

Did you notice the gorilla in the room? Hard to miss! Today, we are in the fourth week of our Game Plan series. If you are visiting today you probably noticed people wearing their favorite team jersey. The jerseys represent being on a team. As Christians, we too are on the same team. To be a successful basketball team you have to practice the fundamentals. That is the same with our faith. We have to practice the fundamentals.

### 1. Be a Gorilla and listen to the Coach

Christianity is about being a Gorilla and listening to the coach. What do I mean by that? **Why did Jesus come to Earth?**

We had the Old Testament. Why not just be Jewish and worship the only God of the Universe? We could be offering sacrifices this morning for our sins and praising God with the aroma of burnt offerings.

Jesus, as God, came to us in a person we could touch, see and follow. Jesus, as God in the flesh, came to us because of his love. His intent from the beginning of creation was to touch, and lead us. Christ illustrated this with his disciples. This is why Jesus is so controversial. We want God by not necessarily that close. Just give me something to read, but don't bring up a God who is that close to me. The religious leaders had the coach of the Old Testament, but the coach didn't play in the game. God could never get as close to people as Jesus was describing.

People were not ready for this. Jesus was hung on a cross for talking like this. But that was his plan. No religion before or since can take care of sins. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away the sins of the people in the Old Testament. But Jesus literally takes the sin from us and puts it on himself, killing it on the cross. This makes us so clean that the perfect God of this universe can come and live here (point to body).

The gorilla has a person living in it who is unseen. We now have the Christ who wants to be seen! The Apostle Paul puts it this way.

#### ***Romans 13:14***

***14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.***

Like the gorilla suit, we clothe ourselves with Christ. (*use hands*)

**Colossians 3:3**

**3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. NIV**

The old way of doing life is gone when you become a Christian!

**2 Corinthians 13:5**

**Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you —NIV**

Secondly, did you see the gorilla do the slam dunks? Did you see him high fiving everyone, and putting a smiles on people’s faces? I think Jesus would like this Suns Gorilla. He said.

**Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden."**

Christ ones should be seen. Christians should be as easily noticed as the gorilla. Jesus never had to announce his arrival. People knew where he was by his actions towards them. The gorilla didn’t have to have a sign around his neck. Wait a minute.....speaking of the gorilla....I think we need to get him down here so you can appreciate him.

**“Gorilla, can you come back out here for a minute?”** (play Sun’s music)

Since Christ wants to be seen in us, I think it is only biblical that we see who is in the gorilla costume?????

**2. Study the Playbook and go to Practice.**

**John 5:39-40 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life. NIV**

Why do basketball players study the playbook? So they can execute the plays. Why do they practice? So they can become better players. Why do we study the Bible? So we can execute the plan of God. Even though God lives in each of us, his Bible gives fundamentals that pertain to all of us!

**Example 1:** God says to support His work. 2 Cor 9; **“God loves a cheerful giver.”** Does anyone here have a dime? **(Give them a dollar for their dime)** That’s called tithing. If everyone in the Christian Church in the United

States tithed, we could provide food and water and housing for everyone in the world in need.

***Malachi 3:10***

***10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD Almighty, "I will open the windows of heaven for you! NLT***

But, here is the rub! Tithing will never happen until we believe it is God who gives us the dollar we earn and the possessions we enjoy. That is fundamental principle of our faith!

***Ecclesiastes 5:19***

***19 Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work — this is a gift of God. NIV***

So in a very practical sense how do we tithe if we never have before? God says to PRACTICE the truths we hear. Jesus tells us.

***Luke 8:21 “My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.” NIV***

If we have never tithed before, maybe we start practicing with 5% or another amount and with more practice, we reach the tithe and beyond.

That’s one example of studying the playbook called the Bible. By the way I am giving you two plays that I have had trouble with.

**Example 2:** “**Love your enemies.**” I really need to go to practice on this! How do you love the guy who cheated you out of a job? How do you love the person who is gossiping behind your back? What about the people who treat you like you are taking up space? How do you love the relative who mocks the God you worship....PRACTICE seeing God in your life during those times! Jesus gave us the Book so we could get to know him and begin to practice living with him!

**3. Put on the Jersey, Take a Shot, and Pass the ball.**

When we put on the Jersey we are identifying ourselves with a group. When we accept Christ as our Savior and Lord we become “Christians.”

Can you imagine if you wore the jersey of the Phoenix Suns for real and Coach Gentry called your number? It would be exciting, maybe embarrassing, but definitely an honor. Not only are we on God's team, but He is looking for people who really wants to give Him their entire heart!

### **2 Chron 16:9**

**9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.**

**NKJV**

It could be exciting, embarrassing, taking this kind of shot with God. We can be on the team and sit on the bench or we can be on the team and sing, dance, encourage, care, visit, and love God with others. That's why we have HomeTeam, small groups. That's why we have teams that serve together. It brings more joy to life and increases our effectiveness. This is part of the plan of God!

### **3 John 8 “...work together for the truth.” NIV**

Why did God set up the kingdom of Israel? Why a specific group of people? After Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, God took Joseph to Egypt and over the next 400 years God's people grew into the millions. But finally, God used Moses to lead the people out of Egypt and head towards the promise land. The Israelites believed that there was only One God and they knew who He was. He was not the sun or the moon or the weather. This was entirely unheard of. God was using these Israelites to change the world's view of God!

After parting the Red Sea and leading the people toward the promise land, God had a meeting with Moses on a mountain.

**Exodus 19:3-83 Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the people of Israel: 4'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, 6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."**

**7 So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. 8**

***The people all responded together , "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD. NIV***

Today, we can be thankful to these early Israelites for working together. Did it always go well? No, and that's what makes God and this faith so genuine. Unlike other religions, God recorded their failings so that we could learn from their mistakes.

**But it didn't end there.** God not only used the Israelites to teach the world there was only one God, he uses us to teach the world that this one God wants to be in us! Are we willing to get into the game and literally follow Him and take a shot at what he does to our family, our work, our community, and our world?

Finally, are you willing to pass the ball?

Steve Nash is one of the best guards in the NBA. Why? Because he knows how to pass the ball to others, he makes Amare better. He is willing to give up the glory so others can shine. Will you do that? Can you give a ministry that you started or grew to someone who loves it too? Can you invite others to join you and let them shine? Can you pass on the glory of God to others?

***Acts 2:28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' NIV***

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