



Get Back to Practicing The Basics—That's What Will Win The Day!

By Kurt von Schleicher

Top Ten Football Principles for Winning with People in Life's Most Important Contest

What makes great football teams? Does a huge assembly of talent in the stadium guarantee on-the-field success? Not always! Yes, we know that *not* to be true and coaches have years of evidence to back this up. I'm not the fan who can't miss a game, but I've noticed that teams with good talent *can* often defeat other teams of great talent utilizing stronger-team-play, better physical, mental and attitudinal preparation, or maybe they just have an unequaled heart-hunger-to-win and focus. Sure, we can see this to be true with the continued success of the *New England Patriots*. We've watched this team known as '*better than the sum of its parts*' become the victor in multiple Super Bowls by applying the basics and exemplifying those good traits listed above. They don't have to be an anomaly... and many of these principles you can apply with your secular organization, your missionary work or church evangelism department. But how do you do it? The Patriots didn't become a success overnight. Success comes by strong leadership, laying a strong foundation of training and development. When your team takes off, it may look to others like an overnight success, but you and your team can point to all the hours and hours of training that allowed you to achieve greatness.

When I was growing up in California my dad, Kim, was the head coach for a couple winning football teams and one of them was the fierce 4A Saint Francis High School sophomore team in Flintridge.¹ They were bad to the bone! They didn't have the best looking uniforms—most of the chipped-up helmets had been spray-painted gold too many times. And it was kind of funny to see them wear mismatched ripped up socks and jerseys along with their black leather high top cleats, but I wouldn't be the one to snicker at them. This team didn't have the best equipment, but they would constantly win! As you can tell I was pretty proud of both him and them. I learned many of the player's names and felt like many of the players were part of our family each fall.

When I would visit and watch his team train hard, it was REAL HARD and I was glad that I wasn't out there barfing my guts out with them. I'm sure the mothers would

have been mad at my dad—no room for girly-boys at his practice! Yes, everyone on the field was soaking wet with muddy sweat; some were launching their lunch until they experienced the dry-heaves, puking chunky gross pizza-hunks and unidentifiable objects out on the sidelines or onto themselves. Some were quitting, some were screaming, crying, grunting, or just dying on the ground. They didn't smell good and it wasn't a pretty sight, but one of unending hellish pain and torture, and each season this ordeal would always seem to pay off for the team. No pain, no gain—that's how discipline is I guess! In fact, I'll tell you what statement it reminded me of...

"Gentlemen, this is a football!" That was a strange kind of greeting for the world champions to hear—the Green Bay Packers in 1963, as they returned to train at the outset

***Football is an honest game. It's true to life!
It's a game about sharing. Football is a team game. So is life!
—Broadway Joe Namath***

of their grueling spring camp. Yet these were the first words their legendary coach voiced to welcome his men back. Then Mister Lombardi would proceed to lecture these men about the rudimentary aspects of running, blocking, passing, punting and tackling. It was the same leadership style I was accustomed to seeing! Not quite as known as Lombardi, but no less respected in our home was my dad who would also repeatedly train his team with great

attention given to the nitty-gritty brass tacks of the sport. He drilled his men with fast repetition in the most basic bare bone essentials. He taught them not to hot-dog or brag so as to draw attention to themselves, but to run hard with the ball tucked in tight where no linebacker could jar it into a fumble. He educated his football players to keep pushing ahead—*"never stop pumping your cleats into the ground to gain another yard!"* And regarding blocking and tackling, I can still hear him roar, *"Plant your face mask in their numbers, until they're on their back! Make them wish they never got out of bed this morning!"* I also remember him tell me and my brothers this: *During a play if the whistle hasn't yet blown and you see someone wearing the opponent's colors out there still on their feet, then go knock him down ...and go do it again and again and again until either the whistle blows or there's no opponent left standing!* He said a lot of motivating things about expressing full wholehearted commitment within the bounds of the rules to us little Pop Warner boys—his sons. We got to run in races on the beach and drink lots of shakes filled with Hoffman's weight gaining powder before we pumped iron just like his player did.

My dad had studied himself READY and worked his men out with the weights until they were also READY. He was constantly brushing-up on the most elementary of skills and workable plays until his coaches and everybody were more than prepared to do battle, were more than physically sore to the bone, and feeling more than confident to conquer! Injuries?—they had a lot of them, but many would still play half healed up because they couldn't stay out.

My dad went into each year's season and each day's practice knowing exactly what he was doing. Not one minute with any coach or player would be wasted. He knew that even in the euphoria of being perceived as one of the best teams in the league, nobody would rest on their laurels or ever "graduate" from *the basics* on his team. Man,

they'd face some large tough teams too, but to be champions, or to stay champions, the whole team would maintain their commitment to the fundamental values!

Christian, *you and I will also never "graduate" from the basics down here.* We can learn some things from football. We must appropriate an all-out aggression towards the real enemy though, who is not a human, but he does rip-off humans. To be a real winner in any area of life, or to remain a winner, you must know the Word. That's as basic as it gets! And that's the exact weapon to use. It's the Sword of all swords! The Bible says, ***"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"*** (2 Tim. 2:15). Yes, crave the pure milk of the word and less media! That's self-denial. We need obedience in this kind of sacrifice—YES WAY! It could still happen in our day and needs to. You and I must be able to say "no" to what our body demands and "yes" to what it needs just like trained football players do! Humble shepherds balance grace and truth, love and control. They often know what the flock needs more than the sheep know what they need, because they're in union with the chief Shepherd—the Owner of the team. We are all to be disciplined people of principle under Him, following Him; submitted to the under-shepherds, wisely diligent, kind to those on our team and to others too. In Him we're to stay committed to the indispensable things—the Essentials, the imperative unsophisticated matters of conquest! And in non-imperatives, we give the players liberty!

Now home missions, foreign missions and serving Jesus Christ—that's certainly not a mere competitive football game that Christians are involved in, but the keys to winning in football as well as in your spiritual walk with the Lord and in other areas, do have some remarkably parallels that you would do well to pay attention to. So listen up to these ten admonitions:

1. Stay committed to Christ and doing the Bible basics! You know how in football, an individual player will *sacrifice his body* if you will just to gain a first down, a touchdown, or some collective benefit for the Owner of the team and the whole team. That's the kind of attitude God loves in His Church, as well. The Bible challenges us, ***"Thou therefore endure hardness"*** (2 Tim. 2:3). Develop a thick skin and a soft heart for as it is with football, Christianity is not a spectator sport designed for people's comfort and pampering. Christian, God wants you in the game so to speak, regardless of the solace or hardships that you might feel ...doing your best in worship, in audio-visual-witnessing, and for mutually building each other up in the body! Of course we don't desire suffering as they do in some religions. And we don't, of our own volition, choose do things that would cause us or anyone pain or harm, but let me ask you this: *Are you willing to suffer if it means others will get saved?* God calls us to be obedient with His playbook. Our suffering doesn't save anyone, God does. But Christ might allow you to go through some tough gantlets, drills, testings and persecution-situations. The Bible says, ***"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him"*** (2 Tim. 2:12). Paul said, ***"I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may***

We are inclined to think that if we watch a football game we have taken part in it.
—John Kennedy

obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10). Do you remember, Mister Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigator’s organization? He sketched out a design of a wheel as describing the disciplines of a victorious Christian life. Of course Christ was the hub of the wheel, and obedience to the Holy Spirit was the outer rim of that wheel. The two vertical spokes of the wheel represented Word and prayer—hearing from God and communication vertically with God. Those are so important in depicting our personal relationship with God. The horizontal spokes were fellowship and witness, depicting our relationship with other Christians and with non-Christians.

This is pretty basic stuff, huh? Yes it is, and so radically vitally to the cause. These are the foundations of a vibrant walk with the Lord. If, every day, attention is given to God's Word, prayer, fellowship with other believers and witness for Christ, there is no way to go but forward. I love what nineteenth century missionary David Livingstone prayed, *"I'll go anywhere with You, Lord, provided it is forward."* The way forward in the Christian life is no mystery, but it's no cakewalk, either. If you keep Christ as the very hub of your life—if you're quick to obey all the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and if you make a daily commitment to letting God speak to you through His Word, sharing your heart with Him in candid prayer, pouring into the lives of others with His Word through fellowship and witnessing, you *will* grow. Simple as that!

But the key word is *commitment*. Anyone who has attempted the discipline of a daily devotional life knows that Satan will throw every possible distraction in your path to keep you away from your time alone with the Lord. When it's time to minister to other believers by faithful participation in your church, unexpected interruptions occur that tug at your time. When God's Spirit prompts you to share the love of Christ with those who need him, you may feel kind of like your tongue grows thick as a bit of fear races through your heart.

Football players show respect towards the referees and all those in authority. Coaches, quarter backs guys up in the bird nests with headsets, and the Owner of the team all aim for very clear, thorough communication with each other about play-calling, audibles and what adjustments and plays the opponents are doing. All Christians need to be flexible in case God’s audible is called! In football an audible is when the QB changes a play at the last minute at the line of scrimmage, by calling out predetermined set of signals his backs, ends and linemen will understand. Your Father is way up high looking down on the game with excitement. He sees and knows better what you and I need to be doing and He wants us to remain alert for open sinners who are ready to repent and believe. Paul said, ***“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”*** (2 Tim. 4:5). Even when things look horrible, hang in there and fight, for our head Coach will surely bring His Super Bowl contenders through to victory so to speak. And ***“We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. Job is an example of a man who endured patiently. From his experience we see how the Lord's plan finally ended in good”*** (Jam. 5:11). Every champion knows what it means to plow through the line another time, get hurt and overcome thick linebacker-sized obstacles. There’s reward waiting for you! So, commit and recommit to

the basics if necessary and plow through the hole—or create a hole—trusting the Holy Spirit to get you through to the end-zone of life!

2. Don't forget to suit up properly. It would look pretty strange if some guy ran out on the field, attempting to play football in a New York Yankee's baseball uniform or without any uniform at all. Yet, many Christians fail to suit up properly and they still expect the Coach to call on them. They go out into the daily battle of life without strapping on the full armor that God has provided. When coaches discover them, the warm the bench and become the Gatorade boys.

As tough as we may think we are, few players would want to face the fury and heat of battle without the proper equipment. The Bible tells us that God has given us a magnificent "defense system" against all opposition. We've been provided with great gear

***When I played pro football,
I never set out to hurt
anyone deliberately.
—Dick Butkus***

that's been tested and proven, but we have to put it on for ourselves. So the Bible urges us, *"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes ... Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet*

fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions ..." (Eph. 6:11, 14-18). We saints of God don't focus on our uniform or suit up to go purposely injure people though. Our aim is to help our teammates and win the yard-by-yard battles that hold our team members back for the goal!

3. Train hard, long and smart and when it starts to really hurt, don't wimp-out on your Leader—train some more! Practice what you preach. Let God and His

trained spiritual pastors train you in righteousness! I like what the great football coach, Vince Lombardi said: *Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect.* That means some players spend time out on the practice field more productively than others do. How about you? Good tennis players learn tennis in actually practicing by playing skilled experienced tennis players. Good skiers learn expert skiing up on steep slopes actually skiing down them, rather than in spending hours merely watching videos on UTube about skiers skiing. Good skilled fishermen learn how the local fish think; they learn what and

when they like to eat, they learn what tools to use and not use. They learn how to best cast a line in fly fishing; they learn how to set the hook. They learn where to fish—where the fish like to congregate and hang out. They learn to fish by actually practicing fishing. They might make some mistakes but they learn by doing. Why don't we do that?

***A football team warms up
grimly and disparately,
like an army on
maneuvers: the ground
troops here, the tanks
there, the artillery and air
force over there. It's can
be a good fight!
—Ted Solotaroff***

Some anxious Christians practice foolishly. They apply name-it-claim-it teaching principles with the wrong motives. Some learn from extremely lame coaches that have tampered with the football playbook so to speak—conveying bad doctrine. Some Christians are too hasty when they talk to the irreligious about spiritual matters. Before the unbeliever has even started to be lured-in for his own benefit, the Christian will skip some important steps and scare away the potential convert, but the Bible commands, ***“Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing”*** (Jam. 1:4). Have you realized your desperate dependence upon the Lord? Have you learn what steps to take, and in what order to take them? God always wants you to practice righteousness by being a doer of the Word with a perfect heart and attitude. The apostle Paul was one who could relate to poor practicing—doing what his flesh felt like doing instead of doing what was right. He was victorious most of the time, but he also talked about the battle within saying; ***“For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice”*** (Rom. 7:19).

4. As a coach would so aptly say it: *We don’t want to hear about all aspects of your labor pains, we just want to see the delivered-baby crying!* Bring in the results, results, results—gaining them not by your own power, but by trusting God for His results! Yes, pray for God to use you in doing good seed-planting, good watering, good-nurturing and tending-work among young plants and also in reaping people into God’s team! Doing our best we commit the rest, leaving all the results up to the Lord. They say talk is cheap—that’s the easy part. They say *put up or hold your mouth* in so many words. James said, ***“Faith that doesn’t show itself by good deeds is no faith at all—it is dead and useless. Now someone may argue, ‘Some people have faith; others have good deeds.’ I say, ‘I can’t see your faith if you don’t have good deeds, but I will show you my faith through my good deeds’”*** (2:18, nlt). Christian, please spare us your lame competitiveness, your whining like a baby, your gripping, quibbling, your petty comparing, your complaining, your ingratitude, your backbiting, your scratching like a girl and all your blow-gut-lording-it-over the other team mates as if you’re the only all-star ...even if in you have been made the captain of the team. Someone could have made a mistake. Just go get the job done! Hang out with the winners—the non-embittered, non-gossipy ones. Proactively fellowship with the righteous play-makers that get it done on the field! Pick their brains regularly. Why hang out with the negative-thinkers to your own demise? If you’ve been recruited to perform on the field, there is really no need for you spending inordinate hours sucking-up to the cheerleaders on the sidelines, or hiding-out in the locker-room to rest, or in the concession stand feasting on hotdogs, or in the ticket sales booth ...or in the fan-wear souvenir store just trying to gain more bucks. A football player is not recruited to squeeze fans for funds! To the fans and to the team’s Owner, the football player is never to be “in it” primarily for what he will make monetarily—it’s about knowing Christ and winning with people! It’s about winning sinners to the Owner’s game if you will! So, please spare us all the excuses. An excuse has been defined as the skin of the truth stuffed with a lie and no lie is of the truth.²

***I don't know any other way
to lead but by example!
—Coach Don Shula***

Show us the baby!

5. Scout the enemy with vigilance. Any good team has really good scouts that are dedicated. They travel a lot to where the Owner wants them to go and they put off sleeping in like a lazy sloth would do. A good scout will know all the trick plays of the opposition; they will stay in close contact with the coach, and they will be poised to foil any attempts to execute those plays against his team. One of the time-tested "trick plays" of the devil's team is unforgiveness. The Apostle Paul was sensitized to this lame tactic of the enemy, so he postured himself to be proactive in forgiving any and all who had wronged him. He said, *"And what I have forgiven -- if there was anything to forgive -- I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes"* (2 Cor. 2:10, 11). Good scouting doesn't mean you have to be hyper-focused on the opposition, but it does mean that you are walking circumspectly. Why should we allow Satan to take advantage of us; *"for we are not ignorant of his devices"* (nkjv).

The devil isn't interested in a little sparring match with you. He'll go for the jugular; his intent is always to *"steal, kill and destroy"* (Jn. 10:10). Satan attacks the very essence of our lives as believers: he will try to destroy (or at least imperil) your faith, your hope and your love. He attacks faith by trying to turn you into a skeptic. He attacks hope by trying to turn you into a cynic, and he attacks love by trying to turn you into a critic. If he succeeds, no matter what the circumstances may have been that turned you skeptical, cynical or critical, he's got you cornered and extremely vulnerable to a KO punch.

So don't be unaware of the schemes of the opposition. The things that wreck men's lives are just multiple variations on a few sordid themes: the abuse of money, the abuse of sex, the abuse of power, the abuse of alcohol and drugs, poor time management, and the adopting of an embittered attitude.

If this life, you will never be perfect; but you *can* serve God with a perfect heart. God is scanning the planet looking for perfect-hearted men. When He finds them, He will bend heaven and earth to honor them. *"For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him"* (2 Cor. 16:9).

6. Play from your strength with right motives, not from your weaknesses. I've got good news for you. If you've trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you've made the team. You weren't cut! The "try-outs" are past. The Bible describes you as literally *"in Christ."* What a place of security! And what a place of authority! When my dad was coaching, he would always say, *"Hey, keep your head up as you go through the hole, as you block, as you run. Keep your weight balanced!"* And that's how Christians need to be, as well. Hole your head up. You've been born again, so praise the Lord enthusiastically! The only children God has are *gifted* children, and you're His child through faith in Christ. Part of the package deal when you received Christ is that the Holy Spirit dispensed gifts to you; He *"gives them to each one, just as He determines"* (1 Cor. 12:11).

One of the most valuable studies you can undertake is to make a thorough study of spiritual gifts. Paul writes of these gifts of the Holy Spirit in Romans 12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12-14. When you take a

Football linemen are motivated by a more complicated series of factors than the simple fear of humiliation in the public's gaze.

—Merlin Olsen

good look at your natural abilities, the spiritual gifts you've received and your life experiences, you'll come to two exciting discoveries. First, you're just part of the picture. As gifted as you may be, you need the rest of the Body of Christ to reach your full potential. And second, there is a

unique job God has for you and you alone in helping to fulfill His purposes in your generation. When we see both realities, it enables us to walk both in humility and dignity. That brings us to the next key.

7. Be a team-player who is authentic even if there are a few posers there who call themselves team players and the coach hasn't noticed yet. Let's get it straight regardless of what others are doing around us. As a Christian, you're not going to make it alone. You need God and He wants you to remain interdependent with other real Christians who are progressing in their walk. The fake Christians will pull you down on the field. God didn't intend for you to make it alone. He has provided a supernatural support system for you—His sound Church. Isolation is a bad thing for Christians who want to grow. The Bible says, ***“Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment”*** (Prov. 18:1, esv).

In this great contest for the hearts and minds of this generation, the victory will not go to individuals, it goes to the team. In fact, Paul said that in Christ's body, ***“if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it”*** (1 Cor. 12:26, 27).

You have a stake in what happens to all believers everywhere. The martyrdom of pastors in the Sudan affects *you*; the thrilling growth of the church in China affects *you*. Growing Christian, in your local church, there's a unique strength so to speak ... you can

It was an ideal day for football—too cold for the spectators and way too cold for the opponents!

—Red Smith

give to your pastor and other members that only you can provide as you obey the Lord. And in Christ's body nationwide and worldwide, there is a role of reconciliation—fishing for people—that God has called you to do. You need to experience God in your local church and

your church needs what the Lord will provide and minister through you. You are to be interdependent with the entire body of Christ all your days. The Bible says, ***“let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another -- and all the more as you see the Day approaching”*** (Heb. 10:24,25).

8. Keep gaining ground for the Leader of the team! Keep your spiritual feet moving non-stop even if you're being gang-tackled with your face in the dirt. Like an agile cat; dodge all the wiles, traps and tacklers on the opponent's side! Take territory rather than going backwards. Missions—that's fishing for souls starting from home—is all about taking more territory for the Kingdom of God by faith. It's about gaining yardage for the King of the team. Please witness faithfully here and involve yourself in international outreach. You do this by going after you get your directive from God, by sending, by funding others going, by praying and by telling! It takes guts to tell them about Jesus and the Gospel. Trust God for the results. You are either having a going-forwards day or a going backwards day spiritually in God's Kingdom—no in-between! You are either having a "going forward day" spiritually and getting more mature in the Word, or you are having a "going backwards day spiritually" as you disobey and digress spiritually. You are either getting better or bitter—improving in your outward witness or getting worse as you try to be a Christian independently from the Word. I like the parable that Jesus told His disciples about "A certain nobleman" who *"called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come"* (Lk. 19:13). He *"said to them, 'Do business till I come'"* (nkjv).

9. Listen to the cheers some, but not so long that it all goes to your head. We are giving it our all in a contest that is not devoid of suffering—for just one Person who is watching. And there is a Prize ahead for those who endure. But for your own further encouragement, every now and then, it's good to remember all those in the "stands" of heaven who are also cheering you on! The Bible says, *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us"* (Heb. 12:1). A lot of things in this life will never make any sense if a person has merely a temporal orientation to things. But if you have an eternal orientation, you can endure all the pain.

Martin Luther observed, *"There are only two days important to me -- today and that day."* If you live today in light of *that day* when you will stand and give an account before Jesus Christ, every decision, every word and every action brims with eternal importance.

I don't consider myself as the best player in the world. I'm not obsessed with self or individual titles. I'm much more interested in being part of a team that wins and I want to enjoy the full pleasure of our victory together!
—Ronaldo

The author of Hebrews goes on to remind us that, *"We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy He knew would be His afterward"* (Heb. 12:2, nlt). And that brings us to the final key to a life that wins.

10. Play to win, rather than just to play. Solomon wrote, *"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might"* (Ecc. 9:10). In America, men tend to define the words "success" and "winning" in some pretty crazy ways. But ultimate success has little to do with what side of town you live in, what size house you own, what your girlfriend looks

like, or what make of late model car you drive. Real success has everything to do with whether or not you know Christ and will hear Him say His *"well done"* over your life spent in serving Him wherever He might lead. When you honor and obey Him, you win! And you and I will only receive His *"well done"* if we are faithful over that which He has put in our hands to steward in His worldwide Cause. Have you been faithful to the vows you've made? Have you been faithful in your relationships? Have you been a faithful witness for the Lord by word, attitude and good deeds? Have you been faithful at work and in your financial dealings? Are you still faithful and walking close with Jesus Christ? If you are, then you are a winner in the fullest sense of the word! He has made you a victor so give Him all the glory!

John rejoiced in the Lord for making him a cheerful triumphant winner saying, ***"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith"*** (1 Jn. 5:4). And Paul won people gladly and exuberantly expressed his gratitude saying, ***"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"*** (1 Cor. 15:57).

You might respond, *"Well, I'm not yet where I want to be spiritually, but I'm willing to change."* Hey, you're in good company. Paul the apostle was right there with you as He wrote, ***"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus"*** (Phil. 3:12-14).³

[Are you suited up](#) and on the field? The Bible says, ***"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ"*** (Rom. 13:14). Maybe all this is new to you, but you desire to meet the Owner of the greatest team on earth? Or perhaps you're already a Christian and you want to run touchdowns for Jesus Christ? Press on in Him! As in football, play it straight, apply the basics wisely, play it consistently and steady. Play to win, for life really isn't a game! Lives are at stake and there's a lot more than yardage people can lose—too much can be lost.



Have Kurt's missions or fishing articles blessed you any? Click on **["Contact"](#)** and let him know what God is doing in your life!

¹ In addition to trying to kick a personal alcohol addiction that was hurting his family life ...and working hard in directing *Tom Sawyer Camp* for hundreds of wonderful kids that he loved (at Oak Grove Park in La Canada Flintridge that my grandfather William [Bill] founded in Laguna Beach in 1926), my dad, Kim Schleicher, LOVED to coach football! Today, he has been a sober sold-out witnessing Christian for many years and has all his priorities in order. But I do have fond memories of him coaching the La Canada Gladiators for some years and then head coaching the sophomore team at *Saint Frances High School*. It's because my dad totally delights in the good that can be instilled in boys through them applying the principles of discipline in football. Basically a lifelong friend of his, Jack Friedman, who was the varsity coach, recruited him to assist in coaching both Saint Frances teams along with the other coaches there. It was a joy! The School had about 600 young men in attendance; no girls and about 300 of these guys would try out for football, (there were three teams total). They did not have players of the greatest speed in their area conference. What they did have was an intense desire to win (that was put in them by strong leadership), combined with the best training around ...and they won the C.I.F. championship multiple times because of this. St. Francis High had a good reputation for fielding strong, fundamental football teams (with several of their players who went on to do great things in college and pro-ball), even though it was a much smaller school than most of the other schools they played against. Due to my dad's influence and tremendous zeal, we all played football in our family a lot—Kevin my older brother did, myself as well, and Kyle my younger brother did to. My little sister, Kathy, would even carry the ball in the front-yard-games in La Crescenta on occasion. And she was a wonderful cheerleader in blue and gold for my team, the Glendale Bears. Of course our mom, Betty, would sacrificially drive us all over Southern California to watch us get stomped by other teams once in a while. Later in the '70s Kevin and I continued to participate in football and other sports at Dana Hill High School because we had moved to Dana Point. And Kyle went on to play college volleyball at Pepperdine University. To this day my dad, a P.E. major from UCLA and a committed Bruin, loves Jesus most! He also loves Christians who aren't sissies, sinners and good clean football played the way it should be played ...where the opponent gets his bell rung as he is knocked down on the deck before the whistle blows!

² See 1 John 2:21.

³ When you get the time, you'll love reading the Bible verses in their own context. In fact, do take the time to prayerfully read through whole books with a heart to apply God's Word! Why read it all? Well, if a "loved one" writes you a love letter, you would read the entire letter to get the full meaning, right? You wouldn't merely jump around lucky dipping in the Scriptures. When you prayerfully read each book in the Bible, you'll also grow hungrier for God and His Word. When you don't read or listen to God, your hunger for His presence can totally evaporate. Some Christians are so busy reading in-between the lines (looking for meaning in the white spaces on the paper), that they don't read the actual lines. Listen you don't need man's opinions, Bible-codes or non-authoritative speculation. Some Christians are hopping around the Bible like rabbits to different verses without ever reading the context, playing Bible Roulette. They do this so much that they get spiritual-indigestion inside. Don't be like them! When you read all the counsels of God, that's how you'll get the bigger missions picture of what God is talking about in reaching unbelievers with the Gospel. Christian, also talk with the Lord a lot about all that you are learning and do expect to hear from Him as He speaks to your spirit by His Holy Spirit. He will direct you to the right people to share with. Do all this when you get the time or better yet ...simply make time for Jesus and these important team priorities!