

Sports Chaplain/ Character Coach's Development Plan:

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Now in my 25th season of serving sports teams and individuals, I continue to grow and develop my ways of thinking, my skills, methods, and resources. I would challenge you to do the same. It is much too easy to fall into serving simply in the routine of last season's way, with last year's methods, and last decade's thinking. It's easy to become a dinosaur. It's hard to stay relevant across decades of service.

- **Read and study regularly.** Of course, read your Bible, but also read good books on subjects like culture, leadership, sports biographies, applied psychology, coaching, theology, and Christian living. Discover authors or genres that interest you and dive in deeply. Stretch your mind.
- **Experiment and evaluate.** Take some chances with new methods of ministry. Risk failure. Ask hard questions in evaluating. Challenge your own status quo. Distribute surveys among your constituents to see what connects well and what misses widely. You may just invent the next breakthrough form of ministry in sport.
- **Consult with peers and mentors.** Reach out to your colleagues and those who paved the way for you. Ask them good questions and listen. Hear their stories. Perceive their hearts' wisdom. Listen and learn.

- **Pray for and about the people of sport.** Secure a team roster, memorize it, and pray for them. Develop a system to pray for them regularly. Half of our role is to be the priest to this community. Carry their souls to the Lord via intercessory prayer. Faithfully praying for them will awaken your heart to their needs and to their souls' hunger for the Gospel of Christ Jesus.
- **Observe and contemplate.** Watch practice and competitions. Watch body language, gestures, facial expressions, and more. These are tied directly to their hearts. Contemplate what each moment, tone of voice, mumble, and comment means. Listen for the Lord's voice regarding each heart you serve. Contemplate, "What would the Lord say to this team, player, coach today?" Tune your heart to hear the Lord's voice. He's speaking. Are you listening?
- **Learn continually.** However you learn best, lean into that and never stop learning. I read, others listen to audiobooks, others like podcasts, others like on-line videos, still others learn best in small groups. Be a life-long learner and your energy will endure, your soul will stay fresh, and your mind will expand beyond your wildest dreams.

