciding to concentrate on the job and task at hand and being focused are right and smart decisions to make both on and off the football pitch.*

In our last session we looked at a proverb from the Bible for us to act wisely and behave in a smart way. So here is our proverb for today on focus and concentration:

“The person of integrity walks securely but the person who takes crooked paths will be found out.” (Proverbs 10:9)

The proverb encourages us to be people of integrity. **What does integrity mean or look like?** *Answers may include honesty, a person of principle, good morals, honour, undivided etc.*

Being undivided in our attention, concentration and focus to be honest, do good, live a right life and play with integrity is a good thing because according to this proverb it should lead to security, peace and safety in life. Focusing on doing the right thing, in the right way at the right time can only be good for our team as it will raise our performance on the field and give us a sense of security, peace and satisfaction off it at a job well done.

The Proverb warns us about the alternative of taking ‘crooked paths’ to achieve our goals, **what does this mean or look like?** *Answers may include being askew, not straight with people, awry, dishonest, not straightforward etc.*

So, what could this look like in football? *Answers may include cheating, assimilation, diving, faking it, not working hard in training, taking short cuts in drills, lying about fitness, hiding in games rather than giving your all etc.*

Failing to focus and concentrate on doing what is right can mean we will be tempted to try and take shortcuts to success. But if you do this and choose this option then you will be found out eventually on the pitch as your performance dips and off the field as people won’t be able to trust you which will lead to loss of friends, influence and opportunity

Reflection Time ... **what is more important for you, win at all costs or playing and performing as a team of integrity and honour?**

The second way is the harder way, and it will require focus and concentration to stay on track for the whole time on the pitch, the whole training session and in all of life. However, it is worth it as it is the way of peace, security and satisfaction rather than being haunted by guilt and shame plus wondering if you will ever be found out.

Jesus was a person of focus. He concentrated on God's plan for His life even when it was hard. It talks about him in the Bible **"Setting his face like flint"** in other words He would not be distracted or tempted away from doing what was right. Even when it was hard, even in His case when it meant suffering, trials, and even going to His death on a cross for you and me. Jesus was so focused on getting you and me back into friendship with God that He was prepared to pay whatever price it took, even at the cost of His own life on a cross so that we could be restored.

Focus and concentration are good, wise and smart qualities to have. **So what distractions are you going to get rid of this week?** *Perhaps you as the coach can share some example from your experience or if appropriate the team can share what they are going do.*

PRAYER: *Father, thank you for your love, your focus and concentration on us as your children. Keep us from distractions and temptations both on and off the field that will keep us from being all that we can be as individual players and as a team. Help us to concentrate on doing what is right even when it is hard and difficult just as Jesus did. Amen.*

Week 14: Act wise and smart by taking the Initiative

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on the 'taking the initiative, thinking on your feet, playing what's in front of you' idea can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

"If you are frightened of making mistakes then you are not going to be free to try things when you play" John Wooden.

Do you think this is true or false and why? *Perhaps you can give a coach's perspective on this quote from John Wooden.*

What can we do as a team to allow our team mates to be free to make mistakes? *Answers may include not shouting or screaming at them, encouraging our parents not to shout at players when they make mistakes, celebrate when someone tries something new in a game, encourage a spirit of creativity, imagination and freedom of expression in training etc.*

Is there a right time and place to make mistakes? *Answers may include in training, in the attacking third of the field, when another player is covering you in case something goes wrong etc.*

We as players need to be free to try new things as we are not a team of robots, but we are born with creativity and imagination with the desire to explore, experiment and discover. If we have an environment within this team where we encourage freedom of expression on the football pitch, then mistakes will be made, and things will go wrong sometimes. However, if we learn from our mistakes as individual players and as a team, we will get better. We will develop the ability to think smart and make good decisions when we play, and we will initiate things that will change games in our favour.

Having the desire to take the initiative, to try new things to learn and excel are smart wise qualities as they can be real game changers for us as a team.

Would someone remind us of what is wisdom? *It is the ability to make good, right, smart decisions and act upon those decisions even if it is tough, hard or difficult. Deciding to be enthusiastic about and during training as well as during games is a smart wise thing to do.*

In our last session we looked at a proverb from the Bible in order for us to act wisely and behave in a smart way. Our proverb today is based on the writer commending and honouring a woman of noble character and action:

"Charm is deceptive, beauty is fleeting but a person who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give them the reward they have earned and let their works bring them praise." (Proverbs 31:20-21)

This proverb celebrates and recognises someone who takes the initiative. They do things that will make a difference. They recognise that talking a good game or just looking good are so temporary and short lived. Yet being concerned about what God thinks and doing something good, so much so that it is recognised and praised now that's worth pursuing. Such a person has cultivated the ability to make good decisions and to excel so, **-what can you do to develop the ability to make good decisions and excel both in:**

- Football?
- Life?

Perhaps you as the coach could emphasise it is in the idea of trying things out (even if we make mistakes), we learn, we grow, and we get better especially if we learn from our mistakes and continue to practice so as to improve. This is true in developing football skills, life skills in how we handle people, academic skills as we learn at school etc. You could also share how you tried something out as a coach and perhaps made a mistake or two but ultimately you got better as a result.

What do you want to take the initiative on and try something to get better:

- In football?
- At school?
- Other areas of life?

If appropriate get the team to share some of their ideas on what to try in order to improve and get better.

Remember it is in taking the initiative and not just discussing something that makes a difference. Example, **5 frogs are on a log and 4 decide to jump in the river so how many frogs are still left on the log? ... 5** because there is a big difference between deciding and doing! So let's be players and a team who take the initiative on and off the football pitch and do something to make a difference to get better.

The person in the proverb was recognised for their fear of the Lord e.g. their reverence and respect for God that came out in their actions. When they took the initiative, they had God in mind, as they wanted to please Him.

Will you take the initiative and seek to please God in what you do? Will you let thoughts of God shape what you do on and off the football pitch because this would be a wise and smart thing to do?

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thank you that you are a God who takes the initiative. When people needed saving from themselves you sent Jesus to reach out and rescue us. Help us to not just talk a good game but to take the initiative and act even if we get it wrong sometimes. Help us to grow in the areas we want to develop, on and off the football pitch and most of all help us to keep you in mind all of the time, so that we might do what is right and commendable by you. Amen.*

Week 15: Speaking Graciously

So far in our sessions, we have looked at Colossians 4:2-5 PRAY and PLAY (Be wise in what we do and how we behave) as God wants to be involved in all aspects of our lives including our playing and related relationships both on and off the pitch. Now as we move onto Colossians 4:6, we get instructions about what we SAY and how to say it. Therefore, in our next sessions we will focus on our speaking one to another.

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on speaking positively one to another (especially after a player makes a mistake) can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

In our last session, we talked about the importance of allowing our team mates to make mistakes. **What kind of things do people say when we make mistakes on the football pitch?** Answers may include people shout at us, call us names, blame us and put us down etc.

How do you feel when you make a mistake and people shout at you and call you names? Answers may include it knocks my confidence, I don't want to play anymore, I feel embarrassed, alone, ashamed, potentially bullied etc.

What would help us in that situation of when we make a mistake? Answers may include somebody encouraging us, speaking positively to us, coming alongside us, helping us etc.

Shouting, talking negatively and/or cursing at somebody very rarely helps somebody to recover. Often it can knock a fellow player's confidence and certainly does not help put right the mistake made. If anything, it can only make things worse. Therefore, we want to explore ways in which through our words we can build our team mates up and be game changers when things seem bad.

The early church leader, the Apostle Paul grasped how important are the words we say and the way we say them as they really can be game changers for us both on and off the pitch. Listen to our Bible verse reading for today from Colossians 4:6:

"Let your conversation always be full of grace" (NIV)

"Be gracious in your speech as the goal is to bring the best out of others in a conversation not put them down, or cut them out." (MSG)

Let your conversation be full of GRACE, **so what does grace mean?** Answers may include elegance in movement, free unmerited favour, giveaway love, letting people off, giving something that somebody does not deserve, giving thanks before a meal, showing Godlike love etc.

Our conversations then should always be full of elegance, favour, positivity, letting people off, thankfulness, building people up, and almost godly even though people perhaps don't deserve such grace!

If our conversation should ALWAYS be full of grace what does this look like when:

- Our team mate messes up and makes mistakes?
- The referee makes a bad call?
- The opposition player makes a mistake (e.g. scores an own goal)?
- You don't agree with the coach's decision?
- We are in the locker/changing room and what we talk about there?

How would conversations always full of grace help the atmosphere?

- On our team?
- At home?
- At school?

Perhaps you as the coach can share a positive experience when a conversation full of grace helped you and then share your desire to create a team where conversations are good, positive rather than negative, dirty and bullying, you want to create a place of grace ... a team environment that is full of elegance, favour, love, care, encouragement, thankfulness and lifting others up – Yes a good place, a safe place for all who play in our team.

Grace is a quality of God. We have a God who is full of free, unmerited, giveaway love for people who don't really deserve it. Grace can be summarised using the letters in the word. '**G**ods **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense'. In other words, we get the riches of a relationship with God because Jesus paid the price for our separation, distance and rebellion from God by dying on the cross. Instead of condemning us, Jesus in a conversation full of grace says- **"Come on, come and be part of my team, a good team, a safe team, a team full of love and care."**

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thank you that you are a God who is full of grace. Thank you that you don't treat us as we deserve, and you are so kind to us even though we mess up and make mistakes both on and off the football pitch. Help us create a safe place within our team, by our conversations being full of grace so that we can reflect you in all that we say both on and off the football pitch. Thank you, Jesus, Amen*

Week 16: Be Salty in what you say

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on instructing to make a difference can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

What is the role of a coach in football? **Answers may include picking the team, allocating positions, deciding on tactics, giving instructions, developing players etc.**

One of the roles of a coach is to give instructions. **Why is this important?** *Answers may include helps us play better, helps us as individuals to improve, a coach sometimes sees things from the side-line that we don't see as players during a game etc.*

In what areas of your game as an individual and as a team do you want a coach to speak into so that you can improve? *Answers may include defend better, improve technique, learn some new skills, point out danger, change tactics during a game etc.*

A coach, because of their experience, training and knowledge is there for a team to help players to improve and play better together as a team. Through what a coach says we should get better both on and off the football pitch. It is not just down to the coach though, we as players, through what we say can help each other improve and get better both on and off the football pitch. It is this idea of what we say can make an impact for good.

The early church leader, the Apostle Paul grasped how important the words we say are, and the way we say them, as they really can be game changers for us both on and off the pitch. Listen to our Bible verse reading for today from Colossians 4:6:

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

It is this idea of our conversation and what we say being seasoned with salt.

So, what does salt do, what is it used for? – Salt can be used for 3 main things:

1. To add flavour, in other words to make food taste better.
2. To preserve as salt is used on foods such as meat to help it be good to eat for a longer time.
3. To heal as salt is sometimes used on wounds, cuts and grazes to help injuries get better.

Also, you only put salt on where it is needed so that it can fulfil one of the purposes we have mentioned.

So how can our conversations and what we say be salty and help make relationships better, keep the goodness in our relationships and help bring some healing to someone? *Answers may include encouragement for someone when they are injured or struggling to play well, helping someone improve in their technique or skills, putting smiles on people's faces, making people laugh etc. Perhaps you as a coach can give an example of where through what someone said it had a salt like effect on your life when you needed it.*

Who needs you to speak salty words of goodness and healing into their lives? *Answers may include parents, brother, sister who maybe struggling with something, a relative who is ill, friends who have problems, school mates who need encouragement with their studies etc.*

Let's be people, players and a team who speak words of goodness and healing into the lives of others.

This is one of the reasons we look at, read and study God's Word, the Bible in our devotions because we believe that the Bible is full of words that can have a salt influence on our lives. The words in the Bible can help life be better for us, they can preserve us as they offer even eternal life, they can bring healing and they are often the words we just need to hear at the right time. So the Bible is amazing for saying words seasoned with salt so if you want or need a Bible or want to know how you can read it please come and talk to me as your coach because we can help you with that.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thank you that through your word, the Bible, you say words that are seasoned with salt. They are just what we need to hear in order to have a better life, a longer life and experience your healing in our lives just when we need it. Help us to bring goodness, life and healing to others both on and off the football pitch in what we say. Help our conversations be seasoned with salt so as to make a difference for good. Thank you, Jesus, Amen*

Week 17: Created to be Creative

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point on instructing to make a difference can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

What's your favourite part of playing football? *Answers may include doing a great move to dribble past somebody, making a great tackle, pulling off a fantastic save, providing that final pass for someone to score, getting a goal etc.*

Most of the favourite parts of the game you mentioned require somebody to be creative and imaginative for them to happen, why is that? *Answers may include that you need creativity to imagine doing a move to beat a defender, to see the pass to give the assist for the goal, to use the right type of shot to finish off a great move to score a goal etc.*

How can we be more creative in playing football? *Answers may include watching other football games to get ideas, working hard on our skills so we have good technique to be creative, working together as a team better so that each player can contribute to the imagination and creativity etc.*

As a club, we want to be renowned for our skills, attacking play and shooting ... all of which requires imagination and being creative on the football pitch in the way we play and off the football pitch in the way we prepare. Football is sometimes known as the beautiful game but for something to be beautiful there needs to be imagination and creativity.

The early church leader, the Apostle Paul grasped how important what we say is and the way we say it as he says in Colossians 4:6:

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Therefore, we want to know how to answer everyone about what we believe and stand for as a club on and off the football pitch. Today we want to think about creativity, why we are creative and who is our Creator.

Listen to the Bible verse from Revelation 4:11 on being creative:

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Who is the Creator in this Bible verse and can you give some examples of all the things He has created? *Answers may include God is the creator and made the sky, the earth, the sea, the trees, flowers, mountains, animals, birds, people etc.*

So everywhere we look, we can see something of God's creation and much of it is beautiful because there is imagination and creativity behind it.

What did the verse we just read say the Creator should receive? *Answers may include recognition, praise, acknowledgement, glory, honour and position etc.*

We know this because when somebody on a football pitch does something good, creative and imaginative we cheer, clap, recognise, praise, honour and acknowledge what that player has done.

How do you like to be creative when you are not playing football? *Answers may include playing music, painting, writing, building, sculpting, making things, cooking, finding creative solutions to problems etc. Perhaps you as a coach can share about something creative you do when not on the football pitch.*

We should encourage such creative activities as they are worthy of praise, honour and acknowledgement as they stir the imagination and bring pleasure to people. You are creative and imaginative because you have been made by a creative, imaginative God, who made you in His image to be creative and imaginative both on and off the football pitch. You are designed to be creative because you have a Creator God.

As a team let's celebrate and acknowledge our creativity both on and off the pitch. On the football pitch this is why we will emphasise skills, attacking play and shooting but also off the pitch we want to celebrate your creative successes at school, at home, in your hobbies and with your friends. Let's be players, a team and people who are creative Why? Because we have a Creator God who made us and built creativity into us and so we can glorify and honour Him by expressing our creativity.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thank you that you are the Creator God. We do want to give you all the honour, glory, power, praise and adoration because you are the Creator God who loves us as we are your special creation. Thank you for making us in your image to be creative Lord and help us to express our creativity to your glory both on and off the football pitch. Amen*

Week 18: We fail, we foul and we fall

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point that highlights how we fall short of the required standard then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

Is there anything that you dislike about football, if so what is it? *Answers may include players cheating, fouling, bad mouthing, losing, frustration at not playing as well as I hoped, parents shouting, poor referee decisions etc.*

What are some of the worst examples of football being spoilt like this that you have seen or experienced? *You as a coach may want to give an example at this point.*

Football is called the beautiful game so why do these things happen to make the sport we love turn ugly and nasty? *Answers may include win at all costs attitudes, selfishness, anger, dislike of certain other teams, coaches' instructions etc.*

Unfortunately, we have to recognise that both on and off the football pitch, things have gone wrong, things are not as good as they could be and as a result our experience is sometimes spoiled and ruined. The game of football may be beautiful but when flawed, selfish human beings play it then football can become ugly and not as much fun. It is this failed, flawed fouling human condition that spoils our game and affects what we say. We want to look at this today.

The early church leader, the Apostle Paul grasped how important what we say is and the way we say it as he says in Colossians 4:6:

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Therefore, we want to know how to answer everyone about what we believe about football, the way people play it and why the standard often falls short of both God's and our own expectations.

Listen to the Bible verse from Romans 3:10-12 today as we think about the flawed, failing fouling human beings that play football.

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one"

Wow, what a negative report from God on how we as people are doing. **Can you imagine getting this kind of report from school?** You don't do what is right, you don't understand, you have turned away to do your own thing etc. Ouch!

How does this report from God on the state, condition and behaviour of human beings make you feel? *Answers may include bad, sad, upset, hopeless, angry, disagree with it etc.*

How does somebody not doing what is right, not understanding, turning away from God to do their own selfish thing affect what happens on and off the football pitch? *Answers may include it spoils, ruins, pollutes our experience, it frustrates us, hold us back and makes us dissatisfied and unfulfilled etc.*

What examples of this not doing what is right, not understanding and turning away from God to our own selfish thing can be seen in life away from the football pitch? *Answers may include lying, stealing, cheating, greed, bullying, bad language, violence, hatred etc.*

So, our beautiful game and our beautiful world is being spoilt, ruined and polluted because people fail, fall and foul as they don't do what is right. They don't understand and think right, all because they have turned away from God to do their own selfish thing.

Reflection Time – **So how do you view yourself? Are you part of the problem? Do you fail, fall and foul both on and off the football pitch? Are you included in God's assessment of people in that you don't do what is right, you don't understand or think right, you turn away from God and do your own selfish thing?**

There was once a question written in a newspaper for people to answer and to respond to and it was this **"What is wrong with the world?"** All sorts of answers came in such as poor education, inequality, politics, poverty, business, schools, foreigners etc. Eventually someone wrote in with a very simple answer to the question what is wrong with the world? ... ME! Yes me, I am the problem in this world. I your coach am the problem in this world because I agree with God's assessment that I fail, fall and foul. I don't do what is right, I don't understand or think straight, I turn away from God and do my own thing. As a result, football and this world is not as beautiful as it should be. I am part of the problem. **What about you?**

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, we come to you as people and as a team who fail, fall and foul. We don't do what is right, we don't understand or think straight as we turn away from you and do our own selfish thing. Forgive us God that as a result of doing this, we hurt you, we hurt others, we hurt ourselves and we ruin this beautiful world that you have created. Help us instead to do what is right, to understand, to think straight and to turn to you rather than away from you because you love us and want the very best for us if only we would seek you. Help us Lord Jesus with this we pray. Amen*

Week 19: Punishment for Fouling

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point that shows the consequences of failure can be done then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

What is the worst foul or thing you have seen or experienced in football? Answers may include a terrible tackle, a fight, fighting in the crowd, racist attack, blatant cheating, a coach abusing his players etc.

What was the punishment for such actions? Answers may include yellow card, red card, ordered away from the field/stadium, banned for games, financial fine, police called to make arrests etc.

Do you think the punishment fitted the incidents mentioned? Examples may include it was fair, it was unfair, should have been a bigger ban, fine or it was too harsh etc.

We acknowledged in our last session together that our beautiful game of football and our beautiful world is being spoilt, ruined and polluted because people fail, fall and foul as they don't do what is right, they don't understand and think right, all because they have turned away from God to do their own selfish thing. A reflection of this is the things we have mentioned today. The fouls and the abuse that occurs leading to hurt and pain because people both on and off the football pitch do their own selfish thing. When hurt and pain are caused to others, judgement and punishment are the right things to follow so as to protect and prevent more damage being done. People do need to be warned in words that actions do have consequences and that sometimes can involve punishment.

The early church leader, the Apostle Paul grasped how important words are as he says in Colossians 4:6:

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

Therefore, we want to know how to answer everyone about what we believe and stand for as a club on and off the football pitch. Today we want to think about when things go wrong and what is the appropriate response and punishment. Listen to the Bible verse from Hebrews 9:27 on punishment:

“People are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”

What is the punishment according to this Bible verse for people that fail, fall and foul as they don't do what is right, they don't understand and don't think right, all because they have turned away from God to do their own selfish thing? Death and God's judgement is the answer

Wow, Ouch!! Death and judgement seem very harsh and final. **Why would God do this?** Answers may include people don't want God in this life, so they get what they want on a permanent basis by being separated from God. God doesn't want to ruin Heaven by letting in people who cause hurt and pain or otherwise it wouldn't be Heaven any more. God makes people pay for their hurtful actions. *You as the coach may need to help with some of the answers as it's a difficult subject to talk about.*

Why are people given red cards in football or sent to jail in society? Answers may include punishment for the person causing the problems and pain or the prevention of further damage being caused so as to protect innocent people from getting hurt. *Coach may have to give some examples to illustrate these things.*

Similarly, God brought in death and judgement to punish, prevent and protect as human beings were never meant to die. They were meant to live forever but God did not want selfish hurtful behaviour to go on forever, so he brought in the punishment of death.

This is all very difficult and depressing to think about especially as in our last session we said that we are all guilty of failing, falling, fouling, not doing what is right, not understanding, not thinking straight, not seeking God but rather we prefer to do our own selfish thing with all the resulting hurt, pain and damage it causes to others and ourselves.

So yes, punishment and judgement awaits us all ... **BUT** there is some great hopeful news as our Bible reading verse continues:

“Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”

So, don't miss the next session because we have a Saviour in Jesus, God's own Son who can rescue us from the punishment that awaits if we seek Him, turn to Him and wait on Him.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, we realise punishment and judgement are not fun things to think or talk about, even if they are right and necessary in life. You are a God of justice and love and you can't stand by doing nothing when there is so much hurt, pain and damage in the world you created. Thank you, though you have provided help and a solution in Jesus so help us to turn to you, seek you and wait on you, so that we can be saved from our own selfish ways and the resulting punishment that we deserve. Amen*

Week 20: The Super Substitute

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point that highlights the difference a substitute or outside help can make then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

Do you prefer to start a game or come on later as a substitute and why? Answers may include *I love being picked so I want to start, I want to play as much as possible, so I prefer to start, or I prefer to come on later when players are tired and after I have seen how things are going etc.*

What has been either your best substitute appearance or the best substitute appearance you have seen? *You as a coach may want to give an example of the difference a substitute made in a game.*

Why can a substitute make such a difference? Answers may include *they can change the game either saving a penalty as a substitute goalkeeper or shoring up the defence as a defender or dominating midfield or scoring the winning goal as a striker when the opposition is tired, or as a tactical change etc.*

The use of substitutes in football can be a real game changer as they can help out when there are injuries or tiredness. They can come onto the field when a player is struggling, their strengths can overcome for someone else's weaknesses. It's always the coach's call for when a substitute comes into the match and we want to look today at the greatest substitution call ever made in history!

The early church leader, the Apostle Paul grasped how important what we say is and calling on a substitute is an important statement to make and so we get the following instruction in Colossians 4:6:

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Therefore, we want to know how to answer everyone about what we believe about football and life and the difference our super substitute Jesus Christ can make.

Listen to the Bible verse from 1 Peter 3:18 today as we think about a super substitution:

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit."

What are sins? Answers may include *its all the bad selfish stuff we say, do and think, it's all the areas we fall short in our relationship with God and others etc.*

As we talked about in our last session, there is punishment for doing wrong things that cause hurt to God, others and ourselves. Yet in this reading there seems to have been a substitution that took place.

What was it and why? The righteous for the unrighteous, the good one for the bad one, Jesus Christ for us was the substitution. He did it to bring us back to God, to restore our relationship and friendship with God.

So, when we keep messing things up, getting things wrong, failing, falling and fouling, Jesus stepped in as our super substitute who didn't do any of that bad selfish, hurtful stuff to take our place, to take our punishment and as a result He made a bridge back to God for us. All our bad stuff just creates a barrier and a block between us and God, but it has all been knocked down by our super substitute Jesus. What a game changer!

In reading the last part of our Bible verse, **how is Jesus our super substitute?**

Yes, He died in our place but rose back to life again!! Yes, He is the super substitute, game changer, life changer as He did what none of us can do without God's help and that is to come back from the dead. He beat the ultimate punishment of death to come back to life again. When we were in a hopeless situation, God made a substitution call that changed everything because when it came to facing death he took us out of the game and put Jesus in and Jesus won so that we can have life now with God forever.

So yes, substitutes really do change games and in the game of life, our super substitute Jesus Christ changed everything. He conquered death so that we can have life, even life after death and we can have that life with him because He paid the price we never could, and all is good now for us to come back to God.

Reflection Time – **Have you ever thanked Jesus for taking your place and being that super substitute that conquered death? Have you ever made that decision to get back to God?**

It is possible for you to get back to God because of Jesus. If you want to do this please talk to your coach, church youth leader or another Christian friend you may have so that you really can enjoy a restored life with God.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thank you for making that call 2,000 years ago and for sending Jesus. Thank you, Jesus for being willing to take our death penalty punishment for all the wrong things we have said, thought and done. You did not deserve to die on that cross Jesus 2,000 years because you did nothing wrong, but you did it for us, taking on all our failures and the punishment we deserved. Thank you for being our super substitute and help us to make the most of a life with God that lasts forever. Amen.*

Week 21: Great Come Back

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point that brings out a great comeback in a game then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

What is the greatest comeback you have seen or experienced in football? *Maybe you as a coach have an example.*

Why was the comeback so great?

How do you feel after a great comeback? *Answers may include elation, party time, feel on a high, can't wait for the next game etc.*

At times in football we can feel as though we are dead and buried when we are losing badly but sometimes a goal, a super substitution, a tactical change can turn everything around on the field. Also, in life off the football pitch sometimes we can feel overwhelmed, struggling and just not getting anywhere but a breakthrough or someone helping us or a change of approach can turn things around. In our last session we saw how we as human beings because of our failings and fouling are in a pretty hopeless condition but then God stepped and created the greatest comeback ever and that's what we want to look at today.

The early church leader, the Apostle Paul grasped how important what we say is and so he says in Colossians 4:6:

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Therefore, we want to know how to answer everyone about what we believe and stand for as a club, on and off the football pitch. Today we want to talk about the great comeback that God orchestrated so that we can have life instead of the punishment of death.

Listen to the Bible verse reading from 1 Peter 1:3 on the greatest comeback ever:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

What is the great comeback spoken of in these words? *Jesus Christ coming back to life from the dead.* Please note that it is resurrection not resuscitation where a person will die again but this resurrection is no more death and life forever in Jesus Christ. So, it is amazing as Jesus has conquered death and He has conquered being buried and came back to life. When everything looked dead and buried, Jesus Christ came back to life and won the victory wow what a comeback!

Why is this comeback good news for us as we read that verse from the Bible?

- God has shown us great mercy, in other words God does not give us what we deserve. We deserve punishment for our fouls, falls and failings but God does not does punish us for these things as Jesus was our super substitute who took our place and punishment instead.
- God has given us new birth. Yes, instead of death God wants to give us new birth into new life and it is life to the full, life everlasting.
- God has given us a living hope. Yes, we have a great future as we have a life with Him, a life in Heaven, a life full of hope and light for the future.

So, from that verse what should be our response to this amazing comeback and all the undeserved and unearned benefits we receive? Praise, worship, thanks, adoration and celebration in God the Father of Jesus, who rescued us from death and brought about the greatest comeback of all time. Once we were dead but now we can be alive in God. So, the most natural thing must be to praise, worship, give thanks and celebrate God because of all that He has done for us.

Comebacks are amazing both on and off the football pitch, and you can be part of the greatest comeback ever in Jesus. So, let's give thanks and praise and worship to the God who saved us. *Perhaps if appropriate, get some of the kids to pray and give thanks, praise and worship to the God who saved and rescued them and brought about that amazing comeback of life after death*

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, we praise, worship, thank, adore and celebrate you for the life you bring, resurrection life, a life that is going to count forever. We know we didn't earn or deserve this new wonderful life, but we thank you for your great comeback in conquering the grave and death so that we can live. Help us to enjoy and live this new life to the full both on and off the football pitch. Amen*

Week 22: A Right Response

If somehow in your coaching session today a drill, exercise or teaching point that highlights right responses to your instructions as a coach then this will add value to the Bible time in terms of experiential learning and relevance.

What was the greatest half time talk by a coach that you have heard? *You as a coach may want to give an example as well.*

Why was this half time talk so good? *Answers may include that the talk was inspiring, motivational, brought about change in the game, really made a difference etc.*

How do you assess or measure the effectiveness of instructions by a coach? *Answers may include it was very clear, it helped change thinking or tactics, it was inspirational or motivational etc.*

Ultimately a half time talk is only as good as the response from the players in applying the talk to the game in the second half. The coach could give the best most insightful, clear, inspirational game changing talk ever but if the players do not respond and carry out the instruction then nothing changes, and the talk was pretty worthless. So, it is our response to the words we hear that will dictate if anything changes on the pitch. It is also true off the pitch, it is our response to the words we hear as to whether anything will change for the better in our lives.

The early church leader, the Apostle Paul knew how important what we say is and the necessary response it requires so he says in Colossians 4:6:

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

Therefore, as we talk with people and share truth and provide answers we want to see a response. A response of belief and action.

Listen to the Bible verse from John 3:36 today as we think about a right response:

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.”

So, from these words from the Bible text what is the response God is looking for? God is looking for a response of belief.

Belief in what? Well it is all the things we have been talking about in our previous sessions. So, it is the belief in a Creator God who loves us. A belief that we have messed up, failed, fouled and fallen. A belief that the consequence and punishment for failing to meet God's standard is death. A belief in the good news that Jesus as our super substitute took our place and punishment of death when He went to the cross and died there. A belief in the great news that Jesus did not stay dead, but He rose back to life again.

If we respond in belief to the Son Jesus what is the consequence? It is life, life eternal, life everlasting, it is living forever with God; initially with His presence in us here on earth and then living with Him forever in Heaven. Now there is fantastic outcome for a response of faith trust and belief in God and what He has done in and through Jesus.

There is not such a good outcome if we don't respond in faith. **What is it?** It is no life, it is death as and we remain separated from God because we have failed to respond rightly and so God continues to be saddened at our decision to not have Him in our lives. Basically, it is like a coach giving us all the answers to winning the game in the second half and we say we don't believe him and go out and do our own thing and lose the game. It is the same in life off the field.

How are you going to respond to God?

The great news is that this offer is open to everyone, good and bad, young and old etc. We just have to respond in belief. We as coaches have all responded in belief to Jesus and so if you need any help with this decision please do come and talk to us at the end. The offer of life forever is there. **What are you going to do about it?**

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, thank you for the offer of life, everlasting, eternal, live forever, life with you. Help us to respond rightly to this offer, help us to believe in you and what you have done rather than think we can somehow save ourselves or earn our way into your good books. No Jesus you did it all and so help us to just say 'Yes' to you our Lord, Master, Saviour and Rescuer and King. Amen."*