



Week 2 – Diamond Dogs

Check-in

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... who was your favorite coach as a kid? Did you have a Little League coach that took your ragtag group of 10-year-olds to the championship? Maybe it was a scholastic bowl coach that invested in you... (okay, scholar bowl wasn't a sport, but coaches are coaches.)

Opening Prayer

God of Unity, remind us that we are not alone.

Introduction

A good “gaffer” doesn't just develop the athletic skills of the players on the team, but also builds a sense of unity and comradery within the group. When asked about his approach to coaching during an

interview in an early episode, Ted Lasso responds, “for me, success isn’t about wins and losses... it’s about helping these young fellas be the best version of themselves on and off the field.” And this isn’t just a good line... Ted lives it. Everything he does is about building a team...getting his players trust one another, to believe in one another, to be better on and off the field. And eventually, through that approach to coaching, they begin to see the benefits. But Ted wasn’t the first to employ this coaching philosophy. Jesus attempted to build the same sense of unity and team togetherness within his players, the disciples. Today, we’ll look at what we can learn from their approach to building a team. But first...

Review: Last week, we looked at Ted’s favorite line, “be a goldfish,” and a parallel line from a sermon of Jesus, “don’t worry.” How did you do this past week being a goldfish? Were you able to channel your worry and find confidence in knowing God holds your future?

Scripture

The players squabbled over who would be captain. They argued over who was the best. They challenged and criticized each other. They let each other down, some betrayed the team. And if you’re asking, “wait, are we talking about the TV Show or the disciples?” The answer is, yes. Much like the dysfunction that Ted endured with his players, Jesus was fully aware of the dysfunction in his followers. The night before he was going to be arrested, tried, and killed, he’s having a final dinner with his team. He knows what’s about to happen, even though they don’t, and he’s trying to prepare them for what’s going

to be a difficult time ahead. The theme of his pre-game speech? Win or lose, you're a team. And at the end of the speech, right before gametime, he prays to the Father... but he does it in front of them, and out loud so they can hear, as a final bit of motivation before they hit the pitch.

Read John, chapter 17, verses 20 to 23.

Jesus uses the language, "may they be as one." (v21.) But in our modern sports parlance, it could just as easily be translated, "win or lose, you're a team." And though Jesus didn't coach soccer, he knew what that meant. "May they experience such perfect unity" that they overcome any challenge. Jesus's last words to his disciples were about being a team.

Question 2: Consider the context and the content of Jesus's prayer. What stands out to you about it? How would you have felt were you one of the disciples listening to Jesus's prayer? How do you feel listening to this prayer now?

Reflection

Both Jesus and Ted were trying to develop a sense of unity within their followers. And if we're going to be the team that Jesus was calling us to be in today's scripture, we need to look at the three techniques that these two coaches employed to achieve that. The first things Ted does is to build relationships with his players, his staff,

even the owner of the club, Rebecca Welton. He institutes “Biscuits with the Boss” every morning to develop a rapport with the owner who is secretly out to ruin the team. (Spoiler, it works, and they become friends.) He has dinner with reporters and one-on-ones with the players. If we’re going to build relationships and team unity for the difficult situations in life, we must invest...

Time

Jesus was a master of this. He sat with his disciples often, taught them often, went to parties and had meals and listened to their burdens. He knew that in order to build this team, it would take the investment of time with each of them. And we know from reading ahead, they learn this lesson. They eat together, worship together, and spend the time. If we’re going to be a team, if we’re going to get through the tough matches of life, we gotta spend the time and invest in the lives of each other.

But, in order to build unity, the time has to be used wisely. (Anyone who has been on a bad date knows that you can spend hours with someone and not get to know them. Stupid Tinder.) Both Ted and Jesus make the most of the time they spend with their teams through the strategic use of...

Vulnerability

Ted creates an inner circle of confidants who get vulnerable with each other. It's not therapy. They just share their lives, offer advice, and challenge one another. And, after the 1976 David Bowie song, they call themselves, "The Diamond Dogs." Jesus has his own Diamond Dogs. He cries with them, shares his fears with them. He listens when they express theirs. They develop team unity through vulnerability. We all need our Diamond Dogs with whom to be vulnerable.

Question 2: Investing time in other can be difficult. Being vulnerable with others can be scary. What prevents you from doing these two things with the "teams" in your life? What would help you incorporate them into your "life matches"?

Closing

The final thing Ted and Jesus do as coaches to build unity in their teams is to remind them that they are part of a...

Community

After one particularly difficult moment, Ted gathers the team and says, "This is a sad moment right here... for all of us. Do me this favor? Lift your head up, look around this locker room... there is something worse out there than be sad... and that is being alone and being sad. But ain't nobody in this room alone." It's the same speech Jesus was giving his

disciples in the Scripture from today. Knowing he'll soon be leaving them, he says, "This is a sad moment right here... but look around this locker room, you have these incredible humans who will lift you up, who will support you, who will challenge you, who will love you just as you are. Ain't nobody in this room alone." (Paraphrased, of course.) We are offered the same pre-game speech. We all go through difficult moments. We face overwhelming odds and tough situations. But with our own Diamond Dogs, and through the tools of time and vulnerability, we know... ain't nobody in this faith community alone.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.