



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddles CORE PRINCIPLES & LEADERSHIP GUIDELINES

Welcome FCAW small group leader! Thanks for organizing this “Team Huddle” group. This means you want to discuss and learn along with your group what the following devotions mean.

Does this NOT mean you need to know all the answers? When confronted with a question that is difficult to answer on the spot, just say “That is a great question, and I am not sure how to answer it. What do you think it means?” If a question begs an answer, just say “I will find out and get back to you”. And then follow up!

As group leader, you have a few responsibilities. These include: organizing a time, a place, and a group of wrestlers who want meet, and guiding your group through these lessons. (Most coaches & wrestlers prefer to hold the “team huddle” right after a practice, in the wrestling room, usually early in the week. Work that out with the coach.) You may have to ask the questions, guide the discussion or encourage others to talk a bit more but you can do it! Below are a few “core principles & guidelines” that will help your group stay on task. You will want to go through these “core beliefs & guidelines” during your first meeting time.

If any important issues or questions come up, or if there are serious needs of a group member, PLEASE call Bill Gifford (with FCA Wrestling) for some guidance!

1. **Confidentiality:** Anything shared in group time is to be held in strict confidence. Very hard to do, but let’s try. This helps people feel safe to share and it shows respect for one another.
2. **TIME:** Be respectful of others’ time. Start & end the devotions on time. This will allow coaches and kids to get home for dinner and their evening responsibilities.
3. **Encourage everyone to talk:** Don’t let any one person dominate the conversation. Graciously re-direct the conversation to another wrestler if one person dominates the sharing time. It is also important to try to stay on topic and support the lesson. Sometimes silence is good for people to think, or to gather courage to speak up.
4. **Major on the majors:** Stay on the topic of the day with the materials you have. Do not bring in politics, what your church or preacher said, or other tangents. Avoid potentially inflammatory topics, especially with the whole group / team.
5. **This is not a counseling session:** Members can best serve one another by praying and encouraging the person in need. *If a real serious issue / problem comes up, please refer this person to someone who can help them.* Alert Bill Gifford, and perhaps call a local pastor, or counselor you trust.
6. **Attendance:** As a leader, commit to being there every week.
7. **Prayer:** Encourage group & individual prayer, to gain a deeper relationship with Jesus.
8. **Worship:** God loves song, praise, and music! Suggest to the wrestlers some contemporary Christian artists to listen to. Many kids don’t even know these exist!



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 1: Wrestling – “BASICS”. (Proverbs 9: 10.)

Every good coach and wrestler knows that success starts with “basics”. If you don’t keep your head up, elbows in, and a good base on your feet, all the fancy technique in the world will not help you be a good wrestler on your feet. If your head drops in a scramble on the mat, you can easily end up on your back. We pay a heavy price for not paying attention to the “basics” in wrestling, and the same is true in life.

The book of Proverbs tells us that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; And knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Prov. 9:10)

This passage basically means: **Having a healthy respect for God, and realizing that He created us for a purpose, results in living a ‘wise’ life, a life that leads to true success.** This kind of success doesn’t mean we always win wrestling matches, or will be rich someday, but it ultimately means success in God’s eyes, for all eternity. And a life that is lived “wisely” upon this earth will result in a life of purpose, peace, integrity, loving relationships, and a strong work ethic, (just to mention a few important blessings) While an unwise life, (one that seeks after the pleasures of this world without stopping to think about the consequences of actions), always leads to ultimate heartache and pain.

So, in this life, we must “keep our head up”, to see life from God’s perspective. And when we “look up” to Him, for wisdom and guidance, (rather than following the crowd), we will “win” the scrambles / the battles of life, because our actions will be sound, leading us to ultimate success.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does respect for God display itself in our daily activities?
2. How would respect for God impact our ‘work ethic’ in the wrestling room?
3. How would respect for God impact the way we listen to our coaches, our parents, and our teachers?
4. How does a lack of respect for God and authority lead to negative consequences in our lives? How about on the mats?
5. Can you see how “seeing life from God’s perspective” can positively impact everything you do?

Understanding this important “basic” of life (**having respect for God**), will impact everything in our lives, whether on the mats, in the classroom, and how we handle our human relationships.

CONCLUDE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 2: Wrestling – “BALANCE” (Proverbs 3: 5-6.)

Balance is one of the keys to wrestling. Great wrestlers have technique, endurance and strength, but they must also have balance. There was a state champion wrestler that had ALL the tools. One morning, he woke up with “vertigo”. Something just happened where he lost his sense of balance. When got out of bed, he fell on the floor and couldn’t get up. He called out to his father, who ran to his side and had to lift him up and put him in a chair. They sent him to all the best doctors, but none could cure the vertigo. The wrestler had to re-learn how to balance himself. He had to find his center of gravity, and constantly think about it with every move he made.

Balance is one of the keys to life. Great people work hard and have a winning attitude, but they must also have balance. School (work), Fitness (health), Family and Faith are a part of everyone’s life. All are important, and each must receive enough time and attention for you to be in balance. Ignoring any one can cause you to lose your balance and “fall”. But only one can be your “center of gravity”. What is your center – School? Athletics? Family? Faith? God calls each of us to put Him as the center of our life. If you do, God promises to “make your path straight” (Prov. 3:5-6) and give you the balance you need to be a champion in life.

Prov. 3: 5- 6 states, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, ... In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight”.

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever seen someone who lost their balance? What happened?
2. Have you ever seen someone who lost their balance in life? (a “workaholic”, a “party animal”, a “fitness freak”, etc...) What happened?
3. Between School, Athletics, Family and Faith, where are you out of balance (too much or too little?)
4. What could you lose, if you lose your balance in life?
5. What does it mean to put God/ Jesus in the “center” of your life?
6. How does putting God/ Jesus in the center of your life improve your balance?

CONCLUDE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 3: “MENTAL DISCIPLINE” (Numbers 14: 24)

Mental Discipline (Joshua & Caleb) – “Champs” in the game of life.

After the Lord freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, He led them up to the land He had promised them, through Moses. Moses sent out 12 men, one from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, to scout the land they were to take possession of, and for 40 days these scouts went out, Caleb and Joshua among them. When they returned, they reported that the land was desirable, but that it was inhabited by giants, living in fortified cities, and they would not be able to prevail against them. However, **Caleb reported in Numbers 13: 30: “We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it.”** The Israelites were 2 years into their Exodus from Egypt at this point, but despite all the miracles they had seen, the people believed the rest of the Scouts, and sought to stone Caleb and Joshua. Therefore, the Lord punished the Israelites with a total of 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Only after this unfaithful and disobedient generation died off in the desert, did God finally allow their children to enter into the “Promised Land”, under the leadership of his two faithful warriors, Joshua and Caleb.

Joshua and Caleb disciplined themselves mentally to stick to the vision that God gave them. And because of their mental toughness and faith, they and their descendants, did inherit the Promised Land. In Numbers 14: 24 the Lord declared; **“But my servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it.”**

Discussion Questions:

1. Caleb saw the same sights his peers had seen; yet, who did Caleb place his trust in?
2. Where did Caleb and Joshua obtain their strength and drive? Where do you find yours?
3. Numbers 14: 24 states Caleb follows the Lord fully; Who do you follow?
4. What happened to the Israelites in this passage who chose not to believe?

Romans 8: 28-31 states: **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose ... What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”**

CONCLUDE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 4: “PREPARATION” (1 Cor. 9:24 - 27)

1 Corinthians 9:24 states; **“Do you not know that in a race all runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.”**

A serious athlete / wrestler must prepare himself for competition with hard work. He must train by drilling technique, conditioning, strength training, hard wrestling, and even mental preparation (studying the sport, knowing the rules, understanding how to use the mat space, and to learning the tendencies of key opponents). All this happens before he ever steps on a mat to compete. All the athletes compete, but it is the wrestler who “trains to win” that usually end up on the winner’s podium.

The passage in 1 Cor. 9: 24 – 27 explains that the Olympic-level athletes “exercise self-control in all things”, but they train for a “perishable crown” (the Olympic wreath put on the head of the victorious athlete). On the other hand, we who live for God, train ourselves for an “imperishable crown” (one that God promises to all who have lived faithfully for Him).

Psalm 1 puts it this way; “the man” who lives for God, will ultimately be “... like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers...for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish”.

Thought Questions:

1. How is wrestling like the race described in 1 Cor. 9: 24 - 27?
2. If we don’t prepare, practice, push ourselves beyond what we thought our limits were, would we be capable of sustaining and expecting victory?
3. Does preparation improve our confidence and ability? Have you ever been in a situation where you hadn’t adequately prepared? What was it like?
4. How is our daily life like this race?
5. While you wrestle with God, have you considered wrestling for God?
6. When you are preparing, are you doing it for you, or Him? What are you really preparing for?

CONCLUDE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 5: WHO ARE YOU? (Ephesians 2:10)

Who are you? I mean really, who are you? OK, I've got your name, but who are you? Are you a student? Are you a son? Are you a brother? Are you creative? Are you serious? Are you funny? Are you moral? Are you athletic?

You may be ALL those things, but you are also a WRESTLER. Wrestling is different. You don't "Play" wrestling. You may play basketball. You may play baseball. You may play football. You may even play hockey. But, you don't "play wrestling". Wrestling is not just something you do. Wrestling is a sport that absorbs your life in many ways. A wrestler is who you are. Wrestling is not just during a match, or during practice, it's 24-7. Wrestling is not just technique; its strength, its endurance, its balance, but most of all, its discipline. And that's what separates Wrestlers from those who just play a sport.

But you are even more than a wrestler. You are the unique workmanship of God, created to follow Jesus Christ, to achieve your full potential. Scripture tells us in **Ephesians 2: 10, you "are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works"**. In many ways, Christians are like wrestlers. Christians are "different". You don't "Play" Christianity. Christianity is not just something you do. A Christian is who you are. Christianity is not just on Sunday and not just at church. It's 24-7. Christianity is not just discipline; it's strength, it's endurance, it's balance, but most of all, it's following Jesus Christ. And that's what separates Christians from those who just play life. Think about it!

Discussion Questions:

1. Name some ways that wrestling is different from other sports.
2. How does it make you feel to be known as a wrestler?
3. How are Christians different?
4. What does it mean to "follow Jesus Christ"?

CONCLUDE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 6: “Who’s Your Daddy?” (Psalm 139: 13 -14)

Each of us has an earthly father. No matter how great your father is, he is not perfect. Some fathers abandon their children before they’re even born. Some fathers are physically present, but are “absent” in their children’s lives. We don’t understand what our father has to deal with; Pressure at work, bills to pay, chores to do, difficult relationships...

Each of us also has a “Heavenly Father” – God.

Biologically, the odds of YOU being born were about a billion to one. You are a WINNER. Genetically, there has never been anyone in the universe just like you. You are incredibly unique. No matter how much your father “planned”, he didn’t have a choice about who you would be. Like it or not, you became his child.

The Bible says that you weren’t “random”. You were custom built by God – cell by cell – You were knit together in your mother’s womb. **Psalm 139:13-14 states; “...You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I have been fearfully and wonderfully made...”**.

God knows exactly who you are. He knows everything about you – all the good and all the bad – everything. And with all that knowledge, God chose to ADOPT you as His son. Yes, He CHOSE you. The God of the universe chose you to be His son. Babies don’t have a choice about being adopted. But you are grown up. You have a choice. You have to choose.

Being a son means a lot of things, but one thing it means is that you have an inheritance from your father. Your earthly father may have some cool stuff that you may inherit someday. But your heavenly Father owns everything – including eternal life.

Discussion Questions:

1. Name some characteristics of a perfect Father.
2. Should a “perfect” father discipline their child? Why?
3. When was the last time you thanked your father?
4. When was the last time you thanked your Heavenly Father, (for how He made you and loves you)?

CONCLUDE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 7: “Who is Really in Control? - You? The ref? Or, God?” (Isaiah 55: 8 - 9)

Scripture: Isaiah 55: 8-9

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways, says the Lord. For as Heaven is higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts are higher than your thoughts.”

We live in a culture where we are expected to try to keep control of everything in our grasp. Having control is a way of showing our strength. Occasionally, we get reminded of how little control we actually have. Perhaps you have had to deal with the death of a loved one, or deal with a divorce in your family. It’s at those times that we find out how little control we actually have over our destiny. We realize that we live with the illusion of control but it can be taken away in an instant.

In wrestling, we have things we can control to some extent. We are responsible for how we eat & sleep, how intensely we train, and how well we do in the classroom. You’ve been told that.

Now, consider this from a different angle. *Who gives you the breath to do all that work? Who powers your heart to pump the blood through your veins to carry the nutrients through your body so you can do all that you do? Who fires the neurons so you can comprehend these words being read to you?*

In our Scripture passage, God was teaching Isaiah that our human ability to comprehend is finite, but He is infinite. God’s point of view is so much higher than ours. He sees the blessings in tragedy. He sees the positive in the negative. His thoughts are so much higher than ours that we cannot even comprehend it.

The Bible describes God as “Lord”, who is in “sovereign” control of everything in His domain. Since He created everything, the universe is His domain. **Psalm 103:19 puts it this way; “The Lord has established His throne in the Heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all”.** And in Romans 8:28, the apostle Paul writes “we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Isn’t it a good idea to trust the One who has been around forever, who made everything, and who never lies?

Discussion Questions:

1. What are you trying to control today that you could yield to God as Lord? Is it possible that He could do better than you in this area?
2. When you suffer a setback in your wrestling season or in life, is it reasonable to blame God? Or maybe is it more reasonable to trust that God is in control and is still “working all things together for your good”? Can you trust Him with the disappointments in life, as well as the blessings?
3. What should our “partnership with God” look like? (Answer: He will never do for us, what He calls us to do; but when we step out on faith, He empowers us.)

CLOSE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 8: “The Key to being a real ‘Winner’ – Humility”: (1 Peter 5: 6)

Have you ever seen a wrestler win a big tournament in a dramatic fashion, and then walk off the mat with humility and grace? What do you think of him? Compare that to the athletes who run around pumping their fists in the air, pounding their chest, and telling everyone that “they are the greatest”. Which behavior displays humility, and which behavior displays a narcissistic (self-absorbed) pride?

There is nothing wrong with taking pride in a job well-done. However, when we want to exalt ourselves over others, and be the center of everyone’s attention, we miss the point of life (and competition). That kind of self-absorbed, prideful behavior demonstrates a deep insecurity. If we need the approval of men to feel good about ourselves, we are basing our self-image on the wrong foundation. Someone will eventually come along who can beat us, and then what do we do? A self-image built upon the accolades (rewards) of men is destined to eventually come tumbling down.

God has a better idea. He wants us to realize that we are already special because we are made in His image (Gen. 1: 26-27; Ps.139: 13-14); deeply loved by Him (John 3:16); and created for His own special purpose (Eph. 2:10). A self-image built on this foundation, can handle the disappointments and rejections of life. Our security comes from God, not man. And we can allow Him to build us up as He sees fit. **I Peter 5: 6 says, “Humble yourselves therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.”**

So whether you win or lose a match, remember that you are already special to God, and deeply loved. Winning does not make you a more worthwhile person, and losing does not make you less worthy as a person. When you understand this, humility becomes a mark of your true character. .

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think of a wrestler who wins a big match and reacts with humility?
2. When someone loses a match, and pitches a fit, throwing his headgear, etc..., what do you think his source of self-image is based upon? (Upon God’s approval, or man’s?)
3. How do you want to act when you win a tough match? Or, when you lose a tough one because of a bad call by the ref?
4. How do your reactions in these situations reveal the true nature of our self-image and character?
5. Do you believe that trusting in God’s love for you can affect the pressure you place on yourself before a big match? (Remember putting too much pressure on ourselves can hurt our performance.)

Note: Whether you win or lose, always walk off the mat, with your head held high - with grace, dignity, and humility. **Because when you do your best, that is always good enough for God.**

CONCLUDE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 9: “Train yourself to Listen” (James 1: 19)

In our previous lesson, we discussed what ‘humility’ looks like. Being humble is an important trait, because it also helps us remain “teachable”. When we are “teachable”, we listen to others advice and counsel, and we learn more. This is true in wrestling. It is true in life.

James 1:19 states; “... Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger...”

When we are “quick to hear”, we learn and improve. It is a smart wrestler who listens to his coaches for instruction, even when he’s exhausted, and in the middle of a tough battle. (In fact that is when it might be the most important time to listen.) The best wrestlers, or athletes, are the ones who never stop learning. They are the ones who “soak in” good coaching. However, if we think we know more than the coach, or get ‘defensive’ when people correct us, it means we are not listening, and we are NOT learning. People who are not humble enough to learn from others, eventually “hit a ceiling” in their performance. They may have all the talent in the world, but eventually they reach a point where they stop developing and improving. (This is why some high school “state champs” don’t do so well in college wrestling. They think that because they were state champs, they already know everything.) But the ones who keep listening, learning and working, are the ones who keep improving and reach greater heights.

Proverbs 1: 5 states; “A wise man will hear and increase in learning; and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you have a hard time listening to your coaches, parents, or teachers?
2. Or, do you listen to their advice and think about what they have told you?
3. Does anyone learn anything, without learning it from some other source outside themselves, either from parents, teachers, or coaches, or even from reading good books, good materials?
4. Is a teachable athlete, a good listener, or a poor listener?
5. What kind of athlete, wrestler, student, or person, do you want to be? Humble & teachable? Or arrogant and “un-teachable”? The choice is yours!

CONCLUDE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 10: “Our Invisible Opponent” (Eph. 6: 12 - 18; 1 Peter 5: 8 – 9)

Before you step on the mat to wrestle your opponent, you must first wrestle the invisible opponents – Doubt & Anxiety. You cannot see these invisible opponents, but they are real, and they are tough! Doubt attacks your mind; “Is my technique good enough”, “Will my conditioning get me through the match? Through overtime?”, “this guy looks strong and tough”, etc. Anxiety attacks your body; your heart rate quickens, your stomach churns, and your focus changes. Often these two opponents can be tougher than the actual opponent you face on the mat. However, as you mature in wrestling, you will learn through experience to anticipate and defeat these invisible opponents, so you are ready to achieve your full potential on the mat.

Before you step out of bed each morning to wrestle all the challenges of the day, you must first wrestle another invisible opponent – the Devil. You cannot see this invisible opponent, but he is real, and he is tough! Satan attacks your mind; he whispers “Your behavior is not good enough”, “Your thoughts are sinful”, “You deserve to be punished”, “Nobody, especially God, could possibly love you.” As you mature in your faith, you will learn that Satan is the “Father of Lies”, you will learn to anticipate his attacks, you will learn God’s truth about you and be prepared to defeat the invisible opponent so you are ready to achieve your potential in life – and for eternity.

Ephesians 6: 10 – 12

“Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. ... For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the forces of darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly realm.”

Discussion Questions:

1. When does Doubt attack your mind?
2. What do you do when Doubt attacks your mind?
3. What lies does Satan tell you?
4. What does the Bible say about you?
5. Who do you believe? Why?

CONCLUDE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 11: “Situational Awareness” (1 Cor. 10: 1 - 13)

Situational “awareness” is critical to success in wrestling. If you don’t know what the score is, or how much time is left in the period, you can easily lose close matches. As a wrestler, you must be aware of the situation at all times. If you have your opponent’s leg in the air, you cannot finish the takedown too close to the edge of the mat because the referee may call it ‘out of bounds’. So, you have to carefully pull the man back into the circle to make sure you have the space to ‘finish the move’.

Just as you must know where you are on the mat, and in the match, the same is true about life. You need to know where you are at in life, how you are doing at life. You must be “aware” of yourself, your actions, and behavior, where you are weak, and where you are strong. You also must figure out “where you want to go in life”, and how you are going to get there. All this takes thought and guidance.

Starting well is important, but finishing well is critical.

1 Cor 10: 12-13 states; “¹² So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!

¹³ No temptation^[c] has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted^[d] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted,^[e] He will also provide a way of escape, so that you can endure it.

Matthew 24: 13 states: “...but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

1 Tim. 4:15 states: “Practice these things; be committed to them, so that your progress may be evident to all.”

God wants us to always be aware of our spiritual state and stay on top of the things that will keep us

Discussion Questions:

- A. What is standing in the way of you reaching a deeper walk with God? Is it an excuse, a habit, a distraction, peer pressure?
- B. Where do you want to go with your life? Once we decide, the course will become clear.
- C. Through the struggle, virtue is carved from stone, steel is forged in fire, muscle shaped in the gym; and as iron sharpens iron, so does one man sharpen another. **Who is sharpening you?**
- D. Look in the mirror. **Who are you living to please?**

CONCLUDE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 12: “Respecting Authority”

Rom. 13: 1 – 5

“Everyone must submit to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are instituted by God.... For government is God’s servant to you for good...”

We all report to somebody. For us as student-athletes, there are several people in our chain of command. We have our parents, school bus drivers, teachers, our administrators, and our coaches. Our referees are even authority figures in our sport. One of the big lies in our culture is that it is our job to question decisions we disagree with all the time. While there may be a time and a place for having reasonable debates with those in authority over us, it isn’t always the right time. Also, we have to consider that God put those people in a position of authority over us, so it is our job to respect their position and do our job in our roles. As athletes, we need to trust that God has put our coaches in charge of our wrestling training to make us better athletes and better people. We may not always be happy with their decisions, but we need to respect them and realize that their perspective comes from years of experience that we don’t have.

Sometimes in a wrestling match you may see an official make a questionable call. There are right ways and wrong ways to handle that situation. Hopefully you have seen more right ways than wrong, but it’s a good idea to decide ahead of time how you will respond to that situation.

The same goes in life. Because we are all sinful creatures (like the Bible says and we all know) it is inevitable that we will encounter a decision from our parents, coaches, teachers, or employers that we will not like. Decide today how you will deal with that situation so you don’t have to figure it out in the heat of the moment. Remember **Proverbs 15:1**, “**A kind word turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.**”

Thought Questions:

1. Do you tend to question authority or accept authority? In light of the Scripture from Romans 13, what should be my general disposition to authority figures?
2. Should I unconditionally follow authority figures or are there cases where it is reasonable to question a decision? What is a wrong way to do this? What is the best way to do this?
3. In a wrestling match, what is the best way to honor God in a situation where you disagree with a call?

CLOSE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 13: “Taking Responsibility for your actions / your choices/ your life.” (I John 1: 8 – 10)

No wrestler ever improved without being willing to take a hard look at his performance, evaluate it honestly, and start to work on his areas of weakness. Sometimes this means hours of extra drilling on one fine motor skill (like the hand motion on a high crotch series) just to build muscle memory and quicker reaction time, or extra time in the weight room to increase strength, or extra road work to improve conditioning. The improvement process always starts with an honest evaluation of the wrestler’s abilities, in relation to his long-term goals. The same is true in our relationship with God.

1 John 1:8-9: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness....”

The Gospel is clear. We have sinned, and separated ourselves from our Holy God. As darkness cannot abide in light, neither can sin abide in the presence of pure Holy God. If we cannot admit this truth to ourselves, God’s Word tells us that we deceive ourselves, and His truth is not in us. However, there is great news! The Gospel tells us that if we ‘confess our sins’, God will forgive us our sins, and cleanse us of all unrighteousness. Why will God do this? Because, although “the wages of sin is death” (Rom.6:23), Jesus paid the price of death for us. He was God in the flesh, and humbled Himself upon the cross, paying the penalty of sin for us. Christ became flesh, and our servant hero, and gave His life upon the Cross to pay the debt that we incurred, so that we may rise up and live with Him forever.

Men, we have built up all season to this point, helping you understand how God loves you, wants a relationship with you, and wants to help you in every aspect of your life, (from the mats, to the classroom, to your home life.) You have heard the truth of Gospel: That God loves you; You are a sinner; Christ died upon a Cross to pay the price for your sins, and then rose from the grave; **But, it is not enough to know these things intellectually. To have an eternal relationship with the Lord, you must act on these truths. You must invite the risen Christ into your heart, repent of your sin, and surrender all of yourself to Him.** Now it is up to you to make an important decision.

Thought Questions:

1. Does anyone know what the word “confession” in the New Testament meant? (Answer: “To agree with”.)
2. What are we acknowledging through confession? (Based on the definition of ‘confess’, we are agreeing with God, concerning our disobedient, or indifferent, attitudes and actions.)
3. What does 1 John 1:9 state happens when we confess?

CLOSE WITH A SHORT PRAYER

(See next page to go into a more detailed explanation of the Gospel with any wrestlers who want to stay longer.)

For those who want to stay for a longer conversation, this is an important conclusion to the regular season. You can review the message of the Gospel, utilizing the message below:

As we end the team devotions for the regular season, there is one final / compelling question: “Will you appear someday at God’s “Judgement Seat”, (His “Great White Throne”) and have your hand raised in victory, and receive His imperishable crown?” Or, will you go down in defeat, to an eternity separated from God and His Kingdom of Heaven? If you want to know for sure that you are on God’s team, and a champion in His eyes, there are 4 points you must know and apply:

1. **God created you for an eternal purpose, and He loves you.** John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have eternal life.” God made you (Gen. 1:27); He loves you (John 3:16); and He wants to have a personal relationship with you (John 15:13; Rom.5:1, 10).
2. **Although God created us for a relationship with Him, all of us have rebelled against Him,** and gone our own independent way (at times) with our lives. The Bible calls this attitude “sin”. Rom. 3:23 says “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Sadly, Scripture goes on to say, “The wages (penalty) of sin is death... (Rom. 6:23)”. Death here does not just refer to physical death, but to spiritual death, to spiritual separation from God for all eternity.
3. **The “Good News” is that Jesus came to die on the Cross in our place.** Rom. 5:8 says, “But God demonstrated His love toward us, in that we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” And not only did Jesus take our sin penalty upon Himself, but He conquered death when He rose from the grave on the third day (I Cor. 15: 3-7). Jesus Christ is God’s solution to our problem of sin. Jesus Himself said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and Life, no man comes to the Father, but through Me.” (John 14:6).
4. **The key to joining God’s Team, is turning to God, repenting of our sins (turning from our sin to God), and receiving Jesus Christ into our heart as Lord and Savior.** It is not good enough to just agree intellectually with the first 3 points. We must turn to God and surrender our hearts to Christ. John 1:12 says, “As many as received Him (Christ), to them He gave the right to become children of God.” Jesus Christ is knocking at the door of your heart today (Rev.3:20). Will you open the door, turn from your sin, and ask Him to be the Lord of your life?

Close in a word of prayer, giving all the wrestlers a chance to pray and ask Christ into their lives.

An appropriate prayer may sound something like this:

Sample “Salvation Prayer”:

“Father in Heaven, I know have sinned against you. Thank you for sending Jesus Christ to die on the Cross for my sins. I ask You to forgive me of my sins. I now ask Jesus to come into my heart, and be my Lord and Savior. Please help me Lord to become the kind of man (person) that You want me to be. In Christ’s Name, Amen!”



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 14: “Getting the ‘funk’ out of our life; Keeping right with God.” (I Jn 1:8 -10; Lk. 18:9-14)

What happens when a wrestler is not focused on his goals, and does not discipline himself in his training the way he should? What happens when he starts following the crowd”, or “partying”, when he lets poor eating and sleeping habits become the norm in his life? Of course, we know the answer: Instead of improving as an athlete, he declines. All of these distractions and temptations cause the athlete to fall into a slump, or a “funk”. Just like a wrestler needs to clear the “funk” out of his / her life to succeed on the mats, so we as individuals must clear out the “funk” in our lives to have an unfettered and growing relationship with God.

Last week we talked about how all improvement starts with an honest evaluation of self. It is true in wrestling, and it is true in life. Once again, getting the “funk” out of our lives starts with honest self-evaluation, and honesty in our relationship with God. Just like bad habits can ruin a wrestling career, sin can ruin our relationship with God. Staying humble, repentant, and surrendered will keep you in relationship with Him.

In **Luke 18: 9-14**: Jesus told a parable to some ‘religious leaders’ who were convinced of their own righteousness, and who looked down upon others. Jesus said; "Two men went up into the temple to pray; one was a Pharisee, and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed to himself like this: ‘God, I thank you, that I am not like the rest of men, extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. **’But the tax collector, standing far away, wouldn’t even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’** I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Thought Questions:

1. When you look at your life, who are you most like, (the religious leader who thought he had his act together; or the tax-collector, who was fully aware of his sinful state)?
2. Who did Jesus say had the right attitude?
3. Do you remember what the word “confess” means? (Ans. ‘To agree with God)
4. How can you and I keep / maintain a personal relationship with God? (What is the most important attitude we must have to maintain a relationship with Him? Answer: Humility/honesty with Him and ourselves.)
5. Would you like to begin a personal relationship with God today?

CLOSE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 15: “COUNTING THE COST” (Commitment) (Luke 14: 25-33)

When you were a beginner on the mats, you recall that there was a lot you hadn't counted on. Dieting to get to your weight class was probably a shock to your system. The burn of staying in a wrestling stance for an extended period of time was probably new to you. The repetition of drilling technique may have taxed your attention span. The sheer exhaustion of your very first practice may have caused you to consider quitting that day. However, experienced wrestlers know what they are getting into at the start of a new season. Wrestlers who compete at the international level often relate that they haven't missed a day of practice in years. John Smith practiced the same stance-and-motion drill for six years solid. Champions commit to follow through on their training plan because they know it is necessary.

Jesus told his disciples that true love for God should ‘trump’ everything else we hold dear in life, even our own family, by comparison to our love for Him. He clarified this by saying; “Whoever does not take up his cross and follow Me, cannot be My disciple”. Crucifixion was the most extreme form of execution at that time. In fact, our English word “excruciating” today, comes from the Greek term, meaning “out of the cross”. By telling the disciples that they needed to bear their own cross, he was telling them to even be ready to give up their lives for His sake. Today, there are Christians in countries like North Korea, Nigeria, Iran, Vietnam, and Colombia where Christians are killed simply because they are Christians. *Compare your own faith with that of Christians in the New Testament, or in these countries today, where living as a Christian has always meant living under the threat of imprisonment, torture, or execution.* Why do you think these Christians would show such devotion? Is it possible that they are grateful for being forgiven for their sins, and are looking at the “big picture”?

Jim Elliott was a wrestler for **Wheaton College**, back in the 1950's. He actually wrestled in college just to prepare himself for the rigors of the foreign mission field. He wrote a letter to his parents during his first year in college, saying this: *“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose”*. Jim was later killed, (while in his late 20's), by the Auca Indians on the shore of the Amazon River. Yet just a few years later, his young widow went back to that same area and led the whole tribe to Jesus Christ. This young couple understood what it meant to “count the cost”!

Thought Questions:

6. How does your love for God compare with your love for other things (family, sports, entertainment, possessions, or what your friends think of you)?
7. How does your love for God compare with those believers in countries where Christians are persecuted? Should it be any less?
8. What ways are there to grow in your love and devotion to Jesus?
9. Is it possible that you are only pretending to be a believer? Have you really had your sins forgiven? Resolve this day to settle the matter between you and God.

CLOSE WITH A SHORT PRAYER



FCA Wrestling – Team Huddle

Week 16: “The importance of Rest” (Matt. 11: 28 - 30)

Dan Gable was quoted as saying “There is no such thing as overtraining.” What he was getting at was the fact that the body can go further than the mind thinks it can. This is a very true statement, but it is important for you to get sleep so your body can repair itself.

Even God Himself took a day of rest, after finishing the work of His creation (Gen. 2: 1-2), He took off a full day. And He set up the same system for the people of Israel, that they should work all week, and take one day of rest per week. Imagine always having to train hard all day, 6 days per week, and only being able to stop training for one 24-hour period each week. That’s what the nation of Israel had to do.

In Matt. 11: 28-30, Jesus said; “**Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...and you will find rest for your souls**”. This certainly must have intrigued the Jews when Jesus told them He could be their rest. That would be great news, right? He told His disciples that those who were trying to make up for their sins through ‘good works’ could come to Him, to find rest for their souls. The Jewish sacrificial system, and all their ‘good works’ could not solve the problem of their sin, nor the burden of their souls. Jesus told them only He could give them the rest and peace they needed for their souls. He was the only solution for their “problem of sin”.

Just like a wrestler’s body needs rest, our souls need rest. Today, Jesus is still the only solution for the “sin problem” we all have. Many people think they can please God with their good works, but they fail to realize that even our good works are like filthy rags to God (Isaiah 64:6). Our ‘good works’ cannot match the holiness of God, because we are sinful by nature. **All God wants from us, is our heart.** And that is all we can give Him. Give Him your heart every day, and spend time alone with Him in prayer and Bible study. The better we get to know Him, the more we will become like Him.

Thought Questions:

1. How good are you at taking care of yourself and getting enough physical rest?
2. Where do you turn, to find rest for your soul? (Are you relying on the shallow things of this world to give your soul rest? Are you trusting in your “works” to earn God’s favor?)
3. Or, are you learning to trust in the finished work that Jesus did upon the cross, when He died to pay the penalty for our sins?
4. If you are resting in Jesus, how could you share this good news with others?

CLOSE WITH A SHORT PRAYER