

Simple Evangelism #8  
**Play On The Team**  
By Bill Denton

**INTRODUCTION**

**A. We're going to look at another aspect of this thing we're calling "simple evangelism"**

1. Throughout the series I've tried to help you see that we are called to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus to others
2. But it's not a job just for experts – it's something for all Christians
3. Neither is it the case that everybody has to become a teacher or preacher, instead we can all work together using our varied talents and abilities to reach people in our community

**B. Let me begin with an illustration**

1. Kevin Costner starred in a movie titled, "For Love of the Game"
  - a. he's an aging baseball pitcher, trying to get through the final years of a brilliant career
  - b. it's also a love story, but there's enough baseball in it to keep the guys interested
2. Toward the end of the movie, Costner's character Billy Chapel, is pitching one of the greatest games ever – no hitter
  - a. the problem – age, injuries and more are catching up with him
  - b. as a pitcher, he's got nothing left and he knows it
  - c. he doesn't want to come out, and everybody want him to get his no-hitter in
  - d. there's one of those pitcher-catcher conferences out at the mound that goes like this  
Billy Chapel: I don't know if I have anything left.  
Gus Sinski: You just throw whatever you got, whatever's left. The boys are all here for you. We're gonna be awesome for you right now!
  - e. so Billy Chapel pitches, not the best, but his teammates make great plays and Chapel gets his no-hitter
3. Of course this is one of the great things about team sports
  - a. you're on a team, and that's the point
  - b. nobody has to do it all alone

**C. That brings us to tonight's lesson in simple evangelism – play on the team!**

1. The church is described as a body, a family, a temple, a building, etc.
2. It is also a team – each of us is a member. Play on the team.

## I. THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE CHURCH AS A TEAM

### A. Team defined

1. a number of persons forming one of the sides in a game or contest: a football team.
2. a number of persons associated in some joint action: a team of advisers.  
(Dictionary.com)
3. I think “team” is a word that describes the church
  - a. Romans 12:3-8

3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. NASU
  - b. wow! Sounds just like how we’d think of a team
    - 1) nobody can think too highly of themselves because nobody can do it all – a team works precisely because every member is important to success
    - 2) a team has many members, but there’s just one team
    - 3) all the members must depend on one another
    - 4) every member provides a special ability or service that works to enhance the product of the other team members
    - 4) no team member is expected to do anything except what that member’s ability equips him or her to do

### B. Look at another passage that teaches the same concept

1. Ephesians 4:11-12

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; NASU
2. This passage reflects the kind of thing we expect from a team and all the supporting people around it
  - a. some are head coaches, some assistant coaches, some are trainers, etc.
  - b. they work to equip the team to play the game and to build the team for peak performance – it’s the same kind of thing Paul wrote about

## II. YOU'VE GOT TO GET THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH, THEN PARTICIPATE

### A. Get the point

1. The church is the body of Christ – and in modern terms, it's much like a team
2. The church is made up of many members, and each one has a place and a role to play that makes the church function properly – just like a team
3. The church isn't just one member, regardless who they are – just like a team
4. Would it make any of the following make sense?
  - a. the shortstop on a baseball team decided to stop fielding ground balls
  - b. the left tackle on a football team decided to stop blocking anybody
  - c. a forward on a basketball team decided to stop rebounding
  - d. you get the idea – and none of those things make sense
  - e. if you're going to play on a team, then play your position

### B. That's the encouragement we read in scripture

1. Acts 1:8 (watch Jesus form his team)

8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." NASU
2. Acts 2:37-42 (watch Jesus build his team)

37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." 40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. 42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. NASU
3. Acts 2:43-47 (watch the team begin to work together to “play the game”)

43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. 46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God and having

favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. NASU

C. It just makes sense – if you're going to be on a team (or part of the church) then play on the team (or we might say – take on your role and function in the church)

### III. PLAYING ON THE TEAM MAKES EVANGELISM WORK

A. Evangelism works best when it is supported from a variety of people

1. My favorite illustration of evangelism begins with the elderly lady who lived in an apartment building. She baked cakes for new residents, delivered the cake with a welcome to the apartment complex, and invited people to church. Some attended, which brought into play, greeters, friendly folks in pews around them, Bible class teachers, the preacher, folks who followed up their visit, personal evangelism workers – which finally resulted in people being saved. Who was responsible? The team!!
2. Evangelism would be much easier if we worked together, all focused on a single goal, but all filling our own individual roles and functions

B. Watch how the team is promoted and recognized in the New Testament

1. The Philippians

a. Philippians 1:3-5

3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, 5 in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. NASU

b. Philippians 4:15-16

15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; 16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. NASU

c. Paul saw the Philippians as part of his team

1) Paul was the preacher, teacher, missionary, apostle

2) but the Philippians made it possible by supporting him

d. Philippians 2:25

25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; NASU

1) Epaphroditus had been sent by the church in Philippi, maybe as the one who carried the funds to Paul

2) He had remained for a time, helping Paul, even becoming very sick and almost died

3) fellow worker, fellow soldier – teammate is how Paul thought

## 2. The Romans

- a. Romans 16:1-2 (note the teamwork encouraged toward Phoebe)  
16 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; 2 that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well. NASU
- b. Romans 16:3-4 (note the husband/wife teammates of Paul)  
3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; NASU

3. There are others Paul mentioned, and you get the sense that he always saw these people as teammates, working together for the Lord

### C. Why is this view so important to today's church?

1. Because Americans are infected with a kind of desperate individualism
  - a. Belief in the primary importance of the individual and in the virtues of self-reliance and personal independence.
  - b. there is much good to be said for individualism, but pushed to an extreme, we lose the idea and all benefits of the value of others, and reliance and dependence on them
  - c. for everyone, church becomes a focus on "me" – "you" just don't count for much
2. Not one of us can fully function alone
  - a. the idea that we can goes against everything the Bible teaches about the nature of the church
  - b. we need a new focus on the church as a body of people
  - c. we need a new focus on the church as a team designed to work together
3. Evangelism becomes simpler for us all, when we learn that we're teammates

### CONCLUSION

#### A. Do you belong to "this" team?

1. If so, play on the team – we need you!
2. Together we can do far more than any of us can ever do alone

#### B. Invitation