

OUR GREATEST

COACH

By Matthew Garrett

Sports teach a lot of life lessons: how to be part of a team, how to work toward a common goal, and how to handle success and failure, to name just a few. We also learn that behind every great team is a great coach. At times, the coach goes largely unnoticed. The coach doesn't actually play on the court or field, so many people watching sports fail to recognize the coach's strategy.

Similarly, at times we may not notice Heavenly Father's preparation and dedication to creating the perfect plan for our lives. But Heavenly Father is always there to teach and help us get in better shape so that we may win a great reward.² When we think of our Father in Heaven, we should remember the things He does for us.

"DISCIPLINE IS NOT
A SPECTATOR SPORT."¹

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FULFILL YOUR PERSONAL PLAN

“The Lord has placed currents of divine influence in your life that will lead you along the individual plan He would have you fulfill here on earth. Seek through the Spirit to identify it and carefully follow that direction that the Lord has put in your life. . . . Oh, how I would encourage you to weave deeply into the fabric of your soul the recognition that your life now is a part of a much bigger plan the Lord has for you. . . . What you decide to do now will affect how well you fulfill that divine, personal plan He has for you.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “He Lives,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 87.

HE IS ALWAYS TEACHING

A great coach knows that teams never stay the same; they get better or worse every day. A successful coach consistently trains and prepares his team. The Lord has said that we must be prepared³ and follow His instructions if we want to succeed. This instruction entails lasting life lessons. A coach is a teacher and is dedicated to helping team members correct mistakes so they can strive for perfection.⁴ We receive direction that helps us improve each day. Heavenly Father and the Savior have given us the path to follow.

HE HAS A GAME PLAN

A good game plan can define a great coach. Our Heavenly Father always has a perfect game plan prepared for us to accomplish our righteous goals.⁵ Just as a coach must know which plays to run and when, Heavenly Father knows all the details of our lives and what we need.⁶ We may not see the big picture, but He has perfect timing and perspective.⁷ Just as a great coach is able to make changes during the game and anticipate what the other team will do, Heavenly Father, who knows all, helps us make necessary adjustments throughout our lives so that we can do better each day and have all things work for our good.⁸

work because he knows every second that passes is a second closer to the end of the game—and to reaching the ultimate victory. Our Father in Heaven encourages us to persevere and endure so that we can be worthy of eternal life with Him.⁹

HE IS AWARE OF EACH PLAYER'S NEEDS

A caring coach knows the players on the team. And no one loves us, knows us, or cares for us as much as Heavenly Father. He knows that people learn and develop talents in different ways, so he will adapt our training experiences to get the most out of each of us. Through clear communication, our Heavenly Father is willing and eager to help all of His children strengthen their weakness¹⁰ and become their very best—the people He knows they can become.

HE NEVER LETS US QUIT

Even if the game is nearly over and the outcome seems certain, a great coach never lets a team quit. He pushes the team to the end and expects hard

HE KNOWS WHEN TO CALL TIME-OUT

In the game of life, we need to take a time-out





from the demands of the world to regroup spiritually. We also need warm-ups, halftime, post-game reviews—consistent opportunities to refocus and receive instruction about what we are doing well and what we need to improve on. Like a dedicated coach watching us in a game or practice, Heavenly Father knows how we are performing.¹¹ He knows what we can handle.¹² He also knows that we may lose focus and need to rest, and He has given us the Sabbath to remind us weekly of what is most important.¹³ We can also stop to reflect on our lives at any time,¹⁴ and we can pray to Heavenly Father, who will teach us through the Spirit what we need to do to improve.

HE INSPIRES AND MOTIVATES

Heavenly Father wants us to succeed and return and live with Him.¹⁵ Like a coach who passionately roots for the players, Heavenly Father is always there to motivate, inspire, and cheer for us, especially when we face our toughest opponents.¹⁶

HE PROMOTES UNITY

Coaches know that team members are most likely to succeed when they work together. They know that for a group of individuals to be a unified team, they must trust and understand one another. Players must be able to depend on one

another to fulfill their assignments and be at the right place at the right time. Team members must also be able to effectively communicate and work together toward a common goal, where everyone is needed to play his or her part.¹⁷ No player is above the team. We are all “sons and daughters unto God,”¹⁸ and He has commanded us to help and teach our brothers and sisters so that we may grow and progress together and be united.¹⁹

HE MAKES PRACTICE JOYFUL

While training and conditioning are necessary in sports and in life, practice does not have to be miserable. A great coach makes practice fun and productive. Learning should be enjoyable, not agonizing. As we learn and grow, Heavenly Father wants us to find happiness and enjoy each day, not suffer through life.²⁰

HE ALWAYS HELPS US WIN

Every game ends, and ultimately only one team

will be victorious. This is true in the game of life, and we know that God’s team will be the winning team. Heavenly Father devotes all His time, energy, and love to His children, and He has promised to be with us always.²¹ If we remain faithful players on His team and listen to His divine instruction, we will win “a great victory”²² and receive the ultimate reward, even His kingdom and all that He has.²³ **NE**

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NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Way of the Disciple,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 77.
2. See Mosiah 4:27.
3. See Ezekiel 38:7.
4. See Matthew 5:48.
5. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
6. See D&C 38:2.
7. See Isaiah 55:8.
8. See D&C 90:24; 98:3.
9. See D&C 14:7.
10. See Ether 12:27.
11. See Alma 26:36–37.
12. See 1 Corinthians 10:13.
13. See Mosiah 13:16–19; D&C 59:9–19; see also Mark 2:27–28.
14. See Mosiah 4:30; Alma 13:28.
15. See 2 Nephi 26:33; Moses 1:39.
16. See Isaiah 41:10; D&C 61:36.
17. See 1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Romans 12:4–5.
18. D&C 76:24.
19. See D&C 38:27; 109:7.
20. See Psalm 118:24; Ecclesiastes 5:18–19; John 16:33; D&C 68:6; 78:18.
21. See Matthew 28:20.
22. 2 Samuel 23:10, 12.
23. See D&C 84:38.