

**Aims:**

- To provide resources to guide you as a Sports Chaplain.
- To suggest effective strategies when working as a Sports Chaplain.

Nothing can help you identify the proper strategy or resource except embracing the profile of sports people, building solid relationships, maintaining a proper attitude and establishing a presence with those you are serving as a sports chaplain. Those things take time and sacrifice.

We are confident that if you make the investment to understand those matters, the strategies and resources for ministry, and the process for beginning will be very evident to you. The next section contains a brief list of such strategies, resources and a plan for beginning that have been most effective for sports chaplains around the world. The items in the following section are arranged in four simple categories representing spiritual disciplines: Prayer, Community, Preparation, and Proclamation.

**Prayer:**

Pray for favor with the leaders of your sport. The coaching staff and the other leaders in your sport will determine in large part the access you will have with the rest of the coaches and the competitors of their team. If they see you favorably, you're in. If they don't, you have a much more difficult assignment.

**Prayer with and for Individuals**

- **Prayer through the Team Roster** - Acquire a team roster and pray for each sportsperson individually.
- **Individual Prayer with sportspeople** – At various times, there may be opportunities to pray with individual coaches or players who find prayer to be helpful to their preparation for competition.
- **Prayers written and distributed with sportspeople** – To write prayers for sportspeople and to share them via email, text message, or even on paper gives them a model for how to pray about their lives in sport.
- **Provide opportunities for competitors and coaches to pray for each other** – There are several simple ways for doing this.

- Prepare small sheets of paper for each one to write a couple of prayer requests, then gather all the papers and redistribute them to those present for prayer through this week.
- During a team meeting, solicit prayer requests from those present and then ask for a team member to pray for each of the requests mentioned as you all pray together.

### Prayer with Teams

- **Team Meal prayers** – Many teams travel all together and eat their meals in one large group.
- **Team Prayer** – Many teams make room for a team prayer immediately before taking the field of competition and/or after the contest is completed. This may be an opportunity for you to lead with this and to thus serve the coach and the team.

### Community:

#### Building community with Individuals

- **Arrange for visits to your home** – This is a great opportunity to model for your players and coaches the values and principles that rule your life.
- **Write notes of encouragement to those who demonstrate their love for God** – There are few opportunities for ministry better than when you “catch them doing it right.”

#### Building community with Teams

- **Relax and enjoy the simple joy of communion with the people of sport** – There are few joys greater in life that spending time with sportspeople who love Christ as we do.
- **Grieve with the team as they experience loss** – As important as genuine celebration is for wins, authentic grief due to a loss may be of greater value. It’s best to talk little and to mirror the posture and expression of the team leadership. Do not minimize the importance of the loss.
- **Rejoice in the success attained by your team** – It’s important that they perceive that you’re genuinely interested in them. It’s important that they see that losses hurt and wins feel great! Celebrate victories with them.
- **Attend a church service together.** Some sports chaplains occasionally arrange for members of their teams to attend church together. It provides a shared experience in a fresh setting which helps teammates to further bond their relationships.

**Preparation:****Preparation for Spiritual Development**

- **Read Scripture in light of sport and team situations** – Learn to see the situations related to your sport which are in the Scripture. The Bible is full of principles that relate to sport. Some of the recurring themes are: Player/Coach relationships, team dynamics, competition, sacrifice, loyalty, fear, courage and more...
  - **Prepare thought provoking questions for discussion** - Think through a few questions that would help relate Scripture to situations in sport and the issues relevant to your players. These may be formal discussions with competitors and coaches together. They can also be times of informal discussion with an individual over a meal or during some free time.
  - **Apply the Bible to the needs and issues of your sport** – Be sure that your study is directly related to the sport context and not simply a cute “Sunday School” story. What might sound like a dynamite devotional thought inside your mind could fall on deaf ears if it’s not well connected to the sport orientation of your audience. Let the issues and situations drive your thoughts, and then apply the Scripture to them.

**Preparation for Sport Knowledge Development**

- **Read books, magazines, journals and articles related to your sport** – Take the time to become a student of your sport. Learn all you can. Read material like these: Sports magazines, coaching journals, sport history, and articles on contemporary issues within the sport. These items for study help you understand and communicate better with your subjects.
- **Read, suggest and buy books with relevance to your coaches and athletes** – You can be a valuable resource to your coaches especially. If they will read, feed their minds with materials that will feed their souls as well as their minds. Visit Christian bookstores and scan the shelves for these sorts of books: Leadership principles, sport devotional books, biographies of faithful people of sport or books on issues related to their sport.
- **Notice the books and authors on the shelves of your coaches offices and read them** – Look to see who his/her favorite author is. What sorts of books do they read? Ask to borrow a book from his/her shelf.

**Proclamation:**

**Express God's heart for the men and women of sport** – This is your high privilege and sacred duty. You are both the prophet and the priest for this community and you are charged with the expression of God's love and will for them. You can make your expression through at least three ways:

- **Through your speech** - You can be used of God to inspire, to challenge, to correct and to comfort.
- **Through writing** – You can write cards, letters, notes, prayers, thank you notes, email messages and more.
- **Through physical expression** – Sometimes your posture, a gesture from the sidelines or a simple touch is the most profound form of communication available. An arm on the shoulder after a tough loss, a hug in celebration of a victory, handshakes, pats on the back, kneeling in tears, holding a hand on an athletic trainer's table, sobs, laughing, sweating and even bleeding speak loudly to people of sport and communicate messages that words are too weak to bear.

**Proclamation with Individuals**

- **Express the message of Christ Jesus in terms relevant to the team's sport culture**  
- It may help if you think of yourself as a cross-cultural missionary. While most of the Christian world thinks of how to communicate about faith in Christ across various language barriers, your task is to clearly communicate in the culture of sport.
- **Encourage genuine expressions of faith in your team** – When you see a player or coach expressing his/her faith or even an interest in spiritual things, encourage and feed them.
- **Devotional thoughts** – Simple application of Scripture to athletic situations may be the most consistently effective method of ministry available to sports chaplains.

**Proclamation with Teams**

- **Issue discussions** – As both players and coaches adopt a postmodern world-view, they're more likely to be interested in a discussion of issues that affect their lives as people of sport than they will a traditional Bible study.

- **Chapel services** – Many teams in the USA, and occasionally elsewhere, make room in their pre-game activities for a team chapel.
- **Bible studies** – To help sportspeople to integrate their lives of faith with their lives in sport should be the goal of such studies. Apply the scripture directly to the world of sport.

## Resources for Sports Chaplains

### Recommended Resources for the Development of the Sports Chaplain:

- Bounce: Mozart, Federer, Picasso, Beckham, and the Science of Success, by Matthew Syed, Fourth Estate, 2010-11-07 ISBN 978-0-00-735052-0
- Open, by Andre Agassi, Harper Collins, London 2009. ISBN 978-0-00-728142-8 388 pages
- Real Joy, by John Ashley Null, Haenssler, Holzgerlingen, Germany, 2004 ISBN: 3-7751-3966-4
- Sports Theology: Playing Inside Out, by Greg S. Smith, Indianapolis, Dog Ear Publishing, 2010. ISBN: 978-160844-3-338
- Transforming Lives in Sport, by Roger D Lipe, Cross Training Publishing, USA, 2006 (65 pages- A4 size) ISBN 1-929478-75-5
- What the Book Says about Sport, by Stuart Weir, BRF,2000 (144 pages) ISBN 1 84101 148 7
- Inside Out by Larry Crabb, NavPress; Revised updated edition (June 14, 2013) ISBN-10: 1612913121
- Game Plan for Life – Your Personal Playbook for Success, by Joe Gibbs, Tyndale House Publishers, ISBN-13: 9781414341002
- Changes that Heal by Henry Cloud
- FCA Coaches Bible, [www.fcagear.com](http://www.fcagear.com)
- Focus on Sports in Ministry, by Lowrie McCown and Dr. Valerie Gin, 360 Sports, Marietta,GA, 2003 ISBN 193261100-2
- The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert E. Coleman
- The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions by Arthur Bennett
- <http://banneroftruth.org/us/devotional-series/the-valley-of-vision-devotional/>
- Leading with a Limp by Dan B. Allender
- The Disciple Making Pastor by Bill Hull
- Sports Chaplaincy Australia: <http://www.sportschaplaincy.com.au/>
- Sports Chaplaincy UK: <http://www.sportschaplaincy.org.uk/>
- Verite Sport: <http://www.veritesport.org>
- Paul Moses – Real Sports - <https://www.facebook.com/accesssportsministry/posts/1498598750363703>
- [SportsChaplains.org](http://SportsChaplains.org)

- Baseball Chapel: <http://www.baseballchapel.org>
- Centre for Sport, Spirituality and Religion (CSSR): <http://www.glos.ac.uk>
- Christians in Sport: <http://www.christiansinsport.org.uk>
- Athletes in Action: <http://www.athletesinaction.org>
- Sports Chaplains Roundtable: [www.chaplainsroundtable.com](http://www.chaplainsroundtable.com)
- A blog for Sports Chaplains: <http://sportchaplainsportmentor.blogspot.com>
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes Sport Chaplains page – [www.fcachaplains.org](http://www.fcachaplains.org)
- Films that are helpful in understanding the lives of sportspeople:
  - Soul Surfer – the story of Bethany Hamilton, the Australian surfer who lost an arm to a shark attack.
  - Walking on Water – the story of a journey of 2 young surfers who find faith.
  - Believe in Me – story of a coach of a small town girls team.
  - Chariots of Fire – This Academy award winning film contrasts the lives of two sprinters whose lives intersect on the track, but vary widely in terms of identity.
  - The Legend of Bagger Vance – This film tells the tale of a golfer who matches up with some high profile golfers in a much hyped contest. It helps the viewers see what the golfer sees when he is well focused and has good concentration.
  - Bull Durham – This often crude film shares a view of minor league baseball which varies between crude, lewd, endearing and humorous. It does detail some of the sacrifices players and coaches make to stay in the game as long as they can.
  - Hoosiers – There are layers of relationships developed in this film about basketball and many are authentic to lives in sport. It displays a number of broken people and how sport sometimes helps them restore their relationships and even their own sense of identity.
  - The Natural – This is a story which portrays a player's love for the game, his broken relationships with people and the game, and finally restoration of those relationships.
  - Field of Dreams – If you can cut through the mysticism and post-modern dogma, you'll find some solid insights into a player's mentality in this film. Watch in particular the segments when Joe Jackson is on the field.

- Eight Men Out – This is a story of the “Black Sox” major league baseball gambling scandal and faithfully portrays the pressures which would lead a player to shave points or otherwise cheat the game he loves
- Remember the Titans – This movie about two high school football teams which were merged due to racial integration in the USA. Watch the relationships which are layered throughout, coach-player, player-player, coach-coach, white-black, white-white, black-black, coach-community and even more.
- 61\* – The pressures which high profile and elite players feel are highlighted in this film about Roger Maris’ pursuit of Babe Ruth’s single season major league baseball home run record.
- The Blind Side – This film about an American football player gives us a look at how a player’s unique athletic abilities can make a way for him to escape his environment of poverty and crime and learn to achieve and relate to people outside his culture.
- For Love of the Game – This film is about professional baseball and the broken relationships so prevalent in that culture. It does a good job of getting inside a pitcher’s head and his ability to focus his mind for high level performance.
- Cinderella Man – This film about boxing deals with the pressures and drives of a competitor. It shows his relationships with his family, promoters and competitors.
- Hoop Dreams – This film follows two young basketball players from the housing projects in Chicago. It tells a sometimes despairing tale of their lives and their dreams that basketball will be their tickets out of this life.
- Rudy – This overly sentimental movie about an undersized kid who grew up dreaming of playing football for the University of Notre Dame is inspiring none the less.
- Miracle – This film tells the story of the formation and the performance of the 1980 USA Ice Hockey Gold Medal team. It’s insightful as to how a coach evaluates players and builds a team.
- Breaking Away – This movie about bicycle racing displays the sacrifices a competitor will make to pursue his dream. The protagonist deals with misunderstanding, cultural bias and family conflicts on the way to fulfillment of his goals.
- Finding Forrester – This film about a young, black basketball player who is mentored by an older, reclusive, white writer is fascinating. They do a good job with the basketball and provide some good insight into mentoring.
- Invictus – This film tells the story of how President Nelson Mandela used the influence of Rugby to help unify South Africa across ethnic and cultural barriers.

- Seabiscuit - is a 2003 American dramatic film based on the best-selling novel by Laura Hillenbrand. The film recounts the life and racing career of Seabiscuit, an undersized and overlooked thoroughbred race horse, whose unexpected successes made him a hugely popular media sensation in the United States near the end of the Great Depression.
- Bend it like Beckham - An Indian girl living in England who wants to play soccer and her battle against prejudice. Girls in that culture don't play sport.
- These are dictionary links that may be helpful resources:
  - Macmillan online Dictionary: <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/>
  - Merriam-Webster: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>
  - Oxford Dictionary: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>
- Personal correspondence with other sports chaplains. Sharing the highs, lows, lessons learned, ministry tips, etc...

#### **Recommended Resources for Effectively Serving Sportspeople:**

- Our Daily Bread devotional
- Sports Chaplaincy Australia Devotional
- Heart of a Champion, by Roger D. Lipe, Cross Training Publishing, 2005 ISBN1-929478-70-4 (373 pages)
- Heart of a Champion on line devotional: <http://devotions4competitors.blogspot.com/>
- Born to Play, by Graham Daniels and J Stuart Weir, Frampton House Publications, Bicester, 2004 (68 pages) ISBN: 1-904726-15-1
- What Happens When Women Pray? by Evelyn Christenson
- Every Day with Jesus by Andrew Wommack
- What the Book Says about Sport, by Stuart Weir, BRF,2000 (144 pages) ISBN 1 84101 148 7
- Real Joy, by John Ashley Null, Haenssler, Holzgerlingen, Germany, 2004 ISBN: 3-7751-3966-4
- InSideOut Coaching: How Sports Can Transform Lives, by Joe Ehrmann,

- 3D Coach, by Dr. Jeff Duke, Regal From Gospel Light, (2014) ISBN 978-0-8307-6969-8
- FCA Competitors Bible, [www.fcagear.com](http://www.fcagear.com)
- Every Point Counts, by Andréas Andersson, 2012, Excel Books, ISBN: 1621360555
- Game Plan for Life – Your Personal Playbook for Success, by Joe Gibbs, Tyndale House Publishers, ISBN-13: 9781414341002
- Finding the Right Place: Professional Sport as a Christian Vocation, by John Ashley Null (2008), in D Deardorff and J White (eds.) *The Image of God in the Human Body: Essays on Christianity and Sports*, Lewiston, Edwin Mellen Press, pp.313-366
- Theology of Sport by J. Stuart Weir, full text available:  
[http://www.veritesport.org/downloads/Theology\\_of\\_Sport\\_An\\_historical\\_review.pdf](http://www.veritesport.org/downloads/Theology_of_Sport_An_historical_review.pdf)
- Email devotions through Sport Chaplaincy New Zealand – subscribe at:  
<http://sportschaplaincy.co.nz/about-scnz/>
- Christianity Explored – One life. What is it all about? [www.christianityexplored.org](http://www.christianityexplored.org)
- Uncommon by Tony Dungy
- An on line blog of prayers for sports people: <http://prayerinsport.blogspot.com/>
- Biographies of Christian sportspeople

## A Process for Beginning to Serve as a Sports Chaplain

One should understand that the cultures of nations, people groups, and different sports vary widely and therefore finding the proper starting place can be difficult. The process we have outlined below is general in nature, but we believe will be helpful to your service.

- 1) Receive the training and instruction available to you to prepare for serving well. Seek the counsel and commissioning of your local church leadership for your service with sportspeople. It is also wise to seek out an experienced sports chaplain who can serve as a mentor and to receive further training from qualified sports chaplaincy training entities. Several such agencies are listed below.
- 2) Seek the favor of and build credibility with those in authority over the sport community you would like to serve. (Federation leaders, club managers, head coaches, etc.)
  - a. Receive their counsel and direction related to your opportunity to serve.
  - b. Embrace the culture and leadership of the sport you are seeking to serve.
- 3) Seek the favor of those with whom you will be serving directly. (Meet the coach, manager, trainer, team captain or others who can give you access to sportspeople.)
- 4) Begin to serve selflessly and to love extravagantly.
- 5) Constantly evaluate your service and adjust to serve effectively.
  - a. Relationships – develop them wisely.
  - b. Relevance – serve in ways that are culturally appropriate.
  - c. Replicable – ministry methods that can be learned and adopted by others are of tremendous long term value.
  - d. Redemptive Results – always seek the fulfilment of the Lord Jesus' purposes in those you serve.

Sports Chaplaincy Australia

<http://www.sportschaplaincy.com.au/>

Sports Chaplaincy New Zealand

<http://sportschaplaincy.co.nz/>

Sports Chaplaincy United Kingdom <http://www.sportschaplaincy.org.uk/>  
Fellowship of Christian Athletes <http://www.fcachaplains.org/>  
Sport for Life – Sweden <http://www.sportforlife.se/>  
Sports Chaplains Network <http://www.sportschaplains.org/>  
Community Church of Greenwood/ <http://www.theqponline.org>  
The Gathering Place Sports Facility