

ON YOUR MARK

X's AND O's OF COLLEGE SPORT MINISTRY

**SPORT MINISTRY TOOLKIT:
U.S. CAMPUS EDITION**



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X'S AND O'S OF COLLEGE SPORT MINISTRY

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Since 1966, Athletes in Action® has been a global pioneer, innovator, and servant leader in sport ministry. Athletes in Action® exists to change lives by building spiritual movements everywhere through the platform of sport: on the field, in the locker room, and under stadium lights. By speaking the language of sport—a language that breaks barriers, transcends differences, and is understood by virtually all—Athletes in Action® brings Jesus and His message of victory into the hearts, homes and communities of millions around the world.

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We would like to hear from you!

If you benefited from this document, please tell us how. We are particularly interested in how these chapters have shaped your understanding of sport ministry in your context. If you have any questions about practical applications in your setting, please write to us at the contact information above. We would love to help in any way we can.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ministry manuals attempt to condense into a useful whole the wealth of ministry experience acquired within a community across many years. This manual, composed at a time when our ministry seeks to give more than 40 years experience away as a matter of Godly stewardship, is no exception. This work is the summation of many Athletes in Action® ministers' efforts since 1966. Sections of this manual were inspired by previous writing from Mark Householder, Cindy White, Reid Lamphere, Karen Zando, and many others from both the US and around the world.

Effective sport ministry need not be complicated, but like all ministries, should benefit from the trial and error of those who precede us in the effort. In short, we should seek the wisdom and direction of others as we listen to God's leading during our own ministry journey. We hope this work represents at least some of the wisdom gathered among our ministers through the years and blesses others for decades to come.

Sola Dei Gloria.





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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

WHO IS ATHLETES IN ACTION®?

Since 1966, Athletes in Action® (AIA) has been a global pioneer, innovator, and servant leader in sport ministry. AIA exists to change lives by building spiritual movements everywhere through the platform of sport: on the field, in the locker room, and in the community. By speaking the language of sport—a language that breaks barriers, transcends differences, and touches even non-participants—AIA brings Jesus and His message of victory into the hearts, homes, and communities of millions around the world.

AIA has a ministry presence in 85 countries, on nearly 125 U.S. college campuses, and on 35 U.S. professional sports teams. Countless volunteers, thousands of athletes, and more than 500 staff members worldwide stand together to share one message: Life's greatest victory is found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Changed lives. A simple yet motivating phrase that gives lift to everything we do as sport ministers. Our goal is to give people an opportunity to encounter Jesus, to help them grow in their faith, and to have them help others encounter Jesus as they continue to journey with Him. If we are effective at trusting God for these things, He uses our efforts to spread His Kingdom around the globe, and changed lives are always the natural result of God's work in the world. It is our privilege to join Him in that work.

If you are reading this manual, you want to be used by God to change lives as well. We consider it a privilege to have you join us in sharing this message in your context. We will provide resources to help you effectively minister during this season of your ministry life. This manual is a resource to help start a sport ministry on the college campus. We pray that God would use you to help change the world one life at a time as you trust Him by faith to work in and through you. Let the adventure of being a sport minister begin!

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This manual is designed to give a greater understanding of the athletic culture and to suggest activities to help you begin a dynamic sport ministry on the college campus. It will also lead you to web sites and make suggestions on where to find other resources. We hope it is practical without being overly pragmatic; sport ministry, like all ministry, should flow from a heart that is nurtured in relationship with Jesus Christ, not simply come as a result of checking off “sport ministry” boxes. Ministry activity done apart from God just clutters the campus with busy bodies, while Spirit-infused work changes the world. We'll offer the boxes to check—you need to walk with God.

We recognize there will be different audiences using this manual. Perhaps you are a staff member of a ministry looking for input on how to relate more effectively to an athletic culture. Others will be student leaders on campus needing more input on how to do ministry. Obviously, a student still attending school and perhaps even competing on the team they are seeking to reach will relate differently to an athletic department than someone doing this work vocationally and as an outsider. Whatever your ministry experience or current relationship to the administration, we hope this manual will help fill your ministry toolbox with sharp, relevant ideas on how to engage the sport culture to God's glory!

Like the warning issued when taking high school tests, we are asking you to read through all the instructions first before starting on campus. Don't jump around in the readings unless you are already experienced in campus ministry. You are probably anxious to get started, but the information we have gathered could keep you from making unnecessary mistakes or inadvertently closing doors by losing credibility. Athletic departments can be a difficult and sensitive environment. We'll flow from understanding the sport culture to engaging the sport culture; spend more time in the areas less familiar to you.

Several chapters of this manual have **Get It Done** sections. These are suggested activities or guiding questions that can help you process what you read. When you are finished reading, find **The Gameplan** which gives you a general order for beginning your time on campus. Enough introduction—let's go!!

CHAPTER 2

TRUSTING GOD FOR SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS



SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS

An athletic ministry should develop a core of strong spiritual leaders among athletes and coaches who can begin connecting with and teaching others. We want to help them embrace 2 Timothy 2:2, “And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” When properly equipped, they will begin to trust God to produce faithful men and women who will build into the lives of others. This process is known as “spiritual multiplication.”

Involving them in a “spiritual movement” is the most effective way to see men and women become spiritual multipliers. A spiritual movement occurs when God works through a team of like-hearted people to win others to Himself (evangelism), build them in their faith (discipleship), and send them to the world to do the same (multiplication). It is a groundswell of Spirit-empowered Christian athletes and athletic department personnel who embrace a common purpose in order to bring about a beneficial change: to become actively involved in helping fulfill the Great Commission: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you . . .” (Matthew 28:18-20).

MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

1. **Evangelism: effective personal and broad sowing, connecting lost people to Jesus**
2. **Discipleship: life changing one-to-one interactions and small group mentoring**
3. **Multiplication of leaders**
4. **Generation of local resources (vision, people, ideas, materials, funding, ministry tools, etc.)**

What sets a movement apart from ministry are the last two items. If you are doing evangelism and if those who come to Christ are beginning to follow Him, then you have “ministry.” But when you have a growing number of men and women reproducing others who win, build and send, and when you are able to sustain this ongoing reproduction locally, you have transitioned to “movement.”

Note: the implied variable undergirding all this activity is prayer. As we’ve already stated, ministry work apart from communion with the Father will not produce the lasting fruit we seek. We are not simply asking God to bless our ideas of what should happen, but asking him to “establish the work of our hands” (Psalm 90) that He has given us to do.

OTHER WORDS DESCRIBING A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT

1. Organic, bottom-up, and grass roots feel but purposeful, unified, and focused action
2. Driven by God's word and prayer
3. Dedication and sacrifice
4. Developing leadership
5. Always seeks to bring about change
6. Always ask for commitment of those involved
7. Members have differing levels of commitment
8. Involves a cause sufficiently great enough that it touches the hearts of people who say, "I want things to be different"
9. The perceived change must be so different or beneficial that it brings forth and requires the best from people
10. Movements are a minority of people trying to influence and change the majority

VISUALIZING A MOVEMENT THROUGH SPIRIT-LED CONCEPTS

Momentum: Refers to large numbers of people going in the same direction. Momentum events spark interest and expand vision. They build enthusiasm, excitement and action by stretching peoples' faith.

Multiplication: Involves the training of a new generation of leadership. There can be no movement without the training of new leadership. The movement will expand only as leadership is developed.

Management: Involves the planning, organizing, leading, and empowering of a movement. Leadership and management of movement processes transform enthusiasm into action. Without them, no movement can be sustained for any length of time.

TWO ILLUSTRATIONS

Suppose a father offers his two sons the choice of taking either \$1 per week for 52 weeks or \$.01 the first week and an amount each week for the next 52 weeks that is double the previous week's amount. Which of the two should the sons choose?

The first choice represents addition. At the end of one year the son would receive \$52. The second choice represents multiplication or exponential growth. If the sons choose this option, the amount at the end of the

year is almost unbelievable. The amount of money the boy would receive in just the 52nd week alone, not the total amount accumulated over the 52 weeks, would be \$22,517,998,136,852! Multiplication is explosive. (Henrichsen, W., *Disciples are Made-Not Born* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1974), page 174)

The following chart demonstrates the difference between an addition ministry and a multiplication ministry. Two scenarios are represented. First, one person who reaches 100 people per day for 16 years. Second, the process of building disciples who build other disciples by having each disciple build into another disciple every six months.

Obviously, our motivation has nothing to do with accumulating pennies but everything to do with growing people! One of the hardest parts of working through the process of spiritual multiplication is the need to be

Years	Reach 100 day	Each disciple build a disciple/6 months
1	36,500	4
2	73,000	16
3	109,500	64
4	146,000	256
5	182,500	1,024
6	219,000	4,096
7	255,500	16,384
8	292,000	65,536
9	328,500	262,144
10	365,000	1,048,576
11	401,500	4,194,304
12	438,000	16,777,216
13	474,500	67,108,864
14	511,000	268,435,456
15	547,500	1,073,741,824
16	584,000	4,294,967,296

patient and stay the course. If you begin to compare ministry results with places that encourage addition, your first couple of years will be discouraging (“They have 146, 000 and we only have 256!”), and you will be tempted to start adding instead of multiplying.

Even if these graphs don’t strike a chord in your soul, consider this: you are here ready to minister to others because someone, somewhere, sometime built into you. Somebody prayed for you, answered your questions, helped you love God by explaining His word, made you want to live differently because of the life you saw in

them. You can “be a revolution” simply by gathering others around you who are hungry to grow, then turning them loose to do the same.

Movements are the goal. Athletes are the audience. So let’s consider the world of college athletics and the mind of the players and coaches we seek to serve.



GET-IT-DONE-GET-IT-DONE-GET-IT-DONE

GET-IT-DONE

Spend a day with the Lord praying for your campus. Pray through the elements of a spiritual movement and ask God to guide you in how to be part of His work.

- Have you ever been part of a spiritual movement as described above?** If so, what was it like for you? If not, have you ever read about one or know someone who has been part of one? Find something to read or someone to talk to you that will help give you an idea of what a movement feels like.

- Who has invested in your life spiritually? Can you think of others you have invested in?** Draw this on a piece of paper, and draw another generation of people being reached by the people you are investing in.

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CHAPTER 3

PERSPECTIVE ON ATHLETIC MINISTRY



ATHLETIC MINISTRY

Media icons. Superstars. Heroes. Role Models. Top level athletes are crowned with flattering titles and lofty expectations. The atmosphere around them is charged and exciting. Crowds flock to watch their every move—on and off the fields and courts. People clamor for an autograph, a handshake, a nod. In our culture, athletes are uniquely gifted people in glamorized positions able to influence and inspire thousands of people. Not all of them do, at least not positively, but that is not the point—we live in an age where athletes are honored, at times even worshiped, and that must be taken seriously.

But once the hype fades away, athletes are just people. People with fears, hurts, desires. People longing to be loved and valued beyond their performance. People who, in spite of their accomplishments and worldly perks, their adulation and peer attention, need to know that Jesus loves them and wants to bring them into a right relationship with God. Unique in their physical gifting, perhaps skewed in their view of self by the constant and unrelenting attention, yet entirely unremarkable in their humanity. A minister seeking to influence this group must see the athlete as God sees them, not as the media or fans or administrations see them.

However, they *are* people whose opportunity to advance Kingdom causes reaches far beyond the scope of the average person. For whatever reason, God allowed sports to rise to a place of prominence in our culture rivaled only by other entertainment vehicles like movies and music. Therefore, those who participate in sports, especially at the college and professional levels but also at lower levels, are in a position to influence the lives of people watching them, listening to them, looking to them for a life to model. We believe a culture looking to athletes as heroes must find some of those athletes looking to Jesus as Lord.

10 RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION: “WHY ATHLETES?”

1. Athletes have a ready-made platform to share Christ through radio, TV, magazines, campus and local newspapers, testimony cards, books, as well as personal appearances before groups of all sizes. When God transforms this stage into a launching pad, they can reach a roommate, a team, a department, a federation, a league, a campus, a community, a city, a region, a state, a country.
2. Athletes influence youth and the surrounding community. Most athletes have tremendous influence on younger athletes. They have phenomenal opportunities to shape a young person’s life and character.
3. Athletes can open doors to every level of society—including business, government, media, entertainment, education.

4. These athletes will one day grow up to be future Little League and AAU coaches, moms and dads of athletes, community followers of sport wherever God ends up placing them. Equipping them well as college students gives them a foundation to build upon as post-college adults; we are affecting future generations and communities by infusing these athletes with Kingdom values.
5. Athletes can use their platform to help the social side of the gospel: alleviating suffering in parts of the world that go unnoticed by most people through fund development, focused attention, building developments, resource redistribution.
6. Athletes can get the attention and respect of a difficult demographic to reach with the gospel worldwide—men.
7. Athletes can easily cross international borders. American athletic teams are highly sought all over the world; therefore, a Christian team or individual can gain entrance into countries where full-time missionaries are restricted or forbidden.
8. Athletes are in a natural environment for developing a ministry. A movement can develop quickly within a team. An athletic team is a natural ministry environment for Christian players, coaches, or trainers because of the amount of time they spend together in practice, on road trips, at tournaments, in the dorm/apartment.
9. College athletes are harder to reach by those who do not understand the athletic mindset or experience. Some campus ministers might even be intimidated to approach athletes.
10. The most important apologetic for reaching athletes with the gospel: athletes need Christ!

BEFORE BECOMING A SPORT MINISTER...

Before starting a ministry to athletes, you should evaluate your own heart and motives for this particular type of ministry. While many characteristics are common to all ministers, certain qualities are particularly necessary for those working among athletes. Has God called you to work with athletes specifically? What is your motivation for engaging athletes with the gospel? Why would you choose athletes instead of some other people group to pursue?

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SPORT MINISTER:

- Committed to prayer.** Not because Christians pray, but because apart from God no inner transformation takes place among those whose god is sport/adulation, no favor granted by secular athletic departments/federations, no lifetime fruit is born, no worship is engendered in the heart of the athlete.
- Secure in Christ.** Living out a confidence whose identity is grounded in the Lord. Asks God to create favor instead of “trying” to be accepted, liked, respected or constantly working to prove that “I understand athletes” or

“I used to be a good athlete, too” or “You should respect me because I know Name Drop”.

- ❑ **Worldliness in check.** Not mesmerized by the glamour/fascination of hanging around athletic departments and athletes. The higher the level of competition, the greater the temptation to be impressed by it.
- ❑ **Patient.** A ministry to top athletes can be frustratingly slow. The pool of people to work with is small and secular idolatry runs deep. Fruit may be slow-growing.
- ❑ **Discerning.** The effective sport minister wrestles with competing tensions: recognizing that he/she is an outsider while still being a peer to the administration; exercising discernment with words while never losing a prophetic voice as God’s man/woman. Chooses battles wisely.
- ❑ **Servant leader.** Looking for ways to “be the least of these” among a people who are striving to “be at the top”.
- ❑ **Loving heart.** Constantly re-stoking compassion for the plight of people living in a broken world.
- ❑ **Social skills/emotional maturity.** Aware of self enough to understand where you fit in. Not prone to have conflict with others. Able to listen well, knows when to keep quiet, when to speak up. Learning to connect with those both older and younger while being oneself.
- ❑ **Convinced of the value of reaching the athlete.** Other activities which are easier and more immediately fruitful will always be tempting to pursue. Unless you are totally convinced of what God wants to do in and through athletes, you will not give the necessary time to make it successful.
- ❑ **Teachable.** A person who wants to understand sport and the athletic mindset that governs participants. Be willing to study the sport, the team and the players. Be able to nurture the athlete by making spiritual matters relevant to what is happening in their athletic world. A desire to grow as a minister.
- ❑ **Trustworthy.** You must be faithful to keep the athlete’s information confidential and be trustworthy around coaches.
- ❑ **Committed to teaching God’s word and promoting Kingdom values.** Not serving primarily as sport psychologist, athletic department booster, or surrogate parent (though all these roles may be exercised at different times), but seeking to brand God’s word on their heart.
- ❑ **Connected in a Christian community.** Lone rangers in the Christian life don’t survive long. Isolation and superficiality parches the soul. When engaging in ministry, you invite Satan’s ire: you will need the love, support, and wisdom of a caring community to stay connected to Jesus and live well along the way.

Not all of the above characteristics have to be perfectly in place before one is qualified for sport ministry, but when these characteristics lack maturity in the life of the sport minister, a difficult ministry will be made that much harder.

BASIC PHILOSOPHIES OF SPORTS MINISTRY

Before reading further, we would recommend going to Appendix 2 and reading the John Ashley Null paper on the difference between ministry to athletes and ministry through athletes. Null illuminates key distinctions in approaching athletes for ministry. We should be conscious of how and why we are interacting with the athlete and always know the audience we are seeking to reach.

For our purposes here, AIA ministers should strive after both: ministry to the athlete by bringing them to Christ and building them in their faith, and ministry through the athlete by sending them back to their teams, campuses, and communities to reach others for Christ. Ministry through the athlete need not “identify Christianity as closely as possible with sporting success to gain a hearing”, but we must be good stewards of the platform God provides the athlete and give opportunities to point others to Christ. Ultimately, we are praying for spiritual movements, not just big events for the sake of splash.

Danger lies at the extremes. Constantly seeking “big events” to put Christian athletes on display can easily devolve into a manipulative circus where the sport minister gets his/her ego stroked but the athletes get used. Conversely, only spending time together in a Bible study circle, never seeking to use the God-given platform inherent in college athletics becomes isolating and equally selfish. In either case, movements are thwarted. Ask God for discernment regarding how to minister to the athlete while also ministering to those watching the athletes.

Next we’ll consider what goes on in and around the sport world and the athletes and administrators who comprise the department.



- What examples have you seen, either personally or in the media, of the platform of athletics being used?** Try to think of both negative and positive examples.

- What was your response as you read through the characteristics of a sport minister? Were there areas that stood out to you that you need to develop?** Tell someone in your life about these areas and ask them for help in pursuing growth.

- Are you currently connected to a biblical community? If so, what has that experience been like for you? If not, what is your plan to seek connection?**

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT



ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

OVERVIEW OF THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

A ministry to athletes on the college campus will probably involve more than just the athletes themselves. Relationships with the other human parts of the athletic department are crucial. Understanding who these people are and the importance of their role in the department should not be overlooked, not primarily because they can open doors for you, but because they too are created in the image of God and need Jesus. The key players in the department include at least the following:

Athletes: Obviously. Realize that each athlete is essentially “owned” by the athletic department. The department dictates their schedule, their off-season, and not infrequently who has access to them. We must both understand and respect the role the athletic department plays in athlete’s lives.

Coaches: The gatekeepers to the players. Coaches’ favor cannot be controlled, but it can certainly be sought. Coaches usually have maximum power regarding what happens around their team/players. They can also lose their job after a bad year which adds to their stress. Out of respect for their position, you should try to meet with a coach before trying to start a ministry with his/her team. Sometimes assistant coaches are the gate keepers; be discerning before plunging forward.

Athletic Director: While listed above the coach on the organizational chart, ADs vary in their influence regarding individual teams. Some ADs exert maximum control over the entire department and dictate who will or will not have access to the teams. Most let the coaches determine parameters. In either case, lack of favor with the AD may slam the door immediately since most coaches will not put their own good standing in jeopardy; it is important to familiarize yourself with his/her thinking toward sport ministries. It’s not necessary to meet with the AD before beginning a ministry (they are incredibly busy), but in some cases it may be wise.

Sports Information Director (SID): This position has increased in importance as media becomes more and more a part of all that goes on around teams. An SID is connected to those outside the organization with media pull, and may be able to educate you on how to publicize local ministry events.

Equipment managers, trainers, other GA's: These are the folks that make the team function. Especially at the bigger schools, team activities are a major production that simply wouldn't happen apart from these folks. While not having the same platform as the athletes themselves, plenty of movements find their beginnings among spiritually interested servers of the department. Trainers get a lot of face time with athletes at games, practices, in rehab for injuries. They can play a crucial encouragement/ministry role in the department.

Secretaries: Remember, secretaries are gatekeepers to the gatekeepers! Don't confuse their service role in the department with lack of influence. Meeting with coaches and administrators can be a process made smooth or difficult by the folks who set their schedule for the week. A positive or negative seed planted about you by a secretary may affect a coach/administrator's view of you before you ever show up. It should go without saying: mind your manners and seek to serve everyone in the department!

COMPLIANCE DEPARTMENT:

Responsible to enforce all NCAA rules, this department monitors potential violations and self-reports when a violation does occur. While athletic department "insiders", they must monitor the entire department for policy infringement, including those associated with athletes or coaches in any way (you!). Thus, you have a responsibility to know and abide by the rules without exception. Knowing and following the rules is mandatory—even those that seem ridiculous to you. Because rule interpretations vary on each campus, we recommend meeting with your compliance officer for both the policies and their interpretation, asking questions that are practically relevant to you. For example, what are the parameters regarding buying meals for athletes on this campus? Can we use the official campus logo on a brochure? Obviously, violations result in serious consequences for the athletes, coaches, administrators—and your credibility as a campus minister. Take this department seriously; they may save you unnecessary embarrassment.

Academic advisors and student-athlete support department: Athletic departments usually have a support department for the athletes. Each team has an academic advisor who meets with the athletes to help them schedule classes and find tutors. These advisors can play a key role in athletes lives and are usually very committed to helping the athletes succeed as people, not just as student-athletes. Some support departments also have staff that teach classes for athletes that help them adjust to college life. There are usually counselors and sports psychologists and doctors that work primarily with athletes. There will also be a regular meeting of

student-athletes, usually one or two from each team, that serve as a link with the support services. This group may also plan community service opportunities and social events. Any of these support staff can be wonderful resources to the ministry.

CONVERGENCE OF MULTIPLE BACKGROUNDS

College athletic departments are fertile ground for learning about human differences. Diversity in most athletic departments exists across racial, cultural and socioeconomic categories.

African Americans may be more prevalent in the athletic department than the rest of the campus. Those beginning a ministry to football, basketball or track teams in particular need to be learners of the African American culture. However, discussion of race should not be limited to black and white athletes; athletes attend college in the United States from all over the world. Prepare to build bridges across cultures no matter your ethnicity and expect to be reeducated by the diversity you encounter.

Note: diversity exists even among African American athletes. Not every black athlete is an African American. For example, they may be Jamaican or Kenyan or Nigerian and will not appreciate being labeled as African American. Not every African American athlete comes from an urban, black area either; some are more comfortable operating in the white culture, some in both, some in neither. *(See the article by Charles Gilmer at www.aia.com/resources for more insight into the different cultural backgrounds you will encounter.)* You will meet athletes and coaches from many ethnic and racial backgrounds, and though you do not need a degree in International Relations to be an effective minister, be aware and sensitive to these cultural differences. Do not deny a crucial reality: your own culture has shaped you and how you view those from different backgrounds. Submit your bias' to the cross.

Within most athletic departments, many socioeconomic categories are represented. Some come from very wealthy families, while others couldn't attend college without an athletic scholarship. Students from either end of this spectrum perceive life differently. For instance, athletes who do not need a scholarship may have different motivations for competing or different attitudes toward their athletic career.

You will meet athletes who compete with differing levels of intensity. Some are primed to continue their career beyond college, either going on to professional teams or national teams. They will endure more stress and pressure to train, improve and avoid injury. Other athletes, such as non-scholarship "walk-ons" or those who do not get much playing time, will have a different outlook and attitude toward competing. Sometimes these athletes are more motivated, driven toward proving themselves or simply playing for the love of the game. Or they may be less motivated because they are not receiving the same benefits as other teammates.

Be yourself. You need not talk with an East Coast accent or start listening to rap or country or ska to fit in. But you might sample things you've never sampled in order to understand and appreciate the diversity

surrounding you. Be intentional to know each athlete as an individual. Be a student of their lives, listening to their stories, asking good questions to educate yourself. Do not rely on stereotypes or first impressions rooted in ignorance; discover and embrace the uniqueness and distinctiveness that God places in each person.

ENGAGING THE COLLEGE ATHLETE

Imagine attending a church with a large number of engineers. Represented are many different types of engineers, some men, some women, with differing educational backgrounds and histories. But they all share certain qualities as part of the sub-culture “engineer”: a love of details, high math capacity, projects with beginnings and endings, etc.

Athletes form a subculture of their own—they play different sports, come from different backgrounds, but nevertheless share certain characteristics common to those who make up the athletic sub-culture. While each athlete is unique in their God-given personality, history, temperament, etc., certain qualities are shared (though not always) among the sub-culture called “athlete.”

Carl Spackler, the groundskeeper of the Bushwood Country Club in the movie *Caddyshack*, offers this bit of advice for gopher-hunters: “My enemy, my foe, is an animal. In order to conquer the animal, I have to learn to think like an animal. And, whenever possible, to look like one. I've gotta get inside this guy's pelt and crawl around for a few days.” Grasping the athletic mindset will help you anticipate ministry paths for transformation. If you want to connect, you'd be wise to absorb *10 things the Athletes Would Like You to Know* into your system.

10 Things the Athlete Would Like You to Know But May Never Tell You

<p><i>"If I don't play well or get to play at all, I'll let everyone down. People-pleasing and meeting others (and my own) expectations drives my life."</i></p>	<p>Pressure to please: Must please coaches, teammates, family, friends, professors, high school friends/teachers, media, and themselves. Belonging to the team demands being accepted by the team; being accepted by the team, in the average athletes mind, demands being one of the best performers on the team.</p>
<p><i>"How I feel about myself and my place in the world is directly tied to my performance. All of life is a stage and I am constantly on it."</i></p>	<p>Pressure to perform: Athletes constantly grapple with performing under pressure—mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, social. Their value and worth are tied to position, playing time, statistics, W/L record, 40-times, skills related to other players. They tend to carry this pressure into every area of life, including the spiritual area.</p>
<p><i>"Sports are my life, and if they are taken away, I'm not sure what I'd do. Behind the appearance of invincibility, I'm constantly dealing with a low-grade sense of fear."</i></p>	<p>Fear Factor: They exude confidence but mask a strong fear of failure; risk of injury; lack of approval from others; loss of position; loss of finances/scholarship; not measuring up; not considered the best by media/fans. They have a strong fear of failure and yet an uncanny belief in their own abilities. The fear comes from the reality that at any time they could be "finished": An injury, the whim of a coach, a teammate or the next "up and coming star" could replace them. But they have reached a high level because they believe in their own ability or they are out to prove that they have ability. Competitive life is a risk and played out in an arena beyond their control. They know it will one day end and that prospect scares them to death, especially as they near the end of their eligibility.</p>
<p><i>"Most people don't understand me and what really drives me, nor do they care about me apart from my sport."</i></p>	<p>Socially isolated/suspicious: Relationships limited to the "right" people. As is often the case with sub-cultures, they don't mix easily with others outside the athletic bubble. They look for relationships with people they can trust who understand the stress but also understand the glory of training and competition. Add the "celebrity" factor to the equation, and it becomes difficult to find someone who not only understands but also genuinely cares for them apart from their sport.</p>
<p><i>"I have exactly 22 minutes of unscheduled time each day."</i></p>	<p>Limited free time: Especially true at scholarship schools but increasingly true at every level of competition down to 12-year-old AAU leagues, the demands of participation controls their lives and how they spend their limited free time.</p>
<p><i>"I am important as an athlete, at least that's what everyone has always told me."</i></p>	<p>False pride: Because of the attention paid to athletes by surrounding culture, they probably think more highly of themselves than they ought. The world starts to revolve around them. Can border in some cases on narcissism.</p>
<p><i>"What else is there to life than practice and games and sports in general?"</i></p>	<p>Imbalanced life: Athletes can become so consumed with their sport that they neglect other important aspects of their lives, with little time to build a well-rounded life. The "dumb jock" stereotype is certainly not true across the board, but most athletes spend an inordinate amount of time playing, thinking, talking sports.</p>
<p><i>"I wish I had a friend who can talk about matters that go beneath the surface."</i></p>	<p>Soul Cravings: All the while surrounded with people, their friendships tend toward superficiality and fail to satisfy at the core. Who can understand the pressure? Who will care for them in spite of performance? Who can answer life's deeper questions? The default answer seems to be "no one". Athletes are craving someone to be interested in their life wholistically. People have interest in them because of who they are or what they have achieved, but rarely can give spiritual, emotional direction.</p>
<p><i>"People are always giving me breaks and I've been able to avoid taking responsibility for many areas of my life."</i></p>	<p>Privileged and spoiled: Often enjoy special privileges; used to being catered to and coddled, pampered by those off the field/court. Players may no longer be thankful to have earned their position, but often arrive expecting their "rights".</p>
<p><i>"I need something to live for besides conference championships."</i></p>	<p>Challenge-oriented: They want something big enough to which they can give their all. Athletes are motivated by challenges. Though this motivation probably starts out as an unhealthy desire to perform/please, it nevertheless is an important part of their psychological make-up—give me something that gets me out of bed in the morning and demands my best.</p>

TIPSTIPSTIPSTIPSTIPSTIPSTIPS

SOME INITIAL TIPS ON ENGAGING THE ATHLETIC SOUL

☐ Pressure to please

- Teach them about a God of grace and acceptance, not just a God that has more expectations of them.
- Make sure you aren't putting a burden of expectation on them spiritually. There's a delicate balance between setting some spiritual goals/having discipline and becoming another legalistic burden.
- Teach identity in Christ.
- **Bible passages:** Romans 8:31-39; Ephesians 1:3-8; 1 Peter 2:9,10

☐ Pressure to perform

- Encourage them for faithfulness, obedience to God, taking small steps forward.
- Help them understand God's standard is faithfulness and obedience, which involves sinning and repentance, not pitching the perfect game or always doing the right thing. God is not like a harsh or demanding Coach or Father.
- Model unconditional love, unheard of concept for most athletes.
- If they've failed in their commitment to Christ, don't get down on them. Model God's grace to them, then talk through the situation and how to handle it better the next time. Help them to see their Christian growth as a process (Philippians 3:10-15).
- **Bible passages:** Romans 8:1-4, Ephesians 2:1-10, 1 Timothy 1:12-17

☐ Fear Factor

- Eternal perspective.
- We're here for reasons other than performing and God is in control of all things.
- Give them confidence that there is life after competition and help them make the transition.
- **Bible passages:** Luke 12:4,5; Deuteronomy 31:8; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

☐ Socially isolated/suspicious

- Need to relate outside of sport world, because one day they will be a neighbor to a non-athlete.
- Be concerned about all aspects of their life, but emphasize the non-sport areas when obviously lacking.
- Help them develop relationships away from sports with people they can trust and talk to openly.
- **Bible passages:** 1 Corinthians 12:1-26; Matthew 5:14-16; Hebrews 10:25

❑ **Limited free time**

- They must make priority decisions with time.
- Don't be offended or give up on them if they miss an appointment or cannot meet for an extended period of time.
- Teach them a biblical view of time, what matters to God and eternity.
- Teach them time-management principles so that they can invest their lives well.
- **Bible passages:** Psalm 90 (esp. v 12); Ephesians 5:15,16; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

❑ **False Pride**

- Life is not about you.
- Help them understand that if they lived in a different time, place, or era they wouldn't get the same attention for being an athlete.
- Show them how God can use their platform as athletes, help them think creatively about service.
- **Bible passages:** 1 Peter 5:6, Romans 12:3, Matthew 23:1-12, John 13:1-17, Philippians 2:1-11; Philippians 3:1-16

❑ **Imbalanced Life**

- Need for self-control and balance in academic, social, financial and family life.
- Teach them other life skills: finances, relationships, home skills, etc.
- Help them understand their life is not their own, but is on loan to them, a stewardship that goes beyond personal achievement.
- **Bible passages:** Luke 12:13-21; Ecclesiastes 2:4-11 & 3:1-8, Colossians 3:17, 23-24; Ephesians 5:15-16

❑ **Soul Cravings**

- Vulnerability with your own life helps create real connection.
- Show interest in their family and other significant areas of their life.
- Teach them what to look for in a safe person.
- **Bible passages:** Isaiah 26:7-11; Psalm 42: 1,2; Isaiah 55:1-3; Revelation 21:1-8; John 4:1-26 & 6:35; Ephesians 3:14-21; 2 Peter 1:3

❑ **Privileged and spoiled**

- Do not be intimidated by them.
- Help them see their life is a gift/loan from God.
- Take them to volunteer in prison or underprivileged situations or on an international mission trip.
- Teach God's heart for humility.
- **Bible passages:** Luke 12:41-48; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 (esp. v15); Galatians 2:20; Job 1:21; James 2:1-4

❑ **Challenge oriented**

- Give them specific challenges to help them take the next step toward walking with God.
- All of their lives, athletes have been motivated by the next level or the next challenge. Once you sense the athlete is ready, give them the next hurdle to leap. The more you expect, the more you will get. God's #1 goal is for their characters to be transformed into the image of Christ. Sport is a vehicle God is using towards that end.
- **Bible passages:** Philippians 1:15-27; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 9:23-25

The athlete also needs to understand how to apply Christ in every dimension of his or her life. If they obtain an integration of faith into life, they will more naturally share their faith openly with teammates and other people.

We want to teach athletes that sport and competition can be a worship experience, a strange thought even for a Christian athlete. In AIA, we teach the intersection of sport and faith through five biblical themes called The AIA Principles. The Principles are basic Christian faith applied to sport. These principles are taught at every AIA Summer Opportunity and are expanded upon in the book *Game Day Glory: Life Changing Principles for Sport*, available at www.aiagear.com. The following is a summary outline of the Principles.

Principle One	<i>Audience of One</i>	1 Kings 18:20-40	God Owns You and Your Sport
Principle Two	<i>Inside Game</i>	Luke 15:11-32	God's Love is the Maximum Motivation
Principle Three	<i>Holy Sweat</i>	Luke 4:1-13	God Provides Resources for Spiritual Training
Principle Four	<i>Hurtin' for Certain</i>	Genesis 37-50	God Allows Pain to Deepen Your Character
Principle Five	<i>Victory Beyond Competition</i>	Matthew 25:14-30	God's Playing Field Extends Beyond Your Competition

ENGAGING THE COLLEGE COACH

Today's college coach faces pressure comparable to the most stressful jobs in the country. Once a profession sought by those whose primary skill set involved teaching the game and caring for the athlete, today's coach handles the demands of a *Fortune 500* CEO. Coaches face long hours, relentless expectations, and a commitment to a job that can be taken away at any time. Sky rocketing finances, intense and competitive recruiting, unforgiving boosters, media scrutiny, ineligible players—welcome to the world of college coaching.

6 Things a Coach Thinks and Feels But May Never Say	
<i>"No matter what I do, somebody is always unhappy with me."</i>	Constant criticism: Parents, media, administration, players, students, fans, even friends and family—somebody always knows what coach should've done and they see it as their right and duty to let him/her know.
<i>"Winning isn't the most important thing, it's the only thing."</i>	Pressure to win: In some programs, 10-1 just isn't good enough. Not infrequently, coaches with winning records get fired. A winning record doesn't always cut it, so you better win every game. Even where the occasional loss is tolerated, coaches themselves struggle not to derive their self-worth from the final score. Winning is intoxicating; unfortunately, losing provides a harsh and unforgiving detox.
<i>"My players could have used a good spanking from somebody when they were younger."</i>	Player attitudes: Most players come recruited into programs. Psychologically, they can start to believe they are doing the program (perhaps especially the coach) a favor. Spoiled kids wear their parents out; spoiled players make a coach wonder why he's not doing something else.
<i>"My entire life revolves around convincing the best 17-year-old players in the country to come live in my city for the next four years."</i>	Recruiting Top-100 Players: While not always the final measure, a team's success and ability to compete for conference/national championships usually depends on getting the best players. Coaches spend countless hours pursuing students, sometimes beginning when the player is still in Junior High, and hardly have a moment to finish a season before the relentless pursuit for the next class continues.
<i>"I wish I had someone to trust who understands and can help me sort through my pressures without thinking I'm weak."</i>	Superficial relationships: Coaches get more paranoid than the players when it comes to trusting those outside the program, but they'd love to have someone who gets it that isn't out to get them. A careless word slipped to the media, a player who takes something the wrong way, assistant coaches vying for their job—a coach learns quickly that words and relationships should be handled with care.
<i>"I need a drink."</i>	Drugs and alcohol: Perhaps because of the pressure, coaches are particularly susceptible to the escape posed by alcohol and other drugs that take some of the edge off their stressful existence.

TIPSTIPSTIPSTIPSTIPSTIPS

SOME INITIAL TIPS ON ENGAGING COACHES

- Focus on them and listen for what God is doing in their soul.** It is likely that no one else is doing this work for/with them. Most would like to have someone they can trust from "outside" the program who loves and champions them.

- Get them into God's word.** Give God a chance to reshape their thinking on competition, ethics, relationships. Let the power of His word be unleashed in the heart and mind of the coaches to bring about change.
- Be a steel trap with your conversations.** Be trustworthy with the things they tell you by not repeating your conversations to others.
- Make their lives easier.** This will look different for each coach and each situation, but you should ask God for creative ways to serve them that go beyond what others who are "looking for something" might do.
- Pray that God would develop coaches who know Him and want to be used by Him to reach their peers.** The best person to reach a coach is another coach.



GET-IT-DONE-GET-IT-DONE-GET-IT-DONE

GET-IT-DONE

- What positive and negative experiences have you had with issues of diversity?** Spend some time praying for wisdom in ministering within a diverse setting.

- What did you learn in reading the sections on understanding and engaging with athletes and coaches? How will this information help you in ministry?**

CHAPTER 5

GETTING THE MINISTRY STARTED



GETTING STARTED

Athletes in Action® takes its marching orders from Matthew 28:18-22: Go and make disciples. CCC (Campus Crusade for Christ)/AIA builds upon the “Win, Build, Send” philosophy of making disciples. The ongoing process of winning people to Christ (evangelism), building them in their faith (discipleship) and then sending out to do the same (multiplication) is the core of our ministry activity. Prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit are at the heart of a spiritual movement from which the activities flow.

- Win Boldly (Evangelism) – to proclaim Christ to every person
- Build Deeply (Discipleship) – to develop leaders and build movements everywhere
- Send Urgently (Spiritual Multiplication) – to multiply disciples, mobilize co-laborers and initiate partnerships

This section provides some specific activities as you begin an athletic ministry. However, it is not designed to give you all the how-to's or specific ministry skills, but to spur your thinking and motivate you to create your own vision as you walk with the Lord and follow His leading. Other material is available from CCC to develop the necessary skills if you need them.

GETTING IN THE DOOR

Before you begin meeting people within the athletic department, you need to do a little homework. Once you have finished reading the previous sections, you can start working on the *Getting to Know the Campus* in Appendix 3. From the information you gather, you will be well-positioned to pursue these next steps. **The Gameplan** will also help in deciding what to do when you are ready to move forward.

With this information gathered, ask God which team or athletes He wants you to begin pursuing and ask yourself this question: Who is the main decision maker who determines my access to the team/players? This will usually be the coach, but might also include other administrators within the department. The coach is the key person. Everything depends on what he/she decides, so begin praying for favor and opportunity with this person. Assistant coaches can also be gatekeepers of access to the team and may be more open to your ministry with their team.

TWO WAYS TO APPROACH THE COACH

1. If you have already met an athlete or assistant coach, or someone in the administrative office, ask them to introduce you to the head coach. If you don't have a sympathetic contact within the organization, perhaps a Christian coach from another team could write a letter and explain how a sport minister has been beneficial to the team.
2. Set up an appointment to talk with the coach. You might first want to send a letter, explaining who you are and what you want. Rather than just calling the office for an appointment, it might be a good idea to stop in the office and, very briefly, explain your situation to the secretary. Ask her who you should talk to and see where it leads.

FIRST MEETING WITH THE COACH

- Plan to keep the first meeting brief.** About 10-15 minutes, unless the coach wants to talk longer.
- Establish rapport and share a little of your background.**
- Give a brief overview of Athletes in Action®.** Emphasize words like “international”, “college and professional athlete”, and “spiritual resource”.
- Explain how you can be a resource to them** by helping the athletes with the problems they face (i.e. motivation, time management, anger, etc.). Most coaches realize that at the top level the physical and mental skills of the athletes are very close. The difference between winning and losing is often an issue of heart, attitude, focus, or self-confidence. The coach also realizes that when the athlete's personal life is in order, he will perform to his highest potential. If he/she responds, “Yeah, we already have a sport psychologist that works with our players,” ask about this role and make clear that your goal is to help student-athletes develop the spiritual side of their life. A sport psychologist may or may not be approaching this side of life.
- Ask if he or she thinks something like this could benefit his or her team.** Realize that some coaches will greet you with open arms, some will become outspoken enemies of what you are doing, and others will be indifferent. Don't assume a coach falls into one of these categories until you've experienced the response yourself; you never know what God may be doing in someone's life, either softening or hardening them to His work on campus.
- Whether their response is favorable or not, you might have a leaving piece made (business card, ministry brochure, personal brochure) that includes your contact information.** Things change.

If he agrees, ask him for three things:

1. Would he be willing to introduce you to the team before or after training, and let you take 3-5 minutes to explain what you are doing? Optimally, this meeting would be mandatory for all players so you can introduce yourself to everyone at once. But have the meeting even if it is optional and only a few show up. One player could make all the difference in reaching the entire athletic department. Show the coach the contact card you are planning to use for his/her approval.
2. Could you attend some of the practice sessions? The purpose is for the players to see you and gradually get to know you. You would just be available to any of the athletes who have an interest in spiritual things. Mention that you probably cannot come to every practice, but you will try to come as often as is practical.
3. If enough interest eventually surfaces, would it be possible to arrange a 15 minute chapel for the interested players sometime before the game begins?

FIRST MEETING WITH THE TEAM

Introducing yourself is the main purpose of your first meeting with the team. Normally the meeting lasts only about 3-5 minutes. Bring enough comment cards and writing utensils for the whole team. Show up early and find the coach to touch base. Sometimes the coach will forget that you are coming. Dress appropriately, casual but not sloppy. Remember you are making an impression on both the coaching staff and the athletes. The tone of the meeting should be friendly and genuine. Be confident, yet humble. Help them feel comfortable and relaxed. See *Sample Team Meeting Format* in Appendix 4.

THE MAIN POINTS OF YOUR MESSAGE SHOULD INCLUDE...

- What is Athletes in Action®?** Emphasize the world-wide scope.
- The goal of AIA—helping athletes develop the spiritual dimension of life.**
- What you do as a minister on campus.**
- A bridge for further contact.** Use some kind of comment card. Assure them you will not give out their information to anyone else. Perhaps offer them a resource (magazine, study book, *Critical Issues in Sport*) which will allow you to reconnect with them after the meeting. Assure them they will not be contacted if they check all “no” or leave the boxes blank. Invite them to any specific events coming soon, like an outreach or service project. You should have a leaving piece with your contact information and general information about the ministry (times and locations of meetings, Bible studies, etc.).

Building Ministry Credibility

Be yourself.	Don't try to be impressive, knowledgeable, or worthy of access to privilege. Just be who and what you are—let God impress as He pleases.
Be a spiritual director.	We are present to teach them about God, the Bible, and how to live for the Kingdom. We are there to care for their soul while they are at college; this is the unique contribution you make to the team, the administration, and ultimately to the school.
Be patient.	Resist the urge to move too quickly. Trust is built over time.
Genuine care and concern will demonstrate itself in both words and action.	Don't be afraid to ask how a person is doing or to let someone know you are praying for them. This isn't something to fake. If you care, show it; if not, ask God to change your heart.
Be flexible.	Athletes will miss many appointments with you. Some athletes cope with the pressure and rigidity of sport by considering everything that isn't mandatory as optional; others are simply inconsiderate and irresponsible. It takes discernment to know when flexibility has reached its limit and becomes enabling—ask God to help you know the difference.
Realize that while you may feel intimidated by those in the department, they may feel just as intimidated by you, and what/who you represent.	Be sensitive to this reality.
Greet everyone!	Remember names, especially those not as highly visible. Seek to minister across the organization (assistant coach, doctor, therapist, public relations director, office personnel, security).
Make a special effort to meet the Freshman.	First influences in their college lives may set their course for years to come. Besides, for many it will be their first time away from home; you might ease their transition by helping them get acclimated to college life.
Remember details from conversations.	Sometimes the best way to care for someone is to listen well. If you struggle remembering multiple conversations, you might consider taking notes after each conversation. Don't be afraid to drop an occasional note of encouragement.
Visit athletes when they are injured.	They will usually come to training and sit and watch. This is a great time to talk with them.
Seek to understand your audience.	Know about their lives, home life, reason for choosing this school, etc.
Travel to away games.	Especially with non-revenue sports. A little "ministry of presence" can go a long way.
Be a servant.	Look for ways to give to the program, make others jobs easier, do what no one else wants to do. Expect inconveniences. Make sacrifices. Spend time. Being a servant to the program will be costly, but remember that is why you are there.
You may have connections, history, or a unique platform that will allow you to serve the athletic department from within.	For example, alumni usually have more open doors than non-alumni. If you were a college athlete on a different campus, you may have connections within your sport: some ministers have become assistant coaches or statisticians because of their connections. But beware: spending too much time with one team may limit your effectiveness in movement building. Again, ask God how best to steward the platform He gives you.
Be sincere and authentic.	Don't be a stalker. Be a safe person who is genuinely there to help the program and not just to hang out with "cool" athletes.

12 THINGS YOU CAN ALWAYS DO

1. Be professional — dress, punctuality, talk, courtesies.
2. Look for ways to meet needs — spiritual or otherwise.
3. Practice the art of “hangin’ out” relationally while not neglecting spiritual feeding.
4. Try to devise shared experiences where you or someone else is modeling a Kingdom lifestyle.
5. Be honest/genuine/authentic. Talk with them openly about real issues they face, sharing openly about your own struggles in those areas.
6. Point to God’s power, helping them understand how to overcome sin in the tempting areas of their life.
7. Motivate for ministry biblically. Manipulation is wrong and only works for a season anyway; we want to see lifetime laborers arise as the fruit of your labor.
8. Call before you visit, unless the relationship allows otherwise.
9. Pray for the players/coaches daily.
10. Expose your athletes to other Christian leaders who have gifts that you don’t possess.
11. Consider writing thank you or encouragement notes to coaches and players.
12. Have athletes over to your home. Let them see you doing life in your environment away from campus.

12 STATEMENTS THAT SHOULD NEVER CROSS YOUR LIPS

1. "I agree with you. Coach is a real idiot for not playing you more."
2. "I know we just met today, but is there any chance you've got extra tickets to the game this weekend?"
3. "So you're telling me that just because this is Ohio State I shouldn't keep wearing my Michigan alumni dri-fit on the practice sidelines?"
4. "But I had 20 minutes of chapel notes... how could he possibly have expected me to finish in 5?"
5. "She said I could meet with the team after practice at 6:30, but everybody knows they never finish before 6:45, so I got there at 6:50."
6. "I'll buy you a beer just this once, but when you turn 21 you owe me."
7. "Sure am glad that Freshman science paper got an 'A' for you. Knew I was keeping it all these years for something."
8. "Great game last week, Coach, but you're still going to hell if you don't accept Christ."
9. "Since none of you guys are going to church these days, we'll start taking an offering at our weekly meeting so you can learn stewardship."
10. "Would you sign this for me? And this... and this... and this...?"
11. "Coach, I didn't think you'd mind my sitting behind your desk while I waited for you... that's a great chair you've got there."
12. "Who would've ever guessed those media guys would find your phone numbers and addresses at my personal Facebook site, for heaven's sake?"



GET-IT-DONE

- Role play meeting with a coach with a friend a few times and get feedback.**
- How are your time management skills?** If this is an area of concern for you, it can really show up in this type of ministry, where there is little structure and few natural time boundaries. You may want to read a book, take a seminar or talk to someone who can help you grow in this area.

CHAPTER 6

BUILDING OUT THE MINISTRY



BUILDING OUT

This section offers a brief overview of the building blocks of a movement: prayer, evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual multiplication. While this section is hardly comprehensive, hopefully you'll have enough to get started and direction to find other resources along the way.

PRAYER: FOUNDATION OF A MOVEMENT

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For more than a year before Campus Crusade for Christ began, Bill Bright led church teams into college dormitories, fraternities, and sororities in the Los Angeles area. Yet during this time, not a single person committed their life to Christ.

After launching Campus Crusade, Dr. Bright held the first evangelistic meeting at the Kappa Alpha Theta house at UCLA. That night, more than half of the 60 girls present expressed a desire to receive Christ. In the course of the next few months, more than 250 students at UCLA, including the student body president, the newspaper editor and several top athletes committed their lives to Christ.

What made the difference?

Dr. Bright explains:

"This unprecedented demonstration of God's blessing was not an accident. God was responding to the prayers of many of His children."

"When God called this ministry into being, we immediately formed a 24 hour prayer chain, which we divided into 15 minute time periods. Scores of Christians invested 15 minutes in prayer every day on behalf of our new ministry at UCLA."

The surest way to build a movement that lasts is to build it God's way. And if we want it God's way, we must begin a movement on a living foundation of prayer.

History and God's Word make it clear that prayer is more than preparation for the work—it is the work. Unfortunately, rarely do we see instant results from our secret prayer life. We know it's vital, but we're too busy. We think we can pull off a ministry with only perfunctory prayer. It takes discipline to pray effectively, because we don't always see what prayer is accomplishing.

Have you ever heard of Epaphras? He's not too famous, but he's the one who brought the gospel to Colossae. In Colossians 4:12 he's named as the prayer warrior: "He is always wrestling in prayer for you ...". Are we prepared to be like Epaphras? Are we prepared to really pray?

Ideas to get started

There's no formula when developing a prayer strategy, and plenty of room for variety. The important thing is that you and your leaders are seeking the Lord regularly as you are involved in reaching college students.

1. Spend personal time in prayer, taking time to develop your personal prayer life. Prayer must be a priority in your life as a leader before you can call others to make it a priority.
2. Establish a Prayer Ministry—Challenge other Christians on your campus to pray together and to make prayer a priority in their personal lives. Choose a time to meet consistently and pray. As you gather a leadership team, encourage your team to spend time in prayer and take time during the leadership meeting to pray.
3. Invite people in your church and Christians in your community to pray for the ministry on campus.
4. As small groups are formed, make prayer a vital part of each meeting.
5. Pray specifically. Each development phase of your campus ministry will have its own prayer needs. Bathe each event, each outreach and each person in prayer.
6. Be creative. Variety is a friend of enjoyable prayer, but if you have to choose between consistency and creativity, go with consistency.

EVANGELISM FAQs

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH THE CONTACTS FROM THE TEAM MEETING?

Separate the cards according to their response. Depending on what you ask for on the card, you will probably have a few who express interest in meeting with you and others who aren't interested at all. In both cases, take time immediately to pray over the cards and ask God for wisdom in future contacts with each athlete. Each of these cards represents a life that God has created and brought across your path for this season of life—don't discard an athlete because of a negative initial response. Take note of their lack of desire to meet and continue to pursue them in other ways in the future.

Take the cards that indicated a desire to meet and put them in some kind of order. Begin calling them back and setting up appointments to meet with you. Attempting to meet over a meal is usually helpful since they have to sit and eat anyway, but take whatever window they offer you. When you call, reintroduce yourself and remind them of both the team meeting and their response on the card. Ask, "When can we get some time this

week to talk?" (If not this week, as soon as possible) Meet in a place that is neither potentially awkward (in a room completely alone) nor distracting (right in the middle of the student union). Make sure you get a day/date, a time, and a confirmed place before hanging up. Be sure to thank God for His favor in opening a door to meet with a student or coach.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I MEET WITH ATHLETES TO FOLLOW UP THEIR CONTACT CARD?

Take some time to get to know them. Don't be inattentive. Small talk in this case isn't cheap filler to pass time until you get to the "good stuff"; it's the raw material that allows you to make connections to the heart instead of dumping information on the table. Let the S-H-A-R-E acrostic below guide you if asking good personal questions doesn't come easy to you. Ask them about their family, how they came to this university, and about their spiritual journey to this point.

USE THE S-H-A-R-E ACROSTIC

- S** Secular . . . talk about events/people, what's going on in community, world, etc.
- H** Home life . . . ask where they are from, parents, siblings, etc.
- A** Attitudes . . . see what they think or feel about something personal or in the news.
- R** Religious background . . . worship or church, celebrations, traditions, etc.
- E** Experience with God . . . spiritual experiences, retreats, enlightenment, etc.

There may be a natural transition to talk about spiritual things. If there isn't, don't be afraid to change the direction of the conversation toward spiritual things. They filled out a comment card, they know why you're here, and they chose to spend time with you. They expect to talk about spiritual things. The comment card is a great place to start: "On the card you filled out, you said you'd wanted more information on how to start a relationship with God. I'd love to talk about that with you." Ask what prompted them to want to get together in the first place. Their answer might give you an indication of where God has them. They may have specific concerns or questions they want to ask. More often, they aren't sure how to ask about their spiritual life, so be prepared to help guide the conversation.

Discern their current position related to Christ: are they somewhere in the pre-Christian stage, think they're a Christian but have no idea how to walk with God, or perhaps maturing and desiring to multiply their life now? Being a good question asker and listener is critical in assessing their spiritual conditioning. If appropriate, use the last portion of your time to explain the gospel message. If they have checked on their comment card that they want to know more about beginning a relationship with God, by all means tell them. The comment card gives

you a green light to share the gospel with them.

If they have not checked that box, there is much debate regarding the place of gospel sharing in these situations. Some believe the goal of meeting with a person is ultimately to get the gospel message in their minds regardless of what they've shared regarding past experiences. Others hold to a more long-term relational approach which suggests we have no right to share our beliefs until we've earned it over time. This is a much larger discussion that is worth pursuing outside this document.

The gospel is good news, but good news that is delivered into a specific life context with a developed history. We should always ask the Spirit of God to lead us as we listen to another's story. In some cases, it just isn't appropriate to do anything other than listen and empathize with the person's story in our first meeting. But in most situations, if we've done a good job listening, it is entirely fitting to ask permission to share the message that brought you together in the first place. "Would it be okay if I shared with you what the Bible says about having a relationship with God?" or "I'd like your opinion on a summary of what the Bible says about God; could I take the rest of our time and get your feedback on this?" People play many different roles on campus: professor, coach, administration, facility upkeep, student. Your role is to have a prophetic voice on behalf of God; not calling down fire from heaven or predicting future events, but retelling the story that transforms a life and bringing His Word to bear on daily situations.

You might share your own testimony as a backdrop for sharing the gospel. No one can take your story from you, and even the most cynical to Bible truth will usually listen to a story of God's work in your life.

As the conversation concludes, think through a natural next step. If the person just trusted Christ with you, suggest meeting again soon (the following week if possible) to answer any questions or begin going through the *Follow-Ups* (see Build section for more information about the *Follow-Ups*). Others may be ready for an invitation to a Bible study or a weekly meeting or a social event. With the exception of someone who just trusted Christ with you, it may be a good idea to wait before committing to meet with someone regularly. They may feel backed into a corner, so always give them an out. Ask if they would like to meet again sometime and say that you will give them a call soon. If they meet with you again and have shown interest in getting involved, that is a better time to ask if they want to meet with you on a regular (i.e. weekly) basis for discipleship.

WHAT IF I COULDN'T DO A TEAM MEETING?

Sometimes coaches are not open to team meetings. Again, pray and ask God how to wisely move forward. Consider other ways to interact with the team that will not violate the coaches' lack of desire for a formal meeting. While a team meeting is the swiftest and perhaps most efficient way to create contacts, it is certainly not the only way to get a ministry started on campus. In either case, ask God for creative approaches and for open doors with a handful of spiritually curious athletes.

Publicizing your events and meetings is another way to gain an audience, even to a small Bible study.

Make posters and ask for permission to post them in places where athletes will see them (training rooms, weight rooms, locker rooms, etc.). If you know of a Christian athlete on a team where you were not able to have a team meeting, he or she may be able to make an announcement to their team about events they can attend.

If you don't know an athlete on that team, you may know an athlete who is friends with someone on that team. Athletes have a natural network of relationships and you can encourage athletes to "spread the word". Viral marketing works in starting spiritual movements, too!

Find ways to serve teams. Some campuses have invited teams to a team dinner, where they feed the entire team (or as many as show up) a meal and maybe play games afterward. This is probably not the best time to have someone share a testimony or have any spiritual content, although having a flyer or information sheet about the ministry available is appropriate.

Attending games and practices will help you build a presence on campus. As they become accustomed to seeing you in their context, it will be more natural for them to talk to you and to see you as a safe person. Sometimes meeting athletes under more natural circumstances makes having a conversation about spiritual things easier. If they see you too much, however, that may offset the advantage of visibility. You do not want to seem like a groupie or a stalker, so keep that in mind. Be available, but not omnipresent.

Prayer against hardened hearts should become a way of life for you. Consider making a commitment to walk around the field or sit in the bleachers several days a week, either early in the morning or late at night to avoid making a scene, to pray for the coaches, staff, and students. You must talk to God about people before engaging people about God. Make this your approach to each day and leave the results to God.

SHOULD I REQUEST TO DO PRE-GAME CHAPELS FOR ANY TEAMS?

Some teams hold chapels before games, and this can be a great opportunity for you to share spiritual perspective with the team. Some make chapels mandatory and while others leave it optional, and it's a good idea to know who will be there before you prepare. If the chapel is mandatory, you will have an assortment of backgrounds represented—be sensitive to this reality. If the chapel is optional, you may assume a predominantly Christian audience. Some athletes attend an optional chapel out of superstition or avoiding "bad vibes" before their game.

Whatever the case, think through your audience as you prepare. Make sure to stay within the time-frame the coach gives you. This is always critically important—more so on a game day.

If you are asked to be a regular chapel speaker, make sure to consider the pros and cons before saying yes. It will be a significant time commitment preparing and giving chapels for every home game, perhaps becoming a detriment to the rest of the ministry.

DISCIPLESHIP FAQs

WHAT SHOULD I DO DURING ONE-ON-ONE APPOINTMENTS?

Through team meeting follow-ups or simply athletes you've met on campus, you should have a group that wants to continue meeting in some capacity. Whether the athlete is spiritually seeking or already professes Christian faith, start with the basics. Even athletes that appear to be grounded and established in their faith can still benefit from reviewing foundational biblical teaching. Sometimes folks aren't as established as they appear, and others need equipping for their own personal ministries.

In AIA we use a set of five simple worksheets called the *Follow-Ups*. The *Follow-Ups* amount to a five week commitment (although it usually takes longer to finish given athletes' schedules). If after five weeks you get the impression that this athlete isn't interested in continuing with you, you've taught Bible basics and have a natural way to end meeting formally.

If you continue meeting weekly with an athlete and have finished the *Follow-Ups*, ask God how best to help them grow in their faith. Do Bible studies that are relevant to their lives. Study a book of the Bible together, teaching them Bible study skills simultaneously. Begin taking them with you as you do ministry: team meetings, *follow-ups*, prayer. Take advantage of opportunities to model the same ministry skills you hope to reproduce in them.

Seek a balance of establishing faith foundations, teaching ministry skills, and just "doing life" together. Biblical discipleship requires a genuine and trusting relationship where others do not feel they are simply part of your job—they need to be part of your life. They face relationship struggles, roommate issues, trouble on their teams, and many other trials and dilemmas; as a spiritual director in their lives, you are uniquely positioned to point them to God and offer a biblical perspective on walking through difficulties. Once trust exists, God may raise hard questions through you concerning every aspect of their lives. This privilege should not be taken lightly.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IN SMALL GROUP STUDIES?

Bible studies accomplish several crucial goals at once. Athletes regularly attending a Bible study learn what the Bible teaches and practical application for their lives. They acquire personal Bible study skills, encouraging a lifetime of "self-feeding". Most importantly, they learn to operate in community. They interact with other athletes equally hungry to learn about God; prayerfully, deep relationships will be formed.

Bible studies come in many varieties. They can be co-ed or divided into men's and women's groups. Co-ed studies build community among men and women, while a divided study encourages discussing gender-sensitive issues. Bible studies may be organized around specific teams or with athletes from different teams. With team studies, the athletes already know each other and have common practice, travel, and off-season schedules. Multi-team studies encourage engaging athletes from other teams, but scheduling can be difficult.

Bible studies may be open or closed. Some groups are open for anyone to join at any time and with no commitment to keep coming. In a closed study, participants make a commitment to be there every week. A closed study builds community through consistency. Trust usually develops quicker in a more stable environment; however, an open environment study initially encourages a wider range of seekers to attend. If necessary, you might consider offering both an open study for those curious and a closed study for the more committed.

Bible studies can cover basic Christian living or more advanced theological topics. Choose material that does not under or over challenge your audience. You might provide the study questions yourself or use any good study resource (go to a local Christian bookstore or see the *AIA Resources* in Appendix 1). If you are just beginning a ministry, it may be best to gather all those who are interested in one study and pray about how to divide them later. Bible studies tend to be easier to lead when there is one leader/facilitator and 5-8 people. The bigger the group gets, the harder it is to connect on a personal level and build deep community.

SHOULD WE HAVE A WEEKLY MEETING?

A weekly meeting creates a gathering place for Christian athletes, doubling as an outreach to those interested in learning about spiritual things. Meetings create an environment for community, especially for athletes who are the only Christian on their team. As an entry level event, anyone can come at any time without making a commitment. Athletes can bring their teammates to investigate Christ. Meetings also give committed athletes opportunities to serve and be developed as leaders. Students can learn communication skills, how to give their testimony, and how to organize and coordinate an event.

A weekly meeting can become very time consuming—finding speakers, preparing talks, prepping students giving testimonies or doing something up front. Running a weekly meeting can be a full-time job. The meeting can start to dominate your ministry efforts, becoming the centerpiece of the ministry. But a spiritual movement is more than events and meetings. Too much programming may distract from the true work of ministry: relationship building and spiritual formation.

Start with a monthly meeting; if it is successful, try meeting every other week or weekly. Obviously, monthly meetings limit the opportunities athletes have to gather together, especially those in season, but gathering only once a month helps prevent the meeting from dominating your life. You'll have to decide what is best, and can always make a quarterly/semester adjustment if necessary.

HOW DO I HELP ATHLETES DEVELOP A MINISTRY AMONG TEAMMATES?

Teams are challenging environments. Certain dynamics make it an ideal atmosphere for a spiritual movement; some of those same dynamics make it a frustrating place to trust God. A team is comprised of competitors, some of whom are competing with each other for the same position on the team. They spend hours together training, traveling and playing—many also live together. When gospel seeds are sown in a team, they can take root and spread quickly or be choked out immediately. A few people on the team always influence the overall team chemistry. If they are open to the gospel, God can use them to spread His Kingdom. If they are opposed, even others who are interested will be more hesitant to take spiritual steps.

We are asking athletes to develop a ministry in this complex environment. They will need vision, encouragement, and some concrete ministry skills while trusting the power of the Holy Spirit. Help them see how God can use them. Many will not believe God can or wants to use them for His purposes, either because of insecurities or a past that discredits them. Teach them what God says is true about them in Christ and train them in the basics of sharing the gospel and giving their testimony. Encourage bringing teammates to meetings and meeting together with you.

Athletes ministering to teammates need to develop deeper relationships with their peers, asking good questions and being a good listener. An athlete's work ethic, attitude, reaction to coaches, and overall demeanor creates or destroys ministry credibility. Athletes live in a fishbowl and must live consistently—not perfectly—with a desire to pursue holiness and repentance. An athlete whose words and actions are consistent develops a powerful platform from which to speak.

WHAT ARE WAYS TO BUILD COMMUNITY?

Community is the elusive yet crucial element of a spiritual movement. Difficult to define, you know when you experience it. It is when students begin to get together on their own and not just hang out at official events; when they linger after a meeting even when the snacks are gone; when you have to repeatedly ask for quiet to start a Bible study; when students become roommates and life gets messier but deeper. Without community, you have a group of people who come to meetings and go home. With it, you have something full of life and energy that attracts others. It is what Christ intended for His people, and when it happens, it is a powerful apologetic for the gospel and a compelling offering in a fragmented world. If only we could bottle and sell it. . .

Evangelistic efforts, discipleship appointments, Bible studies and weekly meetings can all move a group of people toward community. Start small and start real! Pursuing numbers instead of quality relationships bypasses community. If a core group of people starts investing into each others' lives, especially when it's uncomfortable and costs something, you're creating an environment for community to grow. Getting students to connect isn't

controllable. They may be much more comfortable talking to you than to teammates and peers. Help them see the value and necessity of connecting with others. Avoid the temptation to be the sole source of spiritual input. They need to hear from each other and learn to build peer relationships that will challenge and encourage their faith.

Creating social events helps, but ultimately you need to pray and ask God to forge Spirit-infused community. Obstacles to community abound, so pray for discernment to recognize and deal with them. Be careful: you may be one yourself!

SPIRITUAL MULTIPLICATION FAQs

HOW DO I INVOLVE ATHLETES IN MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES?

“A society looking up to athletes as heroes must find heroes looking up to God.” With the eyes of our culture on athletes, Christian athletes have the opportunity and responsibility to direct that attention to God. We can do more than point to the sky after a touchdown or drop His name in an interview.

Opportunities abound for athletes to share their faith and the difference God makes in their lives. Local churches regularly request athletes to speak with youth groups or in front of their congregation. Some churches will organize large evangelistic outreaches and have a student-athlete as the main draw. Other campus ministries might allow an athlete speak at their meeting. Depending on the campus and on the reputation of a particular sports team or athlete in the community, you may have more opportunities than you can handle. Even at a small campus with little visibility in the community opportunities can be created. You must decide which events to accept and which athletes will speak.

Some events are organized toward non-believers, others toward Christians. Some are annual and others one-and-done. Some churches and organizations will want an ongoing partnership, but be careful that you don't over-commit. Be patient and pray about which opportunities the Lord wants you to accept. There may be wisdom in forming a partnership with a certain church or organization; there may also be wisdom in saying “no” to everything until sometime in the future.

Use discretion when putting athletes up front to speak. A new believer whose life and faith are untested should not be hurried, even if (especially if!) their name recognition and platform is already broad. They may not be ready to handle the pressure of being a Christian witness and may even feel used. Don't put an athlete “on stage” unless you have a good relationship with that athlete and solid insight into his or her character. Also, be intentional about giving training and opportunities to athletes who are not as high profile. Big names don't transform lives, but faithful, available teachable men and women can have impact far beyond their pop cultural status.

Help athletes prepare well for speaking engagements. Because a guy can catch a pass with his hands, don't assume he can catch and hold an audience with his words! Poor communication is poor communication

no matter the source, so spend time helping prepare their testimonies and/or talks. You might have them practice their talk with you at least once. Give concrete feedback, both during the practice and after the speaking engagement.

Service opportunities may be a more profound use of their platform than speaking opportunities. The list of community service possibilities is long: visiting kids in the hospital, helping out at after school programs, competing in prisons, nursing homes, construction projects, etc. You may have opportunities in these places to have an athlete share a testimony, but even if you don't, showing up to help speaks volumes and puts flesh on the gospel.

WHAT AIA EVENTS CAN ATHLETES PARTICIPATE IN?

Some regions of the country have Winter Retreats, usually held in January or February. Check the www.aia.com website for information and brochures. Anywhere from 100 – 200 college athletes from several states come together for a weekend retreat to hear challenging Bible teaching and attend seminars relevant to their Christian life.

In Ft. Collins, Colorado, the week-long Ultimate Training Camp teaches athletes how to worship God through sport. Also in Ft. Collins, the Colorado Project is an 8-week experience covering many of the same topics as the camp, but adding evangelism, discipleship and ministry training. For 3 weeks in Los Angeles, the LA Urban Project pursues marginalized people and confronts issues of poverty and racism with the gospel. International and stateside tours with competing sports teams compete and create opportunities to share the gospel wherever they go. For a list of tours, dates, and other information, see the AIA website (www.aia.com). You can also contact our offices for brochures at (937) 352-1000.

HOW DO I PREPARE ATHLETES TO HAVE A MINISTRY WHEREVER THEY GO AFTER THEY GRADUATE?

College athletic ministry has a short life-span. You have at most a four to five year window into this person's life, but more realistically, you make a 2-3 year investment. Some of athletes may play at the next level of competition. Those athletes can continue to minister in a team environment using their athletic platform. If they are successful, they will have a life-long platform from which to share their faith.

For the rest of the athletes, their platform essentially ends soon after they leave school. They will take jobs in the secular workforce, although some of them may be called into vocational ministry. Wherever they go, you want your investment in their lives during college to help them walk with God and build His Kingdom for a lifetime. If they are doctors, they will be godly doctors who serve their patients with kindness and compassion. If they are lawyers, they serve their clients by protecting them and their interests and treating them with integrity and respect while pursuing justice. They will be committed members of local churches, finding ways to give back beyond warming a pew. And they will look for ways to share the gospel in words and actions, investing their

lives in the adventure of making disciples that serve God’s Kingdom.

Your role in this is to ground them in their faith and help them develop a deep and intimate walk with God. Cast the vision before them of a life overflowing with the love and truth of the gospel, and equip them with ministry skills. Be patient. You may not see the fruit of your sowing while they are still in college. You may be frustrated with their lack of commitment and perspective. Good news: their growth is not in your control or your problem. It is not your job to make people grow. You can love them well, encourage them, challenge them, and model a life of faith you hope they embrace, but God must make it happen.

Pray for them faithfully and ask God to help give you a clear vision of what He wants to do in and through these athletes’ lives. Keep that vision before you, not as a standard to measure them by today, but to guide your prayers for their future. Believe in them and also let them be where they are today. Your window into their lives is brief, but it is a crucial season of life, and your words and actions will impact them in immeasurable ways.

TIPSTIPSTIPSTIPSTIPSTIPSTIPS

WHAT CAN I TEACH THAT WILL INSPIRE ATHLETES TO REACH THE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL?

Teaching God’s desire to reach the world with His gospel may come naturally to you. For others, that idea may seem a bit radical. Students must put their own relationship with God inside the framework of the Great Commission, a Commission that necessarily involves the whole world. Life is not about them; it is not about their particular university; it is not about America. God’s Kingdom pervading and redeeming every aspect of life around the globe is all that really matters in the end. You can’t force someone to get this or reorient their lives around this idea—only God can redirect a heart in this direction, but you can help create an atmosphere for Him to work.

- Teach them the Bible.** God’s word is soaked in language that drives people beyond the limits of their own personal comforts and borders.
- Encourage them to go on a summer tour.** Visiting other populations and cultures accomplishes what no amount of classroom teaching can—it breaks one’s heart for a people.
- Expose them to missionaries and to people with a world vision.** Let God provoke them through the testimonies of those engaged in His work outside their own campus setting. Consider building testimonies like this into your weekly meeting or Bible study.
- Consider taking a Spring Break trip overseas or to Mexico or Canada and help serve alongside another ministry.** A trip North or South can open naïve eyes to the diversity and need for gospel transformation that exists around the world.

Help them understand that because sports are an international language, their platform extends beyond the campus, local community, country—they need to let God use them however He wants, wherever He wants. We have a responsibility to contribute to God’s work around the world whether He calls us to live there or not. Without this perspective, it is easier to get comfortable and complacent and think that the Gospel is either just for Americans or not challenging enough.



GET-IT-DONE-GET-IT-DONE-GET-IT-DONE

GET-IT-DONE

- Search the web or talk to others in ministry to find creative outreach ideas.**
- Even before you meet anyone on campus, begin to prepare some chapel talks or salt talks so that you are prepared if the moment arises.** It’s always a good idea to have a fresh and short talk cued up and ready to give.
- Seek proficiency in these ministry skills:**
 - o Sharing the gospel
 - o Explaining how to live and walk in the Spirit
 - o Giving your personal testimony (story of what God has done in your life)
 - o Engaging others in conversation
 - o Leading a small group Bible study
- If you need more training or a review of these skills, visit www.aia.com for more resources.**

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APPENDIX 1

AIA RESOURCES

WWW.AIAGEAR.COM



APPENDIX 1

BOOK RESOURCE



Game Day Glory

Bible study that expounds on AIA Principles of Athletic Competition. How does a Christian competing to his/her fullest glorify God through the ups and downs of sport? Where do Christianity and sports intersect?

EVANGELISTIC VIDEOS



Struggle & Triumph DVD

Every four years, athletes from 200 countries gather to compete in the world's greatest sporting event. While some attain the Olympic gold medal, others recall the words of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the father of the modern Olympic movement: "The important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have won, but to have fought well". In addition to their passion for sport, they share another passion, from which they draw strength for the competition.



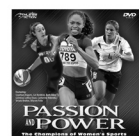
The Prize DVD

Four fascinating stories from the world of soccer. The highs and lows of players finding life beyond the game itself. (28 minutes)



Driving Force DVD/VHS

Features an all-star cast of NASCAR drivers who have helped make stock car racing the fastest-growing spectator sport in the world. Race highlights, behind the scenes footage and candid interviews with top drivers and team owners, all revealing their keys to success. Includes over 20 drivers and their wives. (49 minutes)



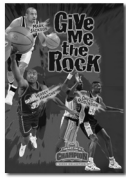
Passion & Power DVD and/or Global Edition

Captures the stories of women from a variety of sports and countries. Topics discussed include competition, handling adversity, and personal identity. (26 minutes)



Reversing the Curse DVD

Tells the exciting story of the Boston Red Sox history making comeback against the Yankees, going on to win the World Series. Stories of faith from the players themselves. (22 minutes)



Give Me the Rock DVD

Takes you inside the lives of the world's top professional basketball players as they tell what makes them true champions. Packed with action highlights, behind the scenes footage, exclusive interviews and contemporary music, this program is fast paced and exciting. Includes over a dozen NBA stars. *Give Me the Rock* featuring current NBA players such as Luke Ridnour, Michael Redd and others!



Power to Win ~ Colts DVD

Life and testimony from Tony Dungy, Josh Williams, Jeff Saturday, Tarik Glenn, Dallas Clark, Hunter Smith, and David Thornton. (17 minutes)



Power to Win ~ Seahawks DVD

Life and testimony from Matt Hasselbeck, Shawn Alexander, Jim Zorn, David Greene, Michael Boulware, and Mack Strong. (17 minutes)



Power to Win ~ Chargers DVD

Life and testimony from LaDainian Tomlinson, Lorenzo Neal, Kassim Osgood, and Norv Turner. (17 minutes)



Unfading Glory DVD

Wrestling highlights and interviews, takes you beyond the mat and into the lives of 15 of the world's top wrestlers. (37 minutes)

OTHER MATERIALS

- Player testimony cards of NFL athletes.
- Joe Gibbs testimony pamphlet – evangelistic leaving piece
- AIA Brochures – explain the vision, scope, and purpose of AIA's ministry
- Winter Conference Brochures – dates and locations of regional student retreats
- Summer Camp, Project and Tour Brochures
- *Meet My Head Coach* – Basketball
- *Real People Real Faith* Booklets – evangelistic leaving piece: Patriots, Colts, Bears, Jaguars, Soccer

OTHER RESOURCES

- www.aia.com/resources – other helpful ministry tools
- www.aiagear.com – *Passing the Baton: Biblical Foundations for Developing a Sport Ministry* – Individual or group study to discover a deeper view into sport ministry.
- www.beyondtheultimate.com – Sport evangelist website highlighting professional and Olympic athletes and coaches from around the world.

APPENDIX 2

BASIC PHILOSOPHIES OF SPORTS MINISTRY

-John Ashley Null



APPENDIX 2

In general, strategies for sports ministry can be divided into two broad approaches, ministering *through* athletes and ministering *to* athletes. These methods are not mutually exclusive. However, most sports ministers give priority to one approach over the other in their work with athletes.

MINISTRY THROUGH ATHLETES

Evangelism is the top priority for these ministers. Their goal is to reach as many people in the world for Christ as possible through the massive global interest in sports. They encourage high-profile Christian competitors to use their platform for the Gospel. Since so many non-Christians idolize these believing sports stars because of their physical prowess, large numbers of people will listen to Christian champions when they speak about their faith. So these ministers recruit top athletes and provide them opportunities for giving their testimony. They also piggy back on the public's interest in a major sporting event like the Olympics. They develop outreaches to the spectators which usually include literature and DVDs that combine testimonies from notable Christian athletes with the plan of salvation presented in the sporting language.

The *through* athletes strategy relies on the natural desire for everyone to be a winner. One approach is to argue that just as a person wants to be a winner in sports, it is important that he or she try to be a winner in life, and that requires getting right with God. Others, however, appeal directly to every athlete's desire to be a champion. They teach that spiritual strength is necessary for athletic success itself. If athletes want to do their best in sports, they must first get right with God. Both approaches rely on the same underlying assumption: When the truth of the Gospel is explained in sporting analogies, people in sports will understand God's rules and will naturally want to play to win accordingly.

The ultimate target audience for a *through* athletes ministry is the sports fan. These ministers may work with top athletes, but their primary purpose in bringing them to Christ is so that they will use their sports platform for Christ. When these ministers encourage top athletes to evangelize their teammates, it is so their fellow athletes will start using their platform with fans for Christ, too. Because of this clearly focused evangelistic purpose, addressing the pastoral and ethical issues faced by competing athletes is a secondary concern.

Clearly, the over-all thrust of ministry *through* athletes is to make Christianity appealing to as many sports fans as possible through associating the faith as closely as possible with sporting success.

MINISTRY TO ATHLETES

This strategy focuses on disciplining and equipping athletes to live a Christian life in the midst of the sporting world. The sports fan is not its target. Instead, ministry *to* athletes treats competitors, in mission terms, like an unreached people group. The ultimate goal is to establish a body of believers whose daily life in the world of competitive sports will bring other athletes to Christ and whose conduct will then influence sporting culture toward Christian values.

The fundamental premise of this approach is that the athlete should be valued for whom he or she is as a person. Individual sportspeople are worthy of being ministered to, not because of what they can do, either as a sportsperson or as a potential evangelist for Christ, but simply because Christ's death shows how much God wants to lavish his love on them.

Since everything else in an athlete's world is determined by performance, the Gospel of grace has an incredibly powerful appeal. So ministers to athletes teach sportspeople to separate their personal identity from their athletic performance. Learning to base their worth only on Christ's performance on the cross for them frees sportspeople from being held hostage to all the ups and downs of competition. Equally important, however, it helps prevent athletes from seeing God as just another coach whom they have to please by proving themselves good enough as well, but this time, to the incredibly high standard of a biblically pure heart and mind. That's of course a recipe for spiritual disaster. So the goal of ministers *to* athletes is simply to be visible witnesses to God's unconditional love. They seek to serve athletes without asking for anything in return. Instead, they merely encourage the athletes with whom they work to show the same unconditional love to their teammates, competitors and coaches, as the ministers have shown to them.

Outstanding Christian athletes who feel called are still encouraged to use their platform to reach sports fans. However, they are reminded that their first priority is always to use that platform to reach fellow outstanding athletes through their loving friendship. After all, few people have as much access to sports stars as other sports stars. Of course, teammates are among the few people to know whether the high-profile Christian's character matches his or her message. But for that very reason evangelizing their peers through love and service can lead to real maturity in Christians who are top athletes.

A CONCLUDING CONTRAST

Ministers *through* athletes seek to identify Christianity as closely as possible with sporting success to gain a hearing from a global audience for the Gospel. Ministers *to* athletes seek to separate the Gospel from sporting success as much as possible so as to nurture a biblical understanding of grace that will change the lives of Christian athletes, and equip them to become radical revolutionaries for God's unconditional love throughout the world of sport.

A FINAL COMMON GROUND

Ministers *through* athletes must take special care to preach and practice the same Gospel of grace as ministers *to* athletes. Otherwise, their emphasis on evangelism will simply harness sportspeople's slavery to performance to serve the minister's own need for success. When that happens, athletes as well as their ministers never discover the depth of true freedom in God's unconditional love for them.

APPENDIX 3

GETTING TO KNOW THE CAMPUS



"Do not bring us the gospel as a potted plant. Bring us the seed of the gospel and plant it in our soil."

- Indian evangelist

God places us in a specific athletic department with a pre-existing history, personality and level of intensity. We need to understand the campus and its surroundings and ask God for guidance along the way. Be sure of this: God already has a history of movement here. We want to take time to raise our spiritual antennae to acquire wisdom and perspective as we look to join God in the transforming work He wants to do in and through you.

PRAYER

- Movement building is started, sustained, and empowered through prayer. Regularly schedule individual and staff prayer times to focus on the athletic department. Let God cultivate a desire to love and serve the athletes and coaches he brings your way. What are specific requests you want to bring before God?

- Learn where the athletes hang out (stadiums, fields, locker rooms, dorms, study table, cafeteria, local hang outs). Walk through these areas asking God for insight into His work here, for wisdom on how to proceed, and for the athletes and coaches themselves (some of whom are several years away from even attending this school!). Ask Him to make your heart and life available to the athletes and coaches on this campus. Be ready for God to open doors even as you walk! What did you learn?

APPENDIX 3

CAMPUS HISTORY

- What are the main worldviews and ideologies taught/lived? What are the popular student organizations on campus? Is this a commuter or a dorm campus?

- Pick up a campus newspaper and read through it. What stories seem important to the students? What do the editorials discuss? What have you learned from reading a week's worth of these papers?

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT SPIRITUAL HISTORY

- What is the spiritual history of both the current athletic administration and previous athletic administrations? Is there a history of being open to spiritual influences?

- Has something happened recently or in the past that slants them either positively or negatively toward sport ministry? If there is negative history, ask the Lord how to proceed. If possible, seek insight from other ministers on campus.

- Do most athletes live on campus or off campus? Do they stick around during the summers? What part of the country do most of the athletes come from? What is their level of commitment to their sport?

OTHER MINISTRIES

- Is ministry already happening in the athletic department (FCA, Champions for Christ, Campus Crusade, etc.)? If so, what is the reputation and history of their ministry on your campus? Is there an officially sanctioned chaplain in place for any of the teams?

- Pursue meeting the leaders of these ministries, introducing yourself and asking appropriate questions about their ministry experience within the athletic department. Be able to explain your hopes of what you'd like to do and how it could fit or help accelerate movement building within the athletic department. What did you learn?

- Be sure not to compete with other believers already serving in the department. Come with a servant's heart and recognize that you are standing on the shoulders of others who have come before you. List possible ways to partner with them.

- Are there any Bible studies already going on among athletes? What teams are involved?

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

- Collect media guides from the Athletic Department or online and begin identifying and learning about the athletes and coaches. What do you learn?

- Regularly check the official Athletic Department website for current news, both positive (winning conference championships) and negative (losses, firings, scandals). What do you learn?

- What are the expectations of the athletic department from the surrounding community, local and national media, and campus administration? Which sport or team does the campus draw its identity from, if any?

- Where can you serve?

CHRISTIAN ATHLETES, COACHES AND ADMINISTRATORS

- Are there any known Christians within the athletic department (coaches, athletes, administrators, etc.)?

- Try meeting with them to share your story and talk about how Athletes in Action® can be a resource as a ministry. Usually, if you find one solid connection, that person will be able to tell you about others within the department who would be interested in Athletes in Action®.

APPENDIX 4

SAMPLE TEAM MEETING FORMAT



APPENDIX 4

SAMPLE PRESENTATION

Hello! My name is Jane Smith, and I work with a group on campus here at The University called Athletes in Action®. We are a faith-based organization that works with college and professional athletes all over the world. I wanted to take a few minutes of your time to introduce myself and explain a little about what AIA has to offer here at The U. *(start with a basic introduction like this, but also add some personal touches)*

As varsity athletes, you understand the importance of physical training. Your coaches and strength trainers are here to make sure that you develop in the physical area. It looks like they are about to make sure of that as soon as I'm done talking and I'm sure they'll do a good job! Your professors and academic advisors are here to help you develop in the mental area. There are people and systems in place all around you to ensure that you grow in those ways.

However, one area of life that often doesn't get as much attention is the spiritual area. You have all come from different spiritual backgrounds, but no matter what your background, the spiritual component of life is very important. Having a grounded sense of your own personal faith can make a big difference in your life whether you are facing tough times or are making decisions that will affect your future in big ways. Athletes in Action exists to be a spiritual resource for you. We want to help give attention to the spiritual questions and matters that affect your life. Some of you have grown up going to church and want to keep your faith a priority; others of you may not have thought much about spiritual things and are curious to explore. Wherever you are, we'd love to be there for you in any ways we can, no matter your religious background.

I'm going to pass out these comment cards for you to fill out. If you are interested in any of the things on this card, check whatever applies. Someone will be getting in touch with you to follow up in a few days. If you aren't interested, we aren't here to push anything on you; if you don't check anything, we won't contact you. No matter what, though, you are always welcome to come check out our meetings. We meet every Tuesday at 9 pm in the Student Center on campus. Thank you for your time. I know you have a big game coming up this weekend, and I wish you luck! *(It may be helpful to talk through the options on the card so they know what they are signing up for.)*

APPENDIX 5

SAMPLE COMMENT CARD



Name _____

Sport _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail Address _____

Year (circle one): Fr So Jr Sr

Check all that *apply to you*:

- I would like to learn how my faith applies to my sport
- I would like info on how to develop my relationship with God
- I would like more info on AIA
(Bible studies, meeting times, retreats, summer opportunities)
- I would like to discuss the reality of God
- Please put me on the AIA e-mail list
- Thanks, but I am not interested at this time

Comments _____

APPENDIX 5

APPENDIX 6

SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP PHONE CALL



Be prepared to call an athlete several times without getting a response. There's a fine line between being persistent and stalking, so use your best judgment on how often and how regularly to call. At some point, maybe after 3 calls, graciously let them know you are still interested in talking to them but are leaving the ball in their court to contact you. If they don't leave a phone number, send them an email.

If an athlete isn't interested in getting together with you, don't push it. Sometimes, they are intimidated to meet with you in person and would rather show up to an event and be able to observe without any commitment. Invite them to stop by the weekly meeting sometime. Ask them if they'd like to get emails about upcoming events.

Sample call:

Hi... is this Michael Jordan? Great... this is Joe Smith with Athletes in Action®. I spoke to your team the other day about AIA. I'm calling you because you filled out the card and said you were interested in opportunities to help you grow spiritually. I'm going to be around campus this week and I'd love to get together with you to talk about that. Is there a time we can sit down and talk for a bit? What day is best for you?

Thursday is good for me too. What's the best time to meet? Great. How about we meet at 11:30 over at the Hub? I'll be sitting near the back wall next to the little water fountain.

Call me at xxx-xxxx if anything comes up or you need to change the day or time. I'm looking forward to talking with you.

APPENDIX 6

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APPENDIX 7

SCRIPTURES WITH ATHLETIC THEMES



APPENDIX 7

- 1 Timothy 4:7-8** **Physical Training:** Training in your Christian life has supreme value for now and later
- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27** **Discipline and Self-Control:** Discipline your mind and body so that you are a worthy servant of Christ
- 2 Timothy 4:7-8** **Run to the Finish Line:** Keep the faith, persevering to the end with sound doctrine and faithful living
- Philippians 3:13-14** **Press on toward the Prize:** Let go of the past with a vision of what is to come
- James 1:2-4** **Testing and Trials:** Joyfully embrace trials as God works in your life so that you are more complete
- 2 Timothy 2:5** **Suffering hardship by the rules:** Submit yourself to the rigors of the spiritual life and let God bless you
- Philippians 4:13** **Strength:** Power for everything that matters comes from God
- Hebrews 12:1,2** **Running the race of faith:** Set aside sin and focus on Jesus for the marathon of faith
- Colossians 3:1-4** **Focus:** Set your mind on things above, not on things that are on earth
- Romans 15:5** **Unity:** Be unified with one another concerning Kingdom matters
- Philippians 2:3-11** **Humility:** Treat others with the same humility Christ extends toward you
- Ephesians 4:29** **Encouragement with words:** Use words to edify, not just talk smack

Isaiah 40:27-31	Spiritual refreshment: The Lord supplies strength for those who seek Him
2 Corinthians 12:9,10	Strength and weakness: True strength is discovered in weakness
Deuteronomy 31:7,8	Courage: We can move through fear when God goes before us
2 Corinthians 5:14,15	Motivation: Christ's love toward us motivates different living
2 Corinthians 3:5	Adequacy: Our adequacy to live different and minister to others comes from God
Psalms 139:13-16	God's care in creating our body: Our bodies are special because God is purposeful their creator
Romans 8:28-30	Suffering: God is in control of everything that happens to us

Note: None of these Bible passages were originally intended as pre-game speeches or motivational talks to help athletes “be all that they can be.” They were written to encourage holy living, eternal perspective, submission to God—to motivate and illustrate Kingdom living. The Bible uses words common to the world of competition to help us see the Kingdom; don’t dilute them by taking them out of their context to serve the locker room. The Bible views life as a long journey, a contested battle, a disciplined adventure, and because of this we find many parallels with the world of sport. Don’t be afraid to make connections between the two, just take care not to submit the Bible to sports—it should always be the other way around.

THE GAMEPLAN



THE GAMEPLAN

1. Read the entire manual through one time
2. Complete the *Getting to Know the Campus* worksheet
3. From the information you've gathered, you will be able to pick which of these situations (there may be several) apply in your context:

If there are other ministries working with athletes

- Set up a meeting with the ministry leader to introduce yourself. Learn his or her story and the history of the ministry here.
- Begin talking about how you can work together to reach the athletes and coaches. If he or she has a particular niche (with one team or with the coaches), you can serve what is already happening by reaching out in other areas.

If you know of Christian coaches

- Meet with these coaches to introduce yourself and the ministry. Ask them if you can conduct a team meeting. Find out if there is any interest in a coaches' Bible study or if there has been ministry to the coaches before. If there is interest, pray about starting a coaches' Bible study.
- Complete the team meeting (see page 25) and begin following up contacts (see page 32)

If you know of Christian athletes

- Meet with those athletes and get to know them.
- Ask them to introduce you to their coach, and then meet with their coach and try to set up a team meeting. If the coach will not meet with you or the athlete is hesitant, ask if the athlete could do a team meeting on his/her own. Then, help them practice doing a team meeting and give him/her the comment cards/resources.
- If there is enough interest among the athletes, try starting a Bible study.

If you don't have any Christian contacts

- Contact 2-3 coaches. It may take time to set up an appointment, so you want to pursue several at a time. If you try to contact too many at once, however, you might be creating scheduling issues for yourself. See page 24 for how to contact a coach.
- Conduct team meetings and begin following up contacts.
- Too many team meetings at once may produce more contacts than you can reasonably follow-up in a timely fashion.

If no one will let you do team meetings

- If you know Christian athletes, ask them to conduct team meetings with their teams.
- If you don't know Christian athletes, pray for creative ways to get word out about the ministry. Organize an event that will attract the kind of students you hope to meet. Put up posters in strategic places (dorms where athletes live, training rooms, weight rooms, athlete support department bulletin boards, etc.), but make sure you get appropriate permission first. The event could be a service project, a social activity, or just free food. Buy the food, they will come!

Once you've gathered a core group of athletes, begin building into their lives. Slowly and prayerfully begin developing more aspects of the ministry (see "Building Out the Ministry" for more ideas)

- Pray for discernment regarding which athletes to meet with for weekly one-on-one discipleship.
- Should you start a regular meeting, either monthly or even weekly?
- Do we need more Bible studies?
- What outreaches, community service projects, or other events could you do?
- How can you encourage a sense of deepening community within your group?

Pray for God to raise up student leaders from your core group and then pray He helps you recognize them. Begin training them in ministry skills and give them opportunities to lead. Take them with you when you do team meetings or follow up contact cards. Possibly develop a student leadership team that would help give leadership to the ministry. Our hope is to empower students to lead, developing them into followers of Jesus who will be equipped to serve in His Kingdom for a lifetime.



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