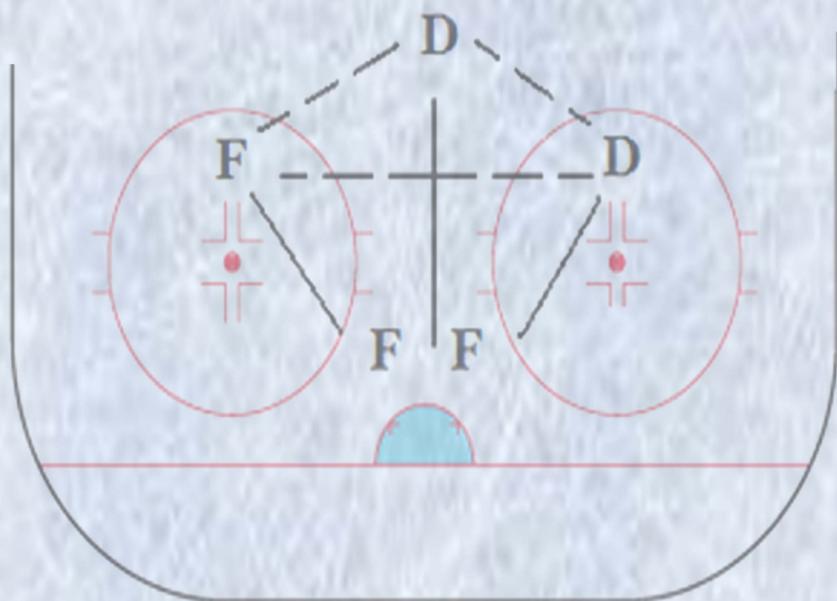


PENALTY KILL

Devotions for Hockey Players

Year One Highlights - A Collection of 12 Devotions



Colossians 2:14

**He canceled the record of the charges against us
and took it away by nailing it to the cross**

By Todd Lohstreter



A Note From the Author

I began writing the Penalty Kill devotions because several people reached out to me and ask if there are sport specific or hockey specific devotions. FCA puts out many devotions for athletes, but as far as I knew, no one put out devotions specifically for hockey players. I've always enjoyed writing, so I prayed about taking on the task.

The name 'Penalty Kill' was the Lord's idea and not mine! I remember thinking about a name and thinking 'Power Play', but as I prayed about it the Lord showed me how Penalty Kill communicates the Gospel much better. I started this collection with the devotion titled 'Penalty Kill' to explain why.

My goal with these devotions is to use hockey terms and concepts to communicate the Gospel and spiritual truth. My prayer is that the Lord would use these writings to draw people closer to Himself. I also hope that, in a culture where sports are broken, these devotions can bring a right perspective. Hockey is a great sport and a great tool to build character, have fellowship, and enjoy competition. However, many in hockey believe the game is about winning at all costs. If this were true, I would want no part of it. Being in hockey ministry has given me a different perspective, that hockey is about winning **Jesus** at all costs (Philippians 3:8-12). There is so much we can understand about Jesus through hockey! I hope to highlight some of this through Penalty Kill devotions.

I'd like to thank everyone who has read the Penalty Kill devotions, and special thanks to those of you who have provided feedback on how it has impacted you or someone you know. It's a special thing for a writer to hear how their work is impacting others. If any of these devotions or current Penalty Kills impact you please share it with me!

I'd also like to give a special thanks to those who have been guest writers in the last year: Scott Wagner, Gary Steffes, and Lance Lohstreter.

I pray that this collection will lead you into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ!

Your Servant, Todd Lohstreter

Table of Contents

Penalty Kill.....	Page 4
Crosscheck.....	Page 6
Integrity.....	Page 8
Conditioning.....	Page 10
Backchecking.....	Page 12
Gordie Howe Hat Trick.....	Page 14
The Deke.....	Page 16
Own Goal *.....	Page 18
Team of Christ.....	Page 20
MVP.....	Page 22
110% -	Page 24
Crash the Net.....	Page 26
About the Author.....	Page 28
About FCA Hockey.....	Page 29
Competitors Creed.....	Page 30

*This devotion was guest written by Lance Lohstreter

Penalty Kill - Written Nov 5, 2012

Romans 3:23 – For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Romans 6:23 – For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus

Colossians 2:14 – He took the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 - O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Anyone who's played hockey for a period of time has committed a penalty – no one goes a hockey career without taking one. So any hockey player can empathize with the Hanson brother from the movie Slapshot, "You do that, you go to the box, you know. Two minutes, by yourself, you know and you feel shame, you know." ... put so eloquently as only a hockey player could....

The most common type of penalty is a two minute minor, where the offending player must sit in the penalty box for two minutes while his team plays shorthanded. The offender may not leave the box until either the penalty is over or the opposing team scores a goal. Anyone who's sat in the box knows the uneasy feeling of hoping your team kills the penalty. And once the penalty has been called, there is no longer anything you can do to kill the penalty. You're at the mercy of others to bail you out.

Just as no hockey player goes a career without taking a penalty, so no one lives a life without committing a sin (Romans 3:23). But in life, the penalty is far more severe than anything called on the ice. Romans 6 tells us that the wages of sin is death – not just of the body, but of the soul (Matthew 10:28).

And just like in hockey, once we've committed sin, there is nothing we can do to get ourselves 'out of the box' or kill our own penalty. In hockey, we are at the mercy of others - our teammates. In life, we need the mercy of Another - Jesus Christ.

While in the penalty box, the offender is nervous because they are waiting for the possible consequence - the other team scoring. If his team kills the penalty, there's a distinct feeling of relief – the consequence didn't come. We are all in the penalty box – and if Someone doesn't kill our

penalty, we'll suffer the consequence. Anyone who puts their hope in Jesus Christ – He will kill their penalty (Acts 2:21, Colossians 2:14). Then we can say with joy, *“O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? ...thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”* .. as we step out of the penalty box, escaping the consequence.

This is the very heart of Christianity – that Jesus Christ, God incarnate (John 1:1), became man (John 1:14), was the only one to ever live a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15, Romans 3:23), was crucified bearing the punishment that we deserve (Isaiah 53), and offers forgiveness and eternal life to all who call on His name (Acts 2:21). Jesus Christ is the ultimate penalty killer!

Discussion Questions

- What's the worst penalty you've taken in hockey?
- Think of a time when you took a penalty, were nervous about the opposing team scoring a power play goal, but your teammates successfully killed the penalty. How did you feel towards your teammates?
- Can you think of any other situations in life where someone committing an offense can only rely on outside help?
- Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. What are some of the ways that we fall short of God's glory?
- Read Romans 10:9-10. According to this scripture what does it take to receive salvation?

Additional Reading

Isaiah 53, 1 Peter 2:24, Mark 2:2-12, Acts 2:21, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Crosscheck - Written Oct 30, 2012

Luke 9:23 - Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Luke 22:63 – Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him.

Isaiah 53:7 – He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.

Luke 23:34 - But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

Crosschecking is defined as hitting an opponent with the shaft of the hockey stick, while holding it with both hands - punishable by a minor penalty or major penalty, depending on the severity of the infraction. Perhaps few penalties in hockey have the ability to get under players skin like the crosscheck – especially in front of the net or in the corner. Little jabs on the hip, just above the breezers (hockey pants), or pushing the breezers down can infuriate the recipient.

The common reaction in hockey is to retaliate or make sure you know who did it, you take their number, so you can get them back later in the game. There is culture in hockey that says ‘I can’t appear soft, I have to get back at them, I must get vengeance’.

But this is very different than how Jesus calls us to act (or react). We are not to repay evil for evil (Romans 12:17), we are to bless those who persecute us, to bless and not curse (Romans 12:14), and to never take our own vengeance but to leave room for the wrath of God (Romans 12:19). Jesus modeled this the day He was crucified, and as His disciples, we’re called to set aside our selfish notions to seek vengeance and persecute – to pick up our cross – and to bless those who persecuted us. Can it be done?

Hockey is a fast pace, emotional sport where it seems easy at times to lose perspective. And yet, in the grand scheme of things, a hockey game is very unimportant. If we cannot be faithful in these little things, how will we be faithful in big things? (Luke 16:10 - He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much).

The crosscheck in hockey certainly isn't the only thing that can make people's blood boil. There are things in every sport, and in life in general. It can be as small as getting cut off in traffic (many times vengeance is with a lone finger or four letter word, or both), or it can be major such as a betrayal by a close friend or family member. You will not find an offense worse than what was committed against Jesus though – of which we are all guilty (James 2:10 - For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all). And the parable of the wicked servant (Matt 18:21-35) tells us that no one will commit a sin against you that is greater than what you yourself have committed against Jesus. So, Brothers and Sisters, will you be like the wicked servant and demand repayment for the very small wrong done to you, when you have been forgiven a Great Debt? Or will you leave vengeance to the Lord, love your enemy, and pick up your cross and deny yourself? How will you react when you get CrossChecked?

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever retaliated to a slash or crosscheck out of anger? What was the result?
- What goes through your head when you see someone else react out of anger?
- What are some things outside of hockey that tempt you to take your own vengeance?
- In Isaiah 53 it says that Jesus did not open His mouth, but was silent when He was mocked and beaten. Do you think this shows weakness or strength? Why?
- What does it mean to deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow Jesus? If we are to do this daily—what are some examples of how to do this in everyday life?

Additional Reading

Luke 10:25-37, Luke 17:3-4, Romans 12

Integrity - Written Jan 15, 2013

Hebrews 4:12-13 – For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two edge sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we must give account.

Proverbs 14:12 – There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Proverbs 16:8 - Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice.

Titus 2:7-8 – In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

“It’s not illegal if you don’t get caught”. We’ve all probably heard the saying, and maybe even used it ourselves a time or two. It’s an easy rationalization – and when we’re honest, we admit that is all it is, a rationalization. In hockey, it’s become a part of the culture, to push the limits of what’s going to get called a penalty. Not pushing the limits of what’s legal or illegal, but using a discreet hook or a hidden hold because you know they won’t get called. Because after all, it’s not a penalty if it doesn’t get called right?

We try to get away with the smallest of infractions to get an edge, and while deep down we know it’s not right, it’s commonly accepted as part of the game. But there are a couple of major follies with this. The first is that nothing is hidden from God. Hebrews 4 tells us that there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we must give account. We may fool the referee, but we will not fool God.

Second, the concept of gaining advantage through whatever means possible displays a focus on winning at the expense of character and integrity. Proverbs 14:12 - There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. As a follower of Jesus, we should be wise to these traps where someone will say, and even believe, that a way is right, and yet leads to death.

Some may argue that ‘playing on the edge’ is necessary to compete, especially at higher levels of hockey. I would strongly contend that you can play clean and excel in hockey. However, even if you have to give up playing at a certain level, or have lower stats, because you don’t compromise your principals, you are still better off. Proverbs 16:8 - Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice.

I think this matter affects both our personal relationship with the Lord and our ability to display Jesus to the rest of the world. We are called to do everything as if doing it for the Lord (Col 3:17). If we compromise integrity in an area of our life, however small, we are not living according to this scripture. Jesus also told us to let our good deeds shine before men (Matthew 5:16). This is why Paul encourages Titus to be above reproach in his conduct (Titus 2:7-8).

So, the question should not be ‘what can I get away with?’, but ‘how can I be above reproach?’. Proverbs 10:9 - He who walks in integrity walks securely.

Discussion Questions

- What is your response when the opposing team commits a penalty but doesn’t get called for it? What do you think of them if you know they did it because the ref wasn’t looking?
- Are there areas of your life where you act differently because ‘the ref isn’t looking’ (‘the ref’ may be a boss, teacher, spouse, roommate, etc.)?
- What are some ways you rationalize doing things you know are wrong?
- In what areas of your life can you work on being above reproach?
- Why do you think integrity is important to growing in your faith?

Additional Reading

Proverbs 12:28, Proverbs 13:11, Proverbs 15:27

Conditioning - Written Feb 5, 2013

James 1:2-4 – Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Romans 5:3-5 – And not only this, but we also exult in tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint.

Hebrews 2:10 – For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.

Romans 8:18 – For I believe that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Most people want growth and improvement – and we want it now (like most things these days). But there are many things that cannot come instantly or easily. Some things take time, and are very difficult. Any athlete can understand this by looking at physical conditioning. It's demanding, and it doesn't come overnight. A mature faith is the same way, it can be demanding, and it doesn't come overnight. But if you want to succeed as an athlete, you need to be in shape. And if you want to flourish as a Christian, you need to mature.

We know what it looks like to train for hockey – weights, calisthenics, cardio, skating, etc. But what does it look like to train for maturity? Reading Scripture and spending time in prayer are things we should do every day that will have huge impact on our growth – but scripture also tells us that trials and tribulations, the testing of our faith, will produce endurance, proven character, and hope (James 1:2-4, Romans 5:3-4). But these passages have a peculiar theme in regards to trials and tribulations – they encourage us to count it as joy and to exult in them. Like an athlete who feels the burn in the legs and smiles.

Even Jesus grew through suffering. Hebrews 2:10 – For it was fitting... to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. I believe this is the reason we have a High Priest who is able to sympathize with our weakness, for He was tempted as we are, yet was without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

But there is no greater example of joy in suffering than Jesus on the cross. Hebrews 12:2 – Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

We hear sayings like ‘no pain, no gain’, and ‘pain is temporary, glory is forever’ thrown around the sports world and weight rooms. They are true, but applied in a very shortsighted way. 1 Timothy 4:8 – for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. Just as our bodies will develop through the strain of conditioning, so our faith will mature through trials and sufferings. Pain is temporary, glory is forever. Romans 8:18 – For I believe that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Discussion Questions

- What is the hardest you’ve pushed yourself physically? Why did you push yourself that hard?
- What does it look like to push yourself spiritually?
- In James 1:2-4 we’re encouraged to count it joy when we encounter trials of various kinds. What do you think ‘trials of various kinds’ includes?
- What trials or sufferings in your life are working to produce spiritual endurance and maturity?
- How can you have joy through your trials?

Additional Reading

James 1:12, Hebrews 10:36, Romans 12:12

Backchecking - Written Feb 28, 2013

Exodus 17:11-12 - As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 - Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!

Matthew 25:35-36,40 - For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' ...The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

1 John 3:16 - This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Backchecking - rushing back to the defensive zone in response to an opposing team's attack, usually done by a forward who is behind the play to stop an enemy's attack or take away their advantage. Backchecking can be exhausting, which is why many players don't do it. But a good forward will backcheck relentlessly – and it goes deeper than just being a good forward – you're a good teammate if you backcheck. It shows a dedication to the success of the team and support for your goalie and defensemen. You have to exert your energy to come to the aid of your teammates. Just as every goalie and defenseman wants a forward who backchecks, so every person wants a friend who will exert themselves to come to their aid when they are in need.

We have an enemy that is on the attack. 1 Peter 5:8 – Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. We need to be personally prepared for these attacks (see Ephesians 6:10-18) – just like the defenseman who is

back, or the goalie prepared for shots to come, but I think most recognize that we need other people also – Just like Moses needed Aaron and Hur. Moses was not alone – he had someone to pick him up when he fell (Eccl 4:9-10).

Just as Backchecking takes exertion in hockey, so it can in life. It's not always easy to carry someone else's burdens along with your own (Galatians 6:2), and yet at some point in life, we all need it. Jesus laid down His life for us, and we are called to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters (1 John 3:16).

We need others to 'have our back' – or to 'backcheck' for us, and we are called to be our brother's keeper, to backcheck for them. It's a wonderful dynamic how God created this, that when we serve others in His name He credits us as doing it unto Him, so strengthening both the relationship with our brother and with our Lord (Matthew 25:40).

And remember, Jesus backchecked for you, He 'rushed back' all the way from Heaven, exerted Himself to the point of sweating blood to come to your aid (Romans 5:8). He still backchecks – are you on His team?

Discussion Questions

- Who is a player known for good backchecking? What impact do they have on their team?
- Why is it important to have others be your brothers keeper?
- Read 1 John 3:16. What does it mean to lay down your life for your brothers and sisters?
- Who in your life has 'backchecked' for you when you've been under attack?
- What areas of your life do you need someone to backcheck for you? Do you know someone who needs you to backcheck for them?

Additional Reading

James 2:14-18, 1 John 3:17-18, Acts 2:44-47

Gordie Howe Hat Trick - Written

April 30, 2013

2 Corinthians 13:14 - The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Ephesians 1:3 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Titus 2:13 - ...looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 - Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Deuteronomy 6:4 - Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

A Gordie Howe Hat Trick, named in honor of forward Gordie Howe who was famous for his ability to both score and fight during his Hall of Fame career, is a variation on the hat-trick, where a player scores a goal, records an assist, and gets in a fight all in one game. There are three distinctly different aspects or parts that make up one Gordie Howe Hat Trick – the goal, the assist, and the fight. The Trinity can be a tough concept, but like the Gordie Howe Hat Trick which has three distinct parts, the Trinity has three distinct Persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – who are one God.

"For many Christians, the Trinity is an abstract principle, a confusing and difficult doctrine that they believe, although they are not really sure why in their honest moments." says James R. White in his article *Loving the Trinity*. And who would have thought this could easily be solved by comparing it to a Gordie Howe Hat Trick? In seriousness, it can be tough to explain, and tough to grasp, but it's important to know what the Bible says, and to more and more understand who God is.

There are many scripture that refer to the different persons of the Trinity, but the scripture listed above identify each of them as God. God

the Father (Eph 1:3), God the Son, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13), and God the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18). And yet scripture is also very clear that there is only one God – “This is what the LORD says- Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.” – Isaiah 44:6 - and that the Lord is one (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Reflecting on the Trinity gives a sense of awe for God, and in some sense, the difficulty of understanding the Trinity is encouraging, to know that God is not so simple or small that we can comprehend His fullness or put Him in a box. And yet, our God is an extremely personal God – One who dwells within us and adopts us as His children, and helps us to know Him (1 Corinthians 2).

As a hockey player, it's easy to talk about what a goal, an assist, and a fight and to easily say they combine to make up Gordie Howe Hat Trick. As a Christian, we should be able to talk about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and to have some understanding that these three distinct Persons combine to make up the one true God.

Discussion Questions

- If someone asked you ‘Who is God’, what would you tell them?
- How would you describe the Trinity to someone?
- How can we grow in our understanding of difficult scriptures or Biblical concepts such as the Trinity?
- Which Person of the Trinity do you feel you know the least? Which one do you feel you know the best?
- What role does each Person of the Trinity play in your life?

Additional Reading

Genesis 1:26, Deuteronomy 4:35-39, John 20:28, Acts 5:3-4

The Deke - Written April 25, 2013

John 8:44 - He (satan) was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Revelation 12:9 – the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown - down with him.

Ephesians 6:10-11 – Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

2 Timothy 3:13-15 – But evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from Whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Any hockey fan loves to watch a skilled player make a beautiful move. Whether Pavel Datsyuk or Evgeni Malkin we watch in awe as they pull the puck through the defenders legs as they're going the wrong direction or have the goalie completely out of the net for an easy goal. The highlights are not as fun to watch for the defender or the goalie. 'Be careful lest you wind up on the wrong side of a highlight reel', right? The term 'deke' comes from the word 'decoy', presenting something false and trying to get someone to believe it's true. In hockey, an opponent will use a deke to get someone out of position on the ice, in life we have an opponent who is constantly presenting us with something false hoping we'll believe it to be true, using a 'deke' to get us out of position with God.

Our opponent is pretty good at 'deking'. There is no truth in him, he is the father of lies, and the whole world is under his deception (John 8:44, Revelation 12:9). In the world are evil men and imposters who proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Timothy 3:13). There are those who exchange the truth of God for a lie and give hearty approval to those who do it with them (Romans 1:25,32). However, just like a good defender is aware of what the his opponent might bring at him, so we are not unaware of satan's schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11)

We are constantly surrounded with lies that we need to be aware of. It started in the Garden, when Satan told Adam and Eve that God was lying to them and withholding good things (Genesis 3:4-5). The world tells women they need to be slim, fit, and attractive to be beautiful. God says it's the hidden person of the heart with a quiet and gentle spirit that makes a woman beautiful. The world tells men we have to be physically strong, successful in a career, and rich to be a real man. God says a man pursues righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11-12). Satan will tell you that God will not accept you or forgive you, but God says all who call on the name of Jesus will be saved (Acts 2:21). Satan will tell you that if you do some good things, or aren't as bad as some other people then God will let you into heaven – Jesus said that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). When we believe lies, fall for these dekes, we stop believing the truth of God. Like a player who stopped watching the body and starts looking down at the puck we take our eyes off what is important, we take our eyes off of God, and soon find ourselves fooled and out of position.

There are many lies out there, but as we can see, there is a truth from God to dispel each lie. (1 Corinthians 10:5). We have the scriptures and the Holy Spirit so that we can receive wisdom that leads to salvation in Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 3:15)! Let us be like a solid defender, proficient in the Word of God so that we are not fooled by any 'dekes' that come our way.

Discussion Questions

- What is the worst you've been deked in hockey? How did you feel after the play?
- What are some lies that you have believed in the past? How did those lies affect your relationship with Jesus?
- What do you think is easier to recognize, when someone else believes a lie, or when you yourself do?
- What are some lies you might believe currently? What does scripture say about them?

Additional Reading

1 Corinthians 10:3-5, Proverbs 21:30

Own Goal* - Written April 3, 2013

Romans 8:7-8 - The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

Hebrews 11:6 - And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

Matthew 23:27 - Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

Matthew 15:8 - These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

A scenario played out in Minnesota high school hockey where a goalie corralled the puck behind his net, casually skated it to the crease, and put it in his own net. On purpose. Apparently he wasn't pleased about losing the starting job to a sophomore and this was his long planned way of expressing his displeasure, on Seniors Night. Afterwards, he slowly skated off the ice and gave a disrespectful gesture to his bench. That goal tied the game late in the third and his team ended up losing that night, by a goal.

I should rephrase that, because as soon as he did that, it wasn't his team anymore. One could even argue that as soon as he started planning it, he did not deserve to be called a member of that team. He broke faith with his teammates, with his coaches, with the fans and community that supported him for years. Instead of working to benefit his side, he plotted against them. It probably goes without saying that he wasn't with the team after that.

It's easy to look at that situation and criticize, but the bad news is we all are no better. We do the same thing to God. From Adam and Eve right up to us, we have our own goals (see what I did there) that don't always line up with God's will. And when we pursue our own selfish desires, our own goals, we give the devil, the opposition, what he wants and disrespect God. Rather than submitting our will, we stubbornly and defiantly choose our own way. Isaiah 53:6 - We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way.

The funny thing about that goalie was that by every outward appearance, he looked like a member of the team. He had the pads, the jersey, maybe even a cool helmet painted with an artistic logo. He could skate, had a quick glove, everything that you need to be a goalie. But his heart had turned against his team and he was no longer deserving of them. Like the Pharisees who praised God with their lips, but whose hearts were far from Him, or Judas who served seemingly so faithfully for years but in the end betrayed Jesus. In the same way, we might look like good people from the outside. We might kiss our grandma, shovel our neighbor's driveway when it snows, and not swear (very much). But all that could be just goalie pads concealing a traitor, just outward appearances hiding a hardened heart. So we see it's not about what the works we see (Ephesians 2:8-9), but where our heart is before the Lord (Hebrews 11:6). The real question for us then is will we submit our will to God and give Him our love, devotion, and trust? In the end, that's all that matters.

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever had a teammate who cared more about himself than the team? If so, what did you think about that teammate? If you were a coach, would you want to keep them on your team? Why?
- What is required for salvation?
- Read Matthew 7:22-23. Many believe they will go to heaven because they are a good person or simply because they go to church. According to this passage, what will Jesus say to them?
- What are your 'own goals', desires you pursue that aren't in line with God's will?
- What should we do when we find our hearts are far from God?

Additional Reading

Matthew 26 – Matthew 27:5, Ezekiel 36:24-36

*This devotion was guest written by Lance Lohstreter

The Team of Christ - Written Nov 13, 2012

1 Corinthians 12:12 – For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:17 – If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the body be?

1 Corinthians 12:21 – And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

Romans 12:4-5 - Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

The definition of a team is a group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a task, job, or project. Hockey is a team sport. So is life. Teamwork in hockey provides a great model to see how God created His church to exist – and gives us insight in how to live as part of it. We are a part of the team of Christ or as referred to in the Bible, the body of Christ. Our task, job, or project: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* – Matthew 28:19-20

In the NHL a team is allowed 23 players on the roster. Typically a team will keep four lines of forwards with maybe an extra, eight defensemen and two or three goalies, all of these are still a part of one team. Likewise, the church is made up of many members as we see in 1 Corinthians 12:12, Everyone who puts their faith in Jesus Christ is a part of the church, the body, the team - and all are of the same Spirit for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). We have no limit to our roster – the more the merrier!

A team must work together. The Church must work together. The late Herb Brooks said, “All-star teams fail because they rely solely on the individual's talent. The Soviets win because they take that talent and use it inside a system that's designed for the betterment of the team”. Just as a player should use his talents for the betterment of the team, and not for themselves, so should a member of the church use their talents for the betterment of the church.

For a team to be successful they will need to have a variety of skill sets. A team full of snipers will be very lacking in defense, and a team full of defensemen will have a tough time scoring. If everyone in the church were workers of miracles and there were no administrators, we would be an extremely disorganized group! We wouldn't be effective in reaching our goal (Matthew 28:19-20). Which means we must learn to integrate our giftings, and show honor and respect to others whose talents are different than ours.

All players will be gifted in some areas, and will need to really work on other areas. It is the same with our role in the church – we all have spiritual gifts, but our role is not limited to only these areas. Everyone knows Steven Stamkos can bury a one timer from the left circle – that's his specialty – but he also has to be able to pass, back check, cycle, and a hundred other skills it takes to play hockey. We all have our giftings which should be leaned on – if you're a gifted teacher, you should teach. However, you should not be limited to only teaching in supporting the body of Christ – just as every hockey player should grow in basic skills, so every team member of Christ should grow in prayer, knowledge of scripture, ability to teach, wisdom, discernment, and a hundred other things that can draw themselves and others closer to Jesus Christ. And that is our task, our job, our project – to make disciples.

Discussion Questions

- Describe a team you've been on that had great teamwork. What were some of the talents that each team member brought to the team?
- If you're a Christian, do you feel like you're a part of the Team of Christ? Why or why not?
- What gifts do you have that could be used to serve the Body of Christ? In what ways do you use them to serve others?
- In what areas do you feel you could grow in spiritually to be a more 'complete player'?

Additional Reading

1 Corinthians 12, Matthew 25:24-30, Ephesians 4:1-7

Galatians 1:10 – For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond servant of Christ.

Matthew 6:1 – Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

Luke 9:46-48 - An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside Him. Then He said to them, “Whoever welcomes this little child in My name welcomes Me; and whoever welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”

Mark 10:31 – Many who are first will be last, and the last, first.

In hockey, a Most Valuable Player (MVP) award is an honor typically bestowed upon the best-performing player on a team or in a league. Almost every hockey player wants to be the MVP. We want to score the most goals, put up the most points, make the big hit, and lead the team to victory. Most have a strong sense of team with a desire to win as a team, but within that is a desire to stand out, for personal fame and greatness, to be first. But God says it is the one who is least who is the greatest, and many of the last who are first. It seems God has a different picture of what an MVP looks like.

We have a desire to be in high positions, associated with people of status, and looked at as important. We think fame and notoriety are the fruit of greatness, so we seek satisfaction in the favor of men and exulting ourselves. This is how the world defines greatness. Jesus’s disciples desired to be the greatest which sparked an argument (Luke 9:46). Jesus put a child in front of them and said whoever receives the child in His name will be great. The disciples understood that there wasn’t much worldly reward from receiving a child, and that one who did, wouldn’t be seen as great. But Jesus gave a new definition of greatness, that those who do this, seen as the least, are truly the greatest.

The world’s concept of an MVP is performance based – who can do the most for the team. Greatness in God’s eyes is not a matter of performance; it’s a matter of the heart. God doesn’t need ‘performers’ to accomplish a goal, as if carrying out His plans is

in jeopardy. He desires those who seek His favor, who are willing to be least, willing to be last – so their recognition will come from Him, and not from men. I believe God wants us to do great things for His kingdom, but greatness in action can only follow greatness of the heart. To have greatness of the heart, we must be made new (2 Corinthians 5:17) and be transformed (Romans 12:2). Without a new heart, one will promote themselves, seek fame in the eyes of the world – and in the world's eyes will be first, but in God's will be last – because of the true condition of their heart. But one who looks to the interest of others, considers them more important than their own interests, and serves those who are least without looking for repayment or praise of men, though it seems like they are last, they will be first before God because of the condition of their heart.

Discussion Questions

- Who is the best player you've played with? What made them a great player?
- How would you define greatness?
- If you had to pick a person in your life who would be 'MVP' in God's eyes, who would it be and why? What characteristics do they display?
- Read Mark 10:31. What does it mean that the first will be last, and the last, first?
- Read Galatians 1:10. In what areas of your life do you try to please men instead of God? What does it mean to be a bond servant of Christ?

Additional Reading

Philippians 2:3-4, Matthew 6:1-6

110%- Written May 24, 2013

Matthew 16:24-25 – Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

Romans 12:1 – Therefore I urge you, brethren, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Galatians 2:20 – I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

1 Kings 19:21 - So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant.

“I want everyone giving 110%!” said many coaches. To a mathematician this sounds like non-sense, but every hockey player knows exactly what it means. It means you don’t take a shift off. It means you’re focused. It means you’re working as hard as you can. It means you’re giving it everything. If you take a shift off, you’re not focused, and not giving it everything – the puck ends up in your net, you take a bad penalty, you don’t make the team... you don’t reach your goal. Hockey is a sport where you have to give 110%. God also expects 110%, not just in hockey, but for Him.

It takes sacrifice to give 110%. An athlete has to give time and effort, have regimented exercise routine, dietary habits, adequate sleep for recovery, practice diligently, and prepare mentally. But the sacrifice it takes to give 110% to God is greater than all these. It means putting your selfish ambition aside. It means giving up everything that doesn’t honor Him. It means you’re not divided by giving some things to God and keeping some things for yourself. He expects you to sacrifice yourself.

Look close at the pictures God gives us - In Matthew 16, Jesus tells us in order to be His disciple we must take up our cross and follow Him. The cross was an instrument of death, much like the electric chair today. In Romans 12:1 it tells us to be a living sacrifice.

In those days a sacrifice often was an animal killed at the alter as an offering to the Lord - to show that what happens to that animal is what we deserve, but God has mercy and diverts His wrath – a foreshadowing of Jesus. And in Galatians 2:20 Paul says he has been crucified with Christ. Put these verses together and God is telling us, ‘Be a living sacrifice, pick up your cross and come be crucified with Me. In doing so you will gain new life, I will live in you, and you will know what My will is.’ This is a bit crazy isn’t it? God asks for 110%.

When Elijah called the prophet Elisha in 1 Kings 19, Elisha had to consider this. He decided to go all in and give up his life. He killed the oxen and burned the plows which were his livelihood – eliminating the possibility of going back to his old life. He did it because he understood God had something better for him. It was once he laid down his life that God really used him.

To give 110% we sacrifice ourselves. We give over our hopes, dreams, relationships, finances, material goods... everything – we entrust it all to the Lord and release our ownership to Him. There’s no going back. Then life in Christ, eternal life, begins - ‘but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it’ - Jesus.

Discussion Questions

- What is the most effort you’ve put towards a team? What did you have to sacrifice to be able to put that amount of effort in?
- In what areas of your life are you giving God 110%? In which areas are you not giving God 110%?
- Elisha killed the oxen and burned the plows to go all in. What does it look like for you to be all in for Jesus Christ? Are there ‘oxen and plows’ that you may need to burn to be all in?
- Read Galatians 2:20. What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? How might this help us give 110% to God?

Additional Reading

Matthew 19:16-26, Mark 1:16-20

Crash the Net - Written Mar 11, 2013

Luke 10:2 - And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Romans 10:14-15 - How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Isaiah 6:8 - Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

Matthew 10:16 - Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

Crashing the net - an aggressive strategy in which a forward charges towards the opponent's net in hopes of deflecting a shot, banging in a loose puck, obstructing the goaltender's view, or simply creating mayhem that could lead to a scoring chance for his team. Done with or without the puck, crashing the net means going into an area where you're likely to take a beating, but that's where goals are scored. I believe sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the spiritual comparison of crashing the net in hockey. You're likely to get beat up, but this is where souls are scored.

It takes courage for a hockey player to crash the net, but it takes much more for a Christian to 'crash the net' and take the good news of Jesus Christ into unknown or hostile territory. Joshua 1:9 – Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go! There is great work to be done! Luke 10:2 - And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." There is a need for people to hear the Gospel (Romans 10:14-15).

Hockey players are willing to risk taking a hard hit, injury, losing teeth, etc. because they seek the thrill of winning and to build their own kingdom through others

recognizing their accomplishments. We give titles that no one will remember and trophies that will tarnish and rust. The apostle Paul noted this when addressing the Corinthians (1 Cor 9:24-25) – he said look at the Olympians and how hard they strive for a wreath (or gold medal) that will perish. As Christians we should strive even harder than an Olympic gold medalist because we will receive an imperishable wreath. So as Christians, how much more should we crash the net and risk? We risk being hated (Matt 10:22), division within our family (Matt 10:34-36), physical and spiritual persecutions (2 Cor 11:22-26, Ephesians 6:10-18), and even death (Matt 20:28, Acts 7:57-60). Sounds like a tough area, being sent like sheep amongst wolves (Matt 10:16) – why would anyone go there? Because the rewards are far greater than the consequences.

Christians seek eternal reward from the Creator of Heaven and earth. We receive eternal life (1 John 2:25), adoption as sons and daughters of God (1 John 3:1), forgiveness of sins (1 John 1:9), love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control (Galatians 5:23), and treasure that cannot rust or be stolen (Matt 6:19-21). We get to have a personal relationship with God forever (Revelation 21:3-4). Jesus told us that the harvest is plentiful, which means there are a lot of people out there who would ‘crash the net’ and risk alongside us if we told them the rewards they can have if they put their hope in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We need courageous men and women of faith who will ‘crash the net’.

Discussion Questions

- What makes it hard to crash the net in hockey? Why do you players still do it?
- Do you ever feel uncomfortable with sharing your faith? If so, why?
- What is the way you would feel most comfortable sharing the Gospel?
- What drives you to share the Gospel?
- Is there someone in your life who you need to share the good news of Jesus Christ with?

Additional Reading

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8, Hebrews 8:8-12

About the Author

Todd grew up in Mandan, North Dakota, where he spent time playing sports and fighting with siblings (two older brothers and a younger sister). It was here that Todd came to have a personal relationship with Jesus – he sought God’s forgiveness, and has been growing in a relationship with Him ever since! Todd went on to play varsity soccer and hockey at Mandan High School.



After graduation Todd received an appointment to the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. At the Naval Academy Todd earned the nickname ‘coolbreeze’ since he was the only player on the team who called hockey pants by their real name, breezers. On top of playing 4 years for Navy, he majored in physics and minored in german.

After Annapolis, Todd received a commission in the US Marine Corps where he served for seven years, four of which he was stationed in Hawaii. Since he is a poor surfer, Todd enjoyed kayaking, trail running, and cliff jumping. Todd did tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan with 2d Battalion 3d Marines, an infantry battalion out of Oahu. Through his deployments, a Hawaiian pastors mentorship, and great church fellowship Todd developed greatly during this time professionally and spiritually.

Todd now puts his faith and professionalism to work full time with FCA Hockey. On staff since January of 2011, Todd has been a big part of summer camps and men’s Christian hockey. As the Director of Community Ministries, he will continue to work with men’s ministry as well as specialty teams.

Outside of FCA Hockey Todd attends All Nations Christian Fellowship in Brooklyn Center, MN where he plays guitar on the worship team. He also enjoys home improvement projects, learning more about car maintenance, and spending time with his family.

Feel free to email Todd at TLOhstreter@fca.org

About FCA Hockey

We are a sport specific ministry outreach of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. As such, we seek to use the sport of hockey to reach out to the world with the love of Jesus Christ. Our vision is to impact the hockey world for Jesus Christ through hockey and the gospel.

Coaches Ministry

The Coaches Ministry vision is to redeem sports through transformed coaches. FCA ministers to coaches through Bible studies, prayer support, discipleship and mentoring, resources, outreach events and retreats.

Campus Ministry

The Campus Ministry is initiated and led by student-athletes and coaches on junior high, high school and college campuses. It has four ministry types: Huddles, Team Bible Studies, Chaplain Programs and Coaches Bible Studies. Additionally, outreach events take place on the campus such as One Way 2 Play — Drug Free programs, school assemblies and the annual Fields of Faith event.

Camp Ministry

Camps are a time of “inspirations and perspiration” for coaches and athletes to reach their potential by offering comprehensive athletic, spiritual and leadership training. These types of camps are Sports Camp, Leadership Camp, Coaches Camp, Power Camp, Partnership Camp, Team Camp and International Camp.

Community Ministry

The “win” of Community Ministry is to see the community reached for Jesus Christ through adult involvement. FCA partners with local churches, businesses, parents and volunteers to invest in coaches and athletes participating in club, recreational and youth sports teams. FCA Teams have also been created to impact the sports community. Other areas of Community Ministry include adult ministries, professional athlete ministries, resources and clinics.

We have a large variety of programs and events across the country. To find out more please visit our website:

FCAHockey.com

Competitors Creed

I am a Christian first and last.

I am created in the likeness of God Almighty to bring Him glory.
I am a member of Team Jesus Christ. I wear the colors of the cross.

I am a Competitor now and forever.

I am made to strive, to strain, to stretch and to succeed in the arena of
competition.

I am a Christian Competitor and as such, I face my challenger with the
face of Christ.

I do not trust in myself.

I do not boast in my abilities or believe in my own strength.

I rely solely on the power of God.

I compete for the pleasure of my Heavenly Father, the honor of Christ
and the reputation of the Holy Spirit.

My attitude on and off the ice is above reproach—my conduct beyond
criticism.

Whether I am preparing, practicing or playing;

I submit to God's authority and those He has put over me.

I respect my coaches, officials, teammates and competitors
out of respect for the Lord.

My body is the temple of Jesus Christ. I protect it from within and with-
out.

Nothing enters my body that does not honor the Living God.

My sweat is an offering to my Master.

My soreness is a sacrifice to my Savior.

I give my all – all of the time.

I do not give up. I do not give in.

I do not give out. I am the Lord's warrior -

a competitor by conviction and a disciple of determination.

I am confident beyond reason because my confidence lies in Christ.

The results of my efforts
must result in His glory.

**LET THE COMPETITION BEGIN.
LET THE GLORY BE GOD'S.**

Notes

