



All in Perspective

COMPANION REFLECTION FOR MADE FOR LOVE:
EPISODE 11, SPORTS AND FAMILY LIFE

Opening Prayer *A Prayer for Family Commitment*

Dear God our Father, you have called all Christian families to be a sign of your love to the world.

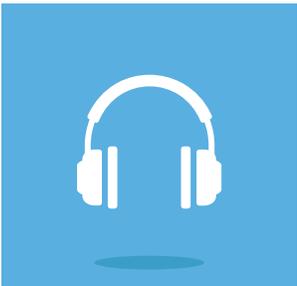
Help us to be generous with the gifts of life and love that you have showered on our family. May we share them so that our homes become true signs of unitive and fruitful love.

Let us never forget to thank you each day for all that sustains us and to look to Christ, who comes to us in the events of family life, in the sacraments of the Church, and in service to the poor.

In all of this, our family becomes a living expression of your Church, a hallowed home of life and love. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may all of us—spouses, parents, and children—share, as members of his Body, in Jesus’ mission to build a civilization of love. Father, we ask this in Jesus’ name in union with the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Listen



Listen to Made for Love: Episode 11, Sports and Family Life: <https://soundcloud.com/usccbclips/made-for-love-ep-11-sports-and-family-life>

Make notes of the words, phrases and comments that stick out to you. Do any of these stories resonate with you personally or do they relate to someone you know? What are your initial reactions to the podcast?

Take time to talk about your reactions and thoughts following the podcast with a partner or in a small group.

Further Reading

In this blog post from Josh Naem, a contributor to USCCB’s ForYourMarriage.org, Josh explores how a losing season for his son’s basketball team was actually very successful. Many of his thoughts echo the stories shared in the podcast. Use this reflection to further your discussion on sports and perspective.

A Successful Winless Season

I coached Oscar’s basketball team this winter. We didn’t win a single game.

The poor kids were shut out, but they kept their chins high. His team was a combined third and fourth grade team, with nearly two-thirds being third graders who had never played the game before. We were starting at ground zero with a lot of these kids: dribbling, passing, offense is trying to score at this basket, defense is preventing the other team from scoring at that basket. My goal for our first game was to have everyone running in the right direction.



The team learned a lot this year, but we were severe underdogs in our skill level and physical development. The teams we played were composed of all fourth graders with at least two years of experience. A person could stack two of my third graders on top of one another and still not be as high as the average kid we played against.

At times, I got discouraged. Working with third and fourth grade boys, one has to act in part like a babysitter (“Everyone gets a turn, so stop pushing in line!”) and in part like the blue-face-painted William Wallace giving a battlefield call to arms (“I don’t care what the score is, let’s decide right now to play as hard as we can for the rest of this quarter!”).

Sometimes I’d come home after practice frustrated that I couldn’t capture their passion or interest, or even their attention. One player in particular kept dodging drills—he’d escape to the bathroom and just never return. I’d tiptoe in, peek around the corner and see him just standing there killing time. I’d ask him what he’s up to and he’d nearly jump out of his skin.

The last thing I wanted was for the kids to feel like this game is a chore or not worth the effort. Often, when that frustration got the best of me, I didn’t like the way I ended up leading practice.

I think the season could have taken a dive into disaster if I didn’t have Stacey to talk with. She knows the game, and she knows me. We both came from successful programs and were well coached in high school, so we have similar visions of how the game should be played.

After losing another game early in the season, I realized I was getting nervous about perceptions. I didn’t want parents to be upset about our performance on the court. Stacey helped me see that my first concern must be for the kids. When I focused on my regard for my players, everything else fell into place. It was clear that we were at a disadvantage, which was not going to change,

so I was able to focus on what I could change: building skills and the right attitudes in the players.

I’m proud of our team because they never gave up on the season—they played hard through every game. Even though we didn’t win a game, I thought it was a great season for Oscar. He learned to play as part of a team and to continue fighting through adversity—exactly the lessons I want him to learn through team sports.

I had four goals for the team at the start of the season: I wanted the kids to learn the game, to play hard, to play as a team and to have fun. I did not set a goal to win a lot of games. If someone had told me at the start of the season that the team would grow in these four areas, but not win a single game, I would have taken that deal.

In the last game of the season, we were losing by ten or 15 when the clock was expiring in the fourth quarter. Our point guard launched a three pointer at the buzzer—no small task for a 50-pound third grader—and it banked off the board and went in. The team erupted from the bench and mobbed him at mid-court as though they had won the NBA Finals. I felt a lot of gratitude in that moment: I was grateful for a bright spot to end the season with; I was grateful to have shared good lessons in life with Oscar; I was grateful for support and insight from Stacey.

When the final shot went in, I was reminded that God is present in aspects of our daily life even more deeply than I could have imagined. Even the journey through this winless season of grade school basketball was a door to the sacred.



This reflection was created as a companion piece to “Made for Love: Episode 11, Sports and Family Life,” an initiative of the USCCB’s Marriage Unique for a Reason. Find this podcast and more at www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/podcast.

A Prayer for Family Commitment was originally published as part of USCCB’s Catechetical Sunday resources in 2011.

The article “A Successful Winless Season” was originally published on USCCB’s For Your Marriage website under “Sports.”

Copyright © 2011, 2018, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. All rights reserved.