

A Special Focus Class

How Football Illustrates Biblical Theology and Life



Rev. Edward D. Seely, Th.M., Ph.D.

Table of Contents

Subject

Slide

Introduction	3
1. Theology (Doctrine of God)	34
2. Anthropology (Doctrine of Mankind)	64
3. Christology (Doctrine of Christ)	77
4. Soteriology (Doctrine of Salvation)	87
5. Ecclesiology (Doctrine of the Church)	110
6. Eschatology (Doctrine of the Last Things).	173
Gratitude and Resources	186

Introduction

I've always enjoyed football, for the reasons below and for other reasons. I've enjoyed watching and listening to games—in person, on the radio, and on TV—and playing the game in gym class and in informal games with friends when I was young, including “tackle-no [or very little] equipment.” (In organized team sports, my games were baseball and fast-pitch softball.) The following principles can be applied to all organized sports, but football is especially illustrative.

Therefore, this presentation is likely to be most useful if offered just prior to, or during, the football season, and especially prior to the Super Bowl.

Now, as a pastor, theologian, scientist, and educator, I enjoy how football and other sports illustrate Biblical teaching and life. We see how in several ways.

- My goal with this presentation is that from now on—when you watch a football game—you'll think theologically. And every other day as well.

Introduction

Football illustrates Biblical theology and life. We see the illustrations in several ways. Consider some empirical evidence of how widespread is the interest in football that provides opportunities for conversations about Christ:

For proof, think about this: In 2023, 93 of 100 most-watched shows on broadcast television were NFL games. That's a staggering domination of the American pop cultural psyche, at least in broadcast television....*

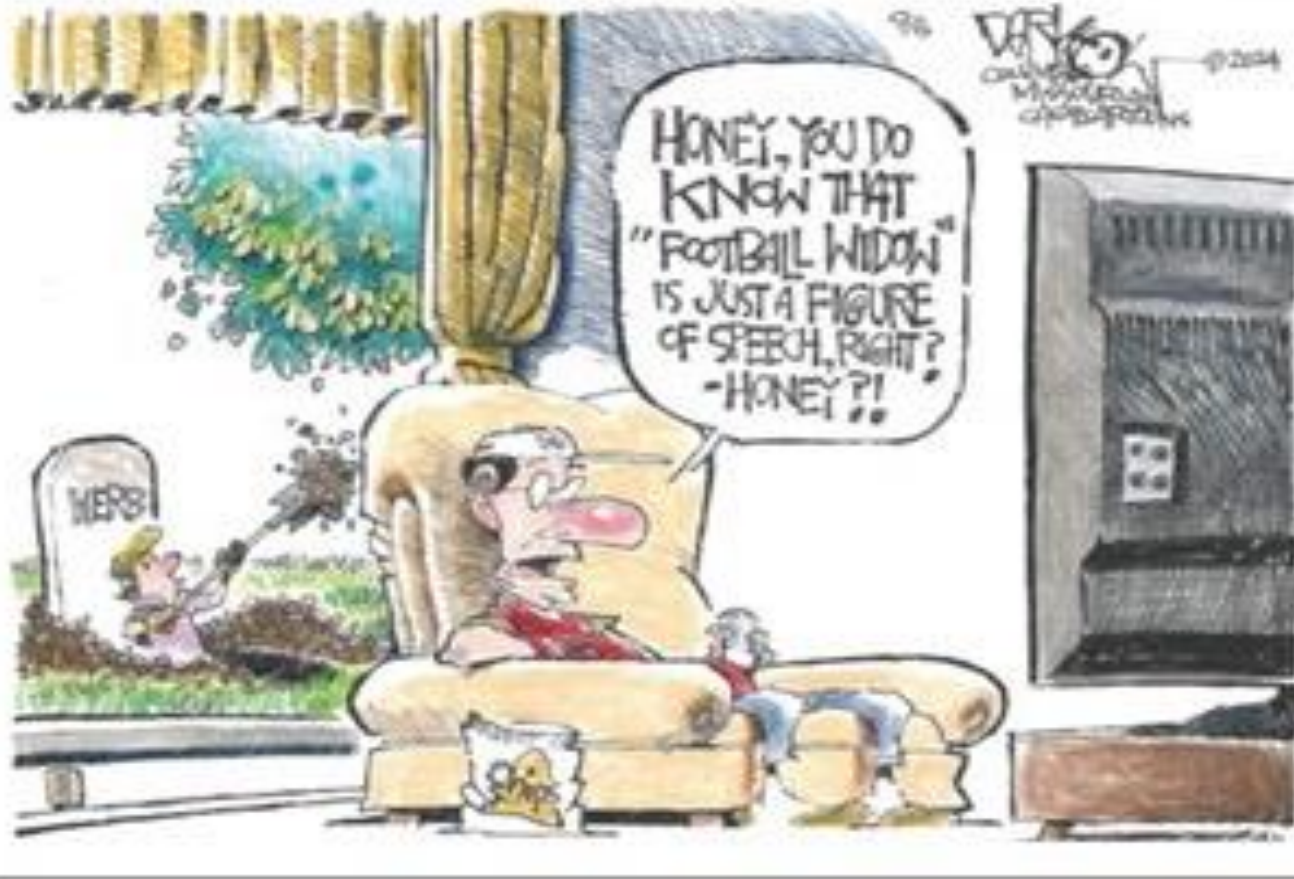
Consider also such anecdotal evidence as the following illustration:

* “*The Bulletin* (Bend, Ore.) on how the NFL is among the last mainstream American culture,” reprinted in the Loveland, CO *Reporter-Herald*, September 8, 2024, p. A4. The acronym NFL refers to the National Football League, which is composed of 32 professional teams.

Introduction

Football illustrates Biblical theology and life. We see many illustrations.

Cartoonist's take



Introduction

Football illustrates Biblical theology and life. We observe many examples.

Notwithstanding the reality portrayed in the previous slides, an informative statistic reflecting at least one of the [6,500 genetic differences between males and females](#) emerged in 2023 when popular entertainer, Taylor Swift, began dating the Kansas City Chiefs outstanding tight end, Travis Kelsey. As TV cameras focused more and more on Swift and Kelsey, mostly on the former, Gen Z and Millennial women's favorable view of NFL football "grew 11 percentage points to 64%, according to a brand survey...."* Its global popularity is also growing rapidly.**

Think of the countless opportunities to relate football to Christian theology...*if we know some ways to do so*. That is the subject of this presentation.

* "The Bulletin (Bend, Ore.) on how the NFL is among the last mainstream American culture," reprinted in the Loveland, CO Reporter-Herald, September 8, 2024, p. A4.

** <https://www.reuters.com/sports/nfl/record-international-audience-super-bowl-indicates-nfl-growing-global-presence-2024-03-06/>.

Introduction

It's helpful to know and remember that a game is a method of teaching. Games were developed early in human history to teach military strategies. We can learn much from the game of football that will help us enjoy life, experience more success, and serve the Lord more effectively.

Pertaining to military applications, we must first recognize the Biblical uses of that analogy for teaching the awareness of—and equipping God's people for engaging—the spiritual war in which we are involved. (Cf., Ephesians 6:10-18)

- Of great concern is the observation that many Christians aren't even aware of the spiritual war going on all around them—and negatively affecting them and their effectiveness in their calling—much less having and knowing how to use “the full armor of God.” (6:13) I pray this program will help us do so.

Introduction

It's also important for us who are believers in and followers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to remember his calling of us to be his witnesses. Indeed, this is our primary vocation (< Latin, *vocāre*, to call). Recall specifically the Great Commission he gave us, which we read in Matthew 28:18-20, in which he tells us to "...disciple all the nations...."

The vast number of people watching football provides a constant cultural opportunity, especially in the fall and winter, to engage in conversations about a subject with many links to Biblical truths. Consider these data:

Introduction

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus tells us to “...disciple all the nations....”

- In the Greek text, the word disciple (μαθητεύσατε [*mathēteusate*], disciple) is a verb (2nd person plural), and it is in the **imperative mood**, i.e., **it’s a command**, not something we do when we feel like it or if we can fit it into our schedule. The verb is in the **orist (past) tense**, meaning **this is actually to be done and with such certainty that it can be expressed as having already occurred and/or is in the process of taking place; i.e., Do it now!** The verb is in the **active voice**, meaning **we are to do the acting and not just wait around and let someone else do it** (as commonly said, “Let George do it.”) or do it for us.
 - + Notice, there is no “George” in the text, and if there were, he would have all he could do in his own witnessing to obey the command.
 - + Rather, Christ has called you and me who believe in him to be his witnesses, not some imaginary “George.”

Introduction

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus tells us to “...disciple all the nations....”

- The verb, μαθητεύσατε (*mathēteusate*, disciple), can also be translated “make disciples.” Part of making disciples involves a witness for Jesus Christ and teaching. Keep in mind two important matters pertaining to this responsibility:
 - + Teaching: Don’t say, “I don’t know enough yet to teach or even to witness.” That common comment is unbiblical; it contradicts God’s Word. Nowhere in the Bible are we told that we have to reach a certain level of competency before we inform people about what God’s Word says. Tell them what you do know. And (aorist tense), **Do it now!** Read and study the Bible daily. Invite them to church. Refer them to this and other trustworthy Websites.
 - + Witnessing: Again, tell people **now** what you know about Jesus. See more below in Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit.
- As we saw earlier, games are useful teaching tools. One game we can use for this teaching is...football. How?

Introduction

In order to teach the Bible about the Lord Jesus Christ—to whom all the Old Testament points and all the New Testament explains—we need to have the opportunity to talk with people and to have their attention and receptivity.

Human learning research shows receptivity to what we have to say is obtained and enhanced by starting with, building upon, and linking to what the others are interested in and need.

Communication research indicates we can tap into such areas of interest and need by early on in discussions using conversational gambits that are directly related to those interests and needs.

Introduction

The word gambit comes from the game of chess, and it refers to an opening move in the beginning of a game.

Gambit now also refers to a remark that opens a conversation about a specific subject.

I recommend using many aspects of the game of football as gambits to open conversations about Christ Jesus and/or to illustrate Biblical teachings in a way many people, especially—but not only—males can easily relate to and understand. While a growing number of females are interested in and enjoy football, men and boys will be especially receptive to illustrations from football.

Such gambits become catalysts to conversations about Christ.

Introduction

In what follows, most of the references to football will be to the game as it is played in the United States and in a growing number of other countries. Nevertheless, what follows can also be applied to the real game of football, as it is called throughout the rest of the world (into which Jesus has sent us). I say real football (called soccer in the U. S.), because it is played mostly with the feet in contrast to American football, most of which is now played with the hands.

The rest of this presentation suggests how football can be used to facilitate conversations about Christ in all the nations due to its great popularity all over the world.

Introduction

Football illustrates Biblical theology and life in several ways. However, in order to teach about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Bible, we need to have the opportunity to talk with people and to have their attention.

Use football as a gambit to open conversations about Christ Jesus.

As we talk about Jesus and the Bible, it will be helpful to answer questions and briefly explain our answers in the context of the main message of the Bible.

Doing so helps people:

- Make sense out of life
 - Understand who God, including Christ Jesus, is and how we have a relationship with him
 - Our purpose in life, and
 - What we experience at the end of this phase of life and then forever.
- Football offers illustrations of some of these realities.

Introduction

As we engage in these discussions in the process of obeying Jesus' command to "make disciples," we can draw on historic Christian theology, which gives an overview of the message of the whole Bible in easy to remember logical, systematic, concepts. Through the centuries, Christian theologians have offered two especially helpful schematics to enable us and others to understand the most basic overview of the Bible, the main message of God's Word, which is that the whole Bible is the revelation of God's plan—starting before creation—to redeem and restore his creation (being all knowing, he knew what would occur) after the destructive and devastating effects Adam and Eve's sin would have on it.

One schematic is: **Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation.**

Introduction

Through the centuries, Christian theologians have offered two especially helpful schematics to enable us and others to understand the most basic overview of the Bible, the main message of God's Word.

➤ One schematic is: **Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation.**

The following slides give a brief explanation of each teaching in the Bible. For more information on each, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity.](#)

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Creation

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

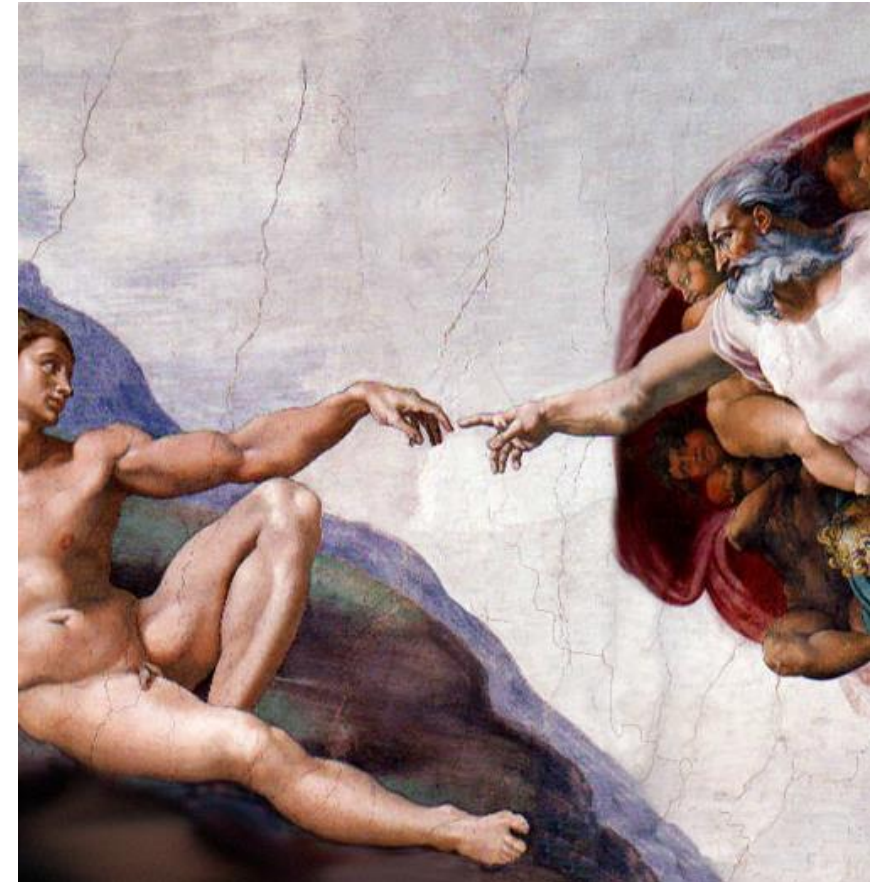
“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” (Genesis 1:26-28)

*As stated in the previous slides, four overarching themes throughout the Bible are: **creation**, **fall**, **redemption**, and **consummation**. The six loci of historic Christian systematic theology further explain those four themes. In his famous classic painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in Rome, Michelangelo portrays the perfect relationship that man had with God at first, when God created him. Nothing separated the first two humans from God.*

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Fall

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

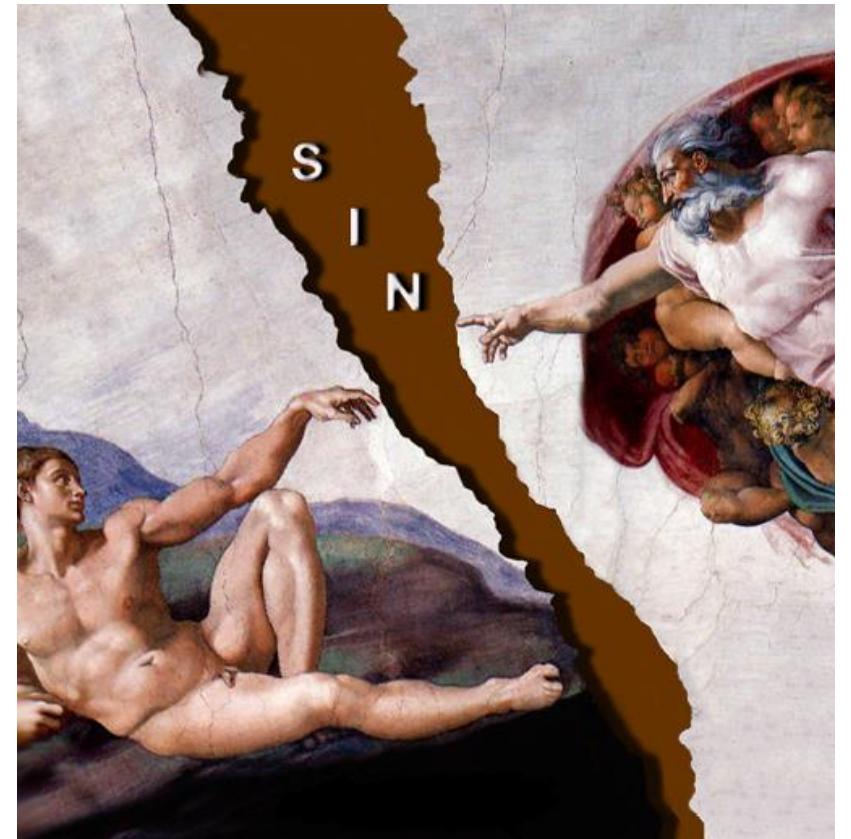
Adam's sin caused disharmony throughout all creation, beginning by separating humans from God. (Genesis 3:23) Thus, sin is extremely serious; indeed, it is inexcusable, but it is not unforgivable, thanks be to our most holy yet also all-loving triune God, who has provided the only way for that forgiveness: by being credited with the righteousness of Jesus Christ through faith in him, thus reconciling us with God, which is the main focus of the Bible (Romans 4:16-25; John 14:6) and Christian theology.

+ "...in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:20-23)

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

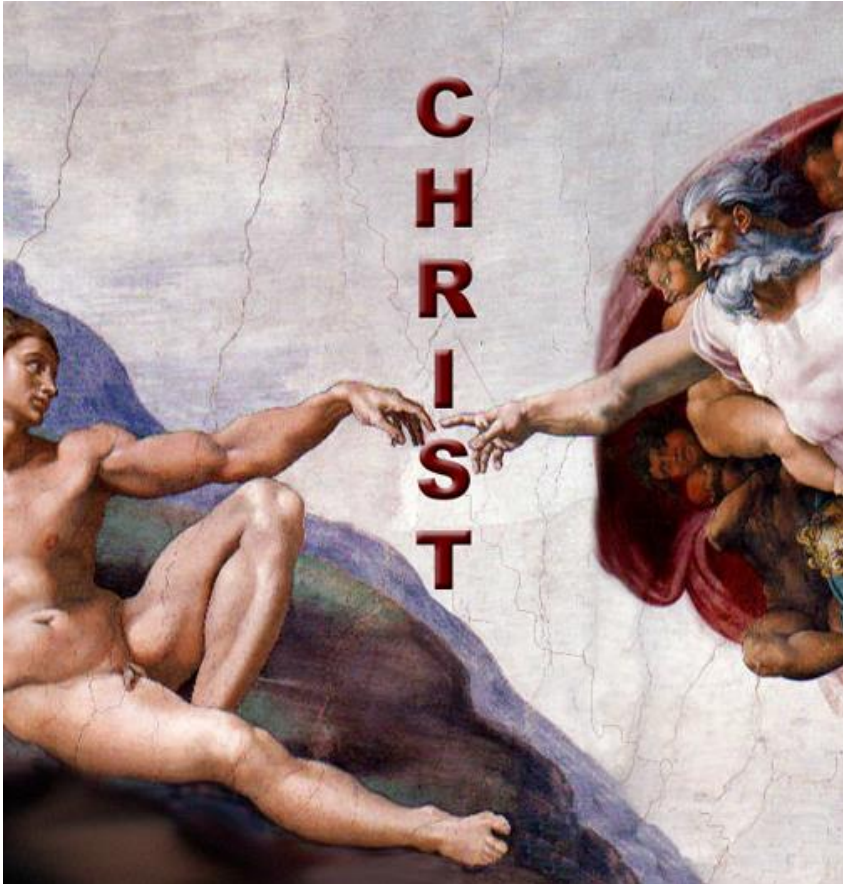
Disharmony between man and God



Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Redemption

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ



Meaning and Practical Benefits

Jesus' life, suffering, death, resurrection, and exaltation redeem all who believe in him and are credited with his righteousness (Romans 4:22-25; 10:9) and thereby can come into God's most holy and loving presence. Believers in and followers of Christ are at peace with God, the necessary basis of our most complete, true, and fulfilling peace. (John 14:6; 16:33; 19:30)

- “And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.” (Matthew 27:50-51)
- “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” (Romans 5:1-2)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Consummation

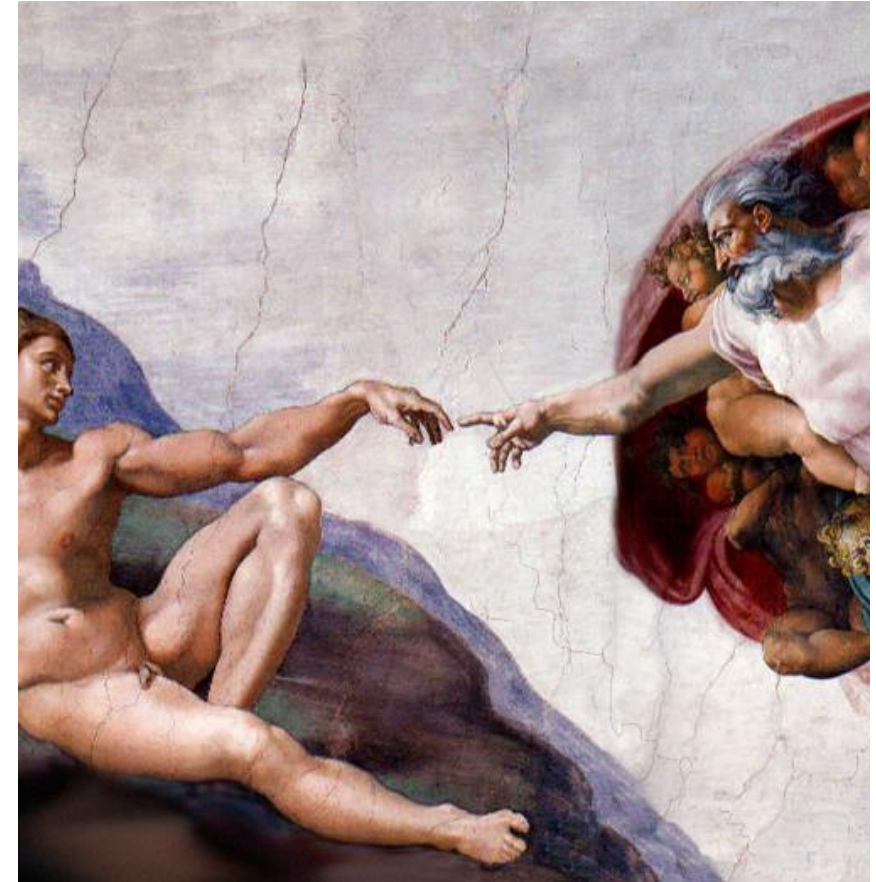
Doctrine of the Last Things

In Christ Jesus' first and second advents we see the beginning and the conclusion, respectively, of what the Bible and Christian theology call the end time or the end of the ages. (Hebrews 9:26) This is the consummation of God's plan to restore his creation.

Jesus' first advent reveals his perfect divine-human and sacrificial love. That love will also be operative in his second advent. In his first advent, he said he had not come to judge but to save. (John 3:17; 12:47)

At his second advent, he is coming for the promised judgment that will resolve all wrongdoing and evil, and forever restore his perfect creation, for which he said he would return. His love is seen in providing a new (*kainos*) heaven and a new (*kainos*, i.e., not brand new [*neos*] but renewed [*kainos*] and fulfilled, having continuity with the good in the original) earth in which God will again dwell with his faithful covenant believers in eternal glory where there is no more sin, evil, death, mourning, crying, or pain. (Matthew 25:31-46; John 12:48; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 21:1-8,24-27)

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Introduction

Now the questions arise, “What does the Bible say about who is involved and how God has accomplished and is accomplishing what he has revealed about the **creation, fall, redemption, and consummation** of his creation? How do we help others answer these universal questions?”

Another especially helpful schematic answers those questions with a more specific summary of the Bible’s main teachings via six subjects, called loci, showing the logical and easy-to-remember systematic progression of God’s plan to restore his creation to its intended perfection.

Introduction

The answer to those questions is seen in [historic Christian systematic theology](#), which comprises six main loci (doctrines, themes) that explain God's plan involving his creation, its fall, his redemption of it, and the consummation of his plan, in a logical sequence throughout the Bible. These six loci identify and explain the essence of God's Word, which helps us understand the Bible, its applications to life today, and make sense of this first phase of life here on earth in the context of a Biblical worldview, all vital aspects of the Biblical teaching about the creation, fall, redemption, and consummation of God's plan to restore his creation perfectly and permanently. Doing so helps us learn about, prepare for, and for Christians benefit already from the Lord's preparations for the next phase of life, the rest of eternity.

Introduction

Football illustrates Biblical theology and life in several ways.

In order to teach about the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible, we need to have the opportunity to talk with people and to have their attention and receptivity to what we have to say.

To gain such attention and receptivity, human learning research (the most accurate of which is an empirical and insightful explanation of what is commonly experienced) reveals the value of tapping into people's motivations. Two ways are especially helpful for doing so.

- Raise questions about key aspects of life and eternity that affect them. Notice how Jesus frequently used questions. Study the specific questions he raised.
- Tap into people's existing motivations. Football season offers many opportunities to talk about a multitude of aspects of the game that can lead to discussing Biblical realities pertaining to life and eternity. Just as Jesus and Paul used contemporary phenomena to teach Bible truths, we can too. Notice Paul also used sports (e.g., 2 Timothy 2:5).

Introduction

Of course football—or any other human endeavor—can't be used to teach a lot of the Bible. But it does offer illustrations of some key aspects of historic Christian Biblical theology that can open up countless opportunities to talk about those aspects of God's Word and his plan of redemption and salvation that constitute the Bible's main message.

This program provides a football analogy for at least one aspect of each of the six loci of historic Christian systematic theology that we can use to help us and others with whom we speak to understand God's Word, as we seek to obey the Lord's Great Commission. (Matthew 28:18-20) As you explain how each football example illustrates an aspect of the related theological doctrine, emphasize that this is only one part of that doctrine; there is much more. Then ask, "Would you like to hear more?" If the response is "Yes," then of course say more and refer the person(s) to the author's [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life.](#)

Introduction

Introduction to Systematic Theology

Introduction to Systematic Theology

What Is Systematic Theology?

1. The word, theology, like many words, is used in a narrower and in a broader sense.
 - a. Theology (in the narrower sense) refers to the study of God. The term, theology, derives from two Greek words.
Theology < θεός (*theos*) → God + λόγος (*logos*) → word, subject, message
 - b. Theology (in the broader sense) refers to the study of God and the other main related teachings about God and his plan of redemption revealed throughout the Bible.
2. Christian theology brings together all the teaching of God's Word, the Bible, and groups the Scriptures by subject categories. That part of theology called systematic theology, arranges the categories in a Biblical sequence, or system, that explains the logic of God's plan of redeeming and restoring his creation after Adam and Eve corrupted it with their disobedience.

Introduction to Systematic Theology

What Is Systematic Theology?

3. Throughout the church, theologians have used different designations of the main categories of the subjects of Scripture. One, as mentioned above, is **creation, fall, redemption, and consummation**. This paradigm is an easy-to-remember and helpful means of understanding and explaining the main message of God's Word in an historical and theological, linear and logical, framework. And, there's another that fits well with and further explains it.
4. Early church leaders discerned six main subjects, also called doctrines, themes, or loci, that occur throughout Scripture, which is God's special revelation of himself: who he is; what he is like; what he has done; what he is doing; and what he will do.
5. All six of the loci are referred to in the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans; in fact all six are even referred to in one chapter (8). The word, loci, is the plural of the Latin word, *locus*, meaning place, locale, or site of something, in this case all the Bible has to say about each of these six main subjects.

Introduction to Systematic Theology

6. Significantly, all true Christian denominations have these six loci in their theological statements of what they believe. Some explain them in the historical system and with much detail, others with less detail and less attention to the historical systematic order. Certain content within each of the six doctrines varies among the denominations, but all Biblically-based denominations see all six loci as covering the essence of God's Word, the Old and New Testaments.

As indicated in the first paragraph, true Christian denominations are those that adhere to the true teaching of God's Word in its original languages, principally the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament, without trying to manipulate the meaning of the words by eisegesis, i.e., reading into the words a biased meaning the words do not have. The content variations of these Biblically-based denominations comes under the heading of genuinely "disputable matters" (e.g., Romans 14:1ff.), where true Christians differ in their exegesis (drawing out the original meaning of the Spirit-inspired words) of specific Scripture passages.

Introduction to Systematic Theology

7. Further, these six loci offer essential Biblical content that helps us understand and explain life today and vital aspects of the Biblical teaching about the creation, fall, redemption, and consummation of God's plan to restore his creation perfectly and permanently.
8. The church early on saw that these six loci can be arranged in a system, a logical order, that explains the rationale of the main parts of God's revelation in the Bible. Knowing these six loci enables us to understand—and helps us help others understand—God's plan of redeeming and restoring his perfect creation in and through Jesus Christ. (Cf. 1 Peter 3:15) What are these six loci?

The Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

1. **Theology**: What the Bible Reveals about God
2. **Anthropology**: What the Bible Reveals about Mankind
3. **Christology**: What the Bible Reveals about Jesus Christ
4. **Soteriology**: What the Bible Reveals about Salvation (This doctrine is also called **Pneumatology** and **The Application of Christ's Redemption**, What the Bible Reveals about the Holy Spirit, the key agent in applying Christ's redemption for our salvation)
5. **Ecclesiology**: What the Bible Reveals about the Church
6. **Eschatology**: What the Bible Reveals about the Last Things or The End Times, Consummation

The Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology: Biblical Derivation and Meaning of the Terms

1. **Theology** > θεός, *theos* → God + λόγος, *logos* → word, subject, message
2. **Anthropology** > ἄνθρωπος, *anthrōpos* → mankind + λόγος
3. **Christology** > Χριστός, *Christos* → Christ, the Anointed One + λόγος
4. **Soteriology** > σώζω, *sōzō* → save, keep safe, preserve, rescue, make well + λόγος; (cognate: σωτήρ, *sōtēr* → Savior, redeemer, deliverer, preserver);
Pneumatology > πνεῦμα, *pneuma* → Spirit (the Holy Spirit); wind, breath + λόγος; **The Application of Christ's Redemption.**
5. **Ecclesiology** > ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* → assembly, congregation, church > (ἐκ, *ek* → from, out of, away from + καλέω, *kaleō* → call, name, summon, invite → literally, [the ones] called out [by the Lord]) + λόγος
6. **Eschatology** > ἔσχατον, *eschaton* → last + λόγος

The Integration of the Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

The Logic of the System and a Summary of the Six Main Doctrines of the Bible

- 1. Theology:** Everything starts with God. Essential aspects of God include his triune being; that he is creator; owner; most holy, righteous, and just, such that nothing unholy ever enters his presence; steadfast love to the core of his being; and for his being completely perfect in every way.
- 2. Anthropology:** God created humans perfect, even to a limited extent in his image, but the first ones disobeyed God; this sin, which has resulted in cosmic disharmony, so corrupted themselves and their posterity that we cannot come into God's presence and have eternal life without his help. In love, God gave his law to teach his will, his plan of restoration, and to restrain sin to prevent chaos in the now sinful and evil world. What's his plan?
- 3. Christology:** Since God is love, he is unwilling to destroy sinful humans who bear his image, but to preserve his holiness, righteousness, and justice, he instituted his plan to have one perfect human being represent all others, fulfill all the law, and credit that righteousness to all people who believe in and follow him. To accomplish God's perfect will for human beings, that one righteous human also had to be divine; the only One who could fulfill all God's law is his only begotten Son, the Redeemer, Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, who did so in his First Coming to earth in his life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. The whole Bible focuses on Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus, and only Jesus (John 14:6), makes salvation, living forever in the presence of God, possible. How?
- 4. Soteriology:** This explanation of salvation explains how the Third Person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, applies the redemption and salvation Christ has provided to all individuals who believe in and follow Jesus.
- 5. Ecclesiology:** This doctrine explains how God calls out, sets apart, brings together, and equips those whom he has redeemed in a new (i.e., renewed) covenant, the church, all those from every race and nation, to work together to most effectively bring to and implement the Good News of salvation throughout the whole world.
- 6. Eschatology:** When the time is right in God's sight, he will bring the present age to a conclusion and restore his original plan in a new (i. e., renewed) heaven and new (renewed) earth. How he has already begun to do so, is seen in what the Bible reveals about the Last Things, or The End Times, including what occurs when we die and what occurs at the end of history, when Christ Jesus returns in his Second Coming: Consummation.

A Reminder

The following six sections pertaining to the six loci of historic Christian systematic theology, only include one or two aspects of each doctrine. Each doctrine contains much more Biblical content than can here be presented. For the rest, see the Resources section.

The only part of each theological doctrine that is included in this program is one which is readily illustrated by an aspect of football. Also, only a few of the many Biblical texts on which the doctrines are based are herein cited.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Proverbs 9:10)

Who is God; what is he like; what has
he done; and what is he doing?

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Plan for Redeeming and Restoring His Creation

1. In our study of Theology—all the Bible teaches about God—we learn that he is all love (from which all his attributes—including his holiness, justice, and righteousness—arise and are all expressions of his perfect love); all of his being is perfect; and he created everything to be perfect in the beginning. He has supreme intelligence, infinitely more than any of the humans he has created, who bear his image, can comprehend. He doesn't make mistakes.
 - a. But his perfect human beings, whom he created in his image, misused the genuine—albeit limited—freedom he gave them, and in so doing corrupted God's creation, and separated themselves and all their posterity from God's most holy presence. In the Bible God's holiness is emphasized by the three-fold repetition, “holy, holy, holy” (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8), the way the Biblical Hebrew language denotes and connotes the superlative, i.e., the concept of most or greatest, *indicating God's total separation from—and strong and active opposition to—all sin.*

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Plan for Redeeming and Restoring His Creation

1. In our study of Theology we learn that God is all love, including being most holy, just, and righteous; has supreme intelligence, infinitely more so than any of the humans he has created in his image can or will ever comprehend; and much else.
 - b. Yet because he loves the humans who bear his image, he is unwilling to allow that separation to destroy us. Therefore, immediately after Adam and Eve's tragic and destructive release of sin and evil in the world, God announced (Genesis 3:15) and began to implement his plan to redeem and restore in Christ all who would use their freedom to faithfully comply with his plan.
 - c. God's plan was established before the world began. In God's all-knowing and infinitely supreme intelligence, he knew what humans would wrongly do with their freedom, so the one true and triune God planned how He would bring together a just resolution of human sin and at such great cost to Himself in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever! (Cf. 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2)

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Plan for Redeeming and Restoring His Creation

1. In our study of Theology we learn that God is all love, including being most holy, just, and righteous; has supreme intelligence; and much else.
 - d. What a marvelous plan, constructed before creation! (John 17:24; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:4) Therefore, it was NOT AT ALL, in any way reckless, as in the very unbiblical, untrue, inappropriate, and offensive title of a contemporary popular song, “The Reckless Love of God.” FAR to the CONTRARY. The standard definition of “reckless” in the dictionaries is thoughtless, irresponsible, inconsiderate, careless, imprudent (i.e., lacking discretion, wisdom, good judgment), and much more that is the very opposite of God's perfectly thought out and loving plan from before creation—not at all a reckless, spur-of-the-moment, rash decision. A much more Biblically accurate title would be “The Steadfast Love [חֶסֶד (*chesed*), Psalm 100:5; Jeremiah 33:11; Micah 7:18] of God.”

Theology: The Doctrine of God

Word and Deed, Planning and Execution: God's Plan Is Perfectly Executed in and through Christ Jesus

1. In our study of Theology we learn that God is all love, including being most holy, just, and righteous; has supreme intelligence; and much else. God has not only formed his plan to redeem and restore his creation but he has executed that plan in and through Jesus Christ.

In the right time in God's sight (Galatians 4:4), God perfectly executed his great plan in the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the rock solid basis of the Biblical message and the turning point in history. (1 Corinthians 15) The Apostle Paul writes, "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (15:21-22)

- e. The whole Bible's central focus is on God's plan of redemption in the restoration of his creation in and through Jesus Christ with whom and through whom the Father created his perfect cosmos.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

Word and Deed, Planning and Execution: God's Plan Is Perfectly Executed in and through Christ Jesus

1.e. Cont'd.: In the right time in God's sight (Galatians 4:4), God perfectly executed his great plan in the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the rock solid basis of the Biblical message and the turning point in history. (1 Corinthians 15)

In addition, in so doing God demonstrates what Biblical scholars call a major motif, a doctrine that is reiterated throughout the Word of God, the whole Bible. This motif is the unity of word and deed. For example, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (James 2:26; cf. Matthew 7:21; Deuteronomy 12:28; 13:4,18)

Theology: The Doctrine of God

Word and Deed, Planning and Execution: God's Plan Is Perfectly Executed in and through Christ Jesus

1. In our study of Theology we see God demonstrate what Biblical scholars call the major motif (theme, doctrine) of the unity of word and deed. God speaks, and his word comes to be. See also Genesis 1:1,3; John 1:1; Proverbs 19:21.
 - f. In football, we observe a similar concept in a major emphasis on planning and execution. Planning is essential for success, but planning also requires execution of the plan in order to actually achieve the desired outcome: a win. Humans often don't plan or don't plan well, and even when we do plan, the plan sometimes doesn't work; it has a flaw, due to human limitations. Nevertheless, this major emphasis in football illustrates many Biblical teachings, chief among them: God's plans always stand. We'll look at specific human examples of this crucial connection in our consideration of ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

Balance between Freedom and Limits

- 1.f. Since God created, and therefore owns, the whole world, he has the right and authority to require his creation to function according to his will. Thus, the standard of authority is a criterion (vertical) not a norm (horizontal) reference. We are accountable to him and will be judged by his standard; the outcome will be according to his will. Similarly in football, when a dispute occurs, it is resolved according to an appeal to an established authority; it is not resolved by the teams having a debate (a norm reference).

God created human beings in his image. (Genesis 1:26-31) Part of that image is a limited—but genuine—freedom. To enhance our freedom, God told Adam and Eve that they only had one rule to follow: Don't eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He also gave them a warning as to what would occur if they disobeyed. (Genesis 2:17)

Theology: The Doctrine of God

Balance between Freedom and Limits

1.f. Similarly in football, when a dispute occurs, it is resolved according to an appeal to an established authority; it is not resolved by the teams having a debate (a norm reference).

As in all of life, freedom exists but within limits. In fact, functioning within the limits—according to the rules—enhances freedom, enjoyment, well being, and successful outcomes.
(Genesis 2:17; Matthew 5:17-19; Exodus 20:1-17; John 13:34-35)

Theology: The Doctrine of God

Balance between Freedom and Limits

- 1.f. As in all of life, freedom exists but within limits. In fact, playing within the limits—according to the rules—enhances freedom, enjoyment, well being, and successful outcomes.
- 1) The game of football is played in an arena that has very specifically defined boundaries of space and time, both of which are well-marked and enforced.
 - a) Every play in the game has to take place within those boundaries.
 - b) Due to Biblical anthropology, which we'll focus on in the next section, it is assumed—and readily observed—that the players are not perfect. Some will willfully violate the rules of the game. Not a few of these violations cause injury, even serious injury. Others will unintentionally make mistakes and violate rules. Nevertheless, both must face a penalty for their infractions.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

Balance between Freedom and Limits

- 1.f. As in all of life, freedom exists but within limits. In fact, playing within the limits—according to the rules—enhances freedom, enjoyment, well being, and successful outcomes.
 - 1) The game of football is played in an arena that has very specifically defined boundaries of space and time, both of which are well-marked and enforced.
 - c) Since violations of the rules regularly occur, judges (some of whom are called referees) are included in the game and will judge the infractions. Penalties are issued. Sometimes games are lost due to these violations. Conversely, often games are won due to following the rules by not receiving counterproductive penalties that result in loss of yardage, touchdowns, and other scores that win games.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

Balance between Freedom and Limits

- 1.f. As in all of life, freedom exists but within limits. In fact, playing and living within the limits—according to the rules—enhances freedom, enjoyment, and well being, including successful outcomes.
- 2) Human life also is conducted within limits established by God in a space and timeframe that has very specifically designated boundaries that are clearly defined and enforced.
 - a) He has given us his law, specific commandments, the following of which will please him and us; negative consequences occur from disobeying him, e.g., negative mental, physical, social, and spiritual health. (Romans 1:27ff.)
 - b) We learn in the Bible, God's Word, that all human beings are sinful and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23 *et al.*)

Theology: The Doctrine of God

Balance between Freedom and Limits

- 1.f. As in all of life, freedom exists but within limits. In fact, playing and living within the limits—according to the rules—enhances freedom, enjoyment, and well being, including successful outcomes.
- 2) Human life also is conducted within limits established by God in a space and timeframe that has very specifically defined boundaries that are clearly defined and enforced.
- c) Since violations of God's commands occur, those who commit the violations will be held accountable, sooner (Romans 13:1-5) and later in a final judgment. (Matthew 25:31-46)

For more on human nature, see the next section and the section on anthropology (the Biblical doctrine of mankind) in [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions.](#)

Theology: The Doctrine of God

Balance between Freedom and Limits

- 1.f. As in all of life, freedom exists but within limits. In fact, playing and living within the limits—according to the rules—enhances freedom, enjoyment, and well being, including successful outcomes.
- 3) Due to human limitations that are compounded by sin and evil, this phase of life contains many challenges. However, the Bible, the revealed Word of God, explains many reasons why his faithful believers—who demonstrate their faith through obedience to his commands (e.g., John 14:21)—do not have to worry and should not worry (John 16:33; Philippians 4:4-13).

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

- 1.f. Playing and living within the limits—according to the rules—enhances freedom, enjoyment, and well being, including successful outcomes.
- 3) Due to human limitations, compounded by sin and evil, we now have many challenges. However, the Bible, the revealed Word of God, explains many reasons why his faithful believers—who obey his commands—do not have to worry and should not worry.
 - a) We learn in theology that some of those reasons are that God is the creator of all that is (Genesis 1:1), transcendent (above all and in control of all, Psalm 113:4-6; John 16:33) and immanent (living within his people in his Holy Spirit, Psalm 113:7-9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20), and that everything good comes from the Father (James 1:17), which is called his Providence.

God's faithful believers also see God's Providence in football.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

1.f.3)a) God's faithful believers also see God's Providence illustrated in football.

b) One of those believers, whose strong and openly professed faith in Christ Jesus, is Deion Sanders (a.k.a. "Coach Prime"), Head Coach of the Colorado University (CU) football team, called the Buffalos.

1- His faith in Christ, which gives him "eyes [that] see" and "ears [that] hear" (Matthew 13:16), enables him not to worry.

"Asked if he worries about his team keeping their momentum after a week off, Coach Prime said, 'Worry and faith can't live together. I'm a man of faith, not a man of worry.'"* This comment must be seen in the light of Coach Sanders' many very clear previous references to the focus of his faith: Jesus Christ. Deion's faith is not a nebulous, amorphous, unspecified, or misplaced faith as is that of many people today.

* Brian Howell, "Buffs back to work after having their bye week," *Reporter-Herald*, October 9, 2024, p. B5.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

- 1.f.3)a) God's faithful believers also see God's Providence illustrated in football.
 - b) One of those believers in Christ Jesus, is Deion Sanders, Head Coach of the CU Buffalos.
- 2- His faith also helps him help others, including his players, not to worry. Reporter Brian Howell tells the story:

“Immediately after hauling in a diving, 47-yard touchdown catch on Saturday, Colorado receiver Will Sheppard repeatedly yelled, ‘I’m back!’

“Head coach Deion Sanders had to check him on that.

“‘He caught the touchdown, and he was yelling, ‘I’m back!’” Sanders said after CU’s 48-21 win at Central Florida. ‘And I said, “You never left. You never left. What do you mean you’re back? You never left. We got you, man. We here for you.” Will has been making plays all darn season.’ ...

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

- 1.f.3)a) God's faithful believers also see God's Providence illustrated in football.
- b) One of those believers is Deion Sanders, Head Coach of the CU Buffalos.
 - 2- Cont'd.: "On Sept. 21, Sheppard caught just one pass for five yards in the Buffs' 38-31 overtime win against Baylor. And he dropped a deep pass from Shedeur Sanders inside the 5-yard line with two seconds left in regulation and the Buffs trailing 31-24.

"It's debatable whether or not Sheppard would have scored on the play, as he appeared to be falling anyway, and CU might have ran out of time and lost the game. But that became irrelevant when the Buffs tied the game on the next play.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

- 1.f.3)a) God's faithful believers also see God's Providence illustrated in football.
- b) One of those believers, whose strong and openly professed faith in Christ Jesus, is Deion Sanders, Head Coach of the CU Buffalos.

2- His faith also helps him help others, including his players, not to worry. Brian Howell continues the story:

“If Will would have caught the ball (against Baylor), the time would have ran out the clock,’ Coach prime said. ‘That was God’s hand [Providence], man. So we’re grateful that it didn’t happen, and I told him that.’ ...

“Shedeur never lost confidence, either, because of the rapport he’s built with Sheppard in practice.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

- 1.f.3)a) God's faithful believers also see God's Providence illustrated in football.
- b) One of those believers in Christ Jesus, is Deion Sanders, Head Coach at CU.

2- Brian Howell continues the story:

“I’m like, “Bro, don’t worry about all that. You know, you just had a slow start. Don’t get down about it,”” Shedeur said. “That happens to everybody but because I know the type of player he is, I know when he’s feeling himself and when he’s actually in his groove and when he’s comfortable. Then nobody could stop him... So then he made a play and I was just excited. It was good for the team....”

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

1.f.3)b) God's faithful believers also see God's Providence illustrated in football. One of those believers is Coach Prime of the CU Buffalos.

2- Coach Prime's faith also helps him help others, including his players, not to worry. Brian Howell continues the story:

“(Shedeur) having that confidence to keep coming and keep throwing the ball to me and taking those chances,” he said, “knowing that I’m gonna come down with it in moments like that just instills more confidence in me.””*

* Brian Howell, “Performance at UCF a confidence boost for Sheppard: Near-100 yard game included a 47-yard TD catch,” [Reporter-Herald](#), October 3, 2024, pp. B1,3.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

1.f.3)b) God's faithful believers also see God's Providence illustrated in football.

2- Coach Prime's faith also helps him help others not to worry.

FOR REFLECTION AND/OR DISCUSSION:

- What can we learn from Coach Prime's references to Biblical teachings—and the similar statements of his son, Quarterback Shedeur, also a faithful believer in Christ—to offer strong assurance to help someone else (who comes to mind?) build his or her confidence and sense of worth, encouraging him or her in a positive and attractive witness to Christ Jesus?
- Identify the ways faith in Jesus Christ helps you personally and helps you help others in Christ's name?
- Where do you see God's Providence in your life? (See James 1:17.)

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

- 1.f. As in all of life, freedom exists but within limits. In fact, playing and living within the limits—according to the rules—enhances freedom, enjoyment, and well being, including successful outcomes.
- 4) The preceding, and most of the following, examples of ways football illustrates Biblical and historic Christian theology have been and are positive. That is, they are illustrations of how a Biblical text is directly applied on the gridiron, in the locker room, or elsewhere.
- 5) At the same time, negative expressions also exist and provide examples we can use to point out and explain contemporary concepts and conditions that are contrary to God's Word and will. An example is readily seen in the preceding news report about CU [pass] receiver Will Sheppard.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

- 1.f. Playing and living within the limits—according to the rules—enhances freedom, enjoyment, and well being, including successful outcomes.
- 5) Negative expressions also exist and provide examples we can use to point out and explain contemporary concepts and conditions that are contrary to God's Word and will. An example is readily seen in the preceding news report about CU [pass] receiver Will Sheppard.
 - a) Reporter Howell wrote, “I think everybody saw what happened (against Baylor) and luckily we had LaJohntay come save the day,’ Sheppard said.”* What's theologically wrong with this statement? (To begin, look again at James 1:17.)

* Howell, “Performance at UCF a confidence boost for Sheppard: Near-100 yard game included a 47-yard TD catch,” pp. B1,3.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

- 1.f.5) Negative words and deeds also exist in and pertaining to football, and they provide examples we can use to point out and explain contemporary concepts and conditions that are contrary to God's Word and will.
- a) What's Biblically and theologically wrong with the preceding quote?
- 1- Throughout the Bible, and in historic Christian systematic theology, we read that everything good comes from the loving hand of God the Father. (James 1:17, *et al.*) In theology, all this goodness from God is referred to as his Providence; God the Father has provided all we value, cherish, and consider good. Since everything good comes from God, the word luck, which means fortune or chance, actually ignores God and his Providential gift of love and grace. It transfers God's good gift from him to only chance, simply "being in the right place at the right time."

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

- 1.f.5)a) What's Biblically and theologically wrong with the preceding quote?
- 2- The same concept is rooted in the related word in that sentence: "happened," and in its cognate words: e.g., happy, happenstance, haply; we even see it all combined in the often-heard expression, "happy-go-lucky." The root of these words, hap, comes from the Old Norse word, *happ*, and Middle English *hap*, meaning luck, chance, fate, very much contrary to James 1:17 and the rest of the Bible.
- I invite you to join me in ever more consciously avoiding the word luck. I'm also substituting blessed, joyful, and similar words for happy and its derivatives. The Hebrew and Greek words some English versions of the Bible translate as happy, actually mean blessed or joyful. Let's promote—not diminish—God's glory!

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

1.f.5)b) Sadly, many Christians also use these words without careful thought and without understanding the denotations and connotations of the words. The result is unintentionally but actually taking gratitude and glory away from God...which is precisely what Satan is—and has always been—trying to do.

- **Since God is the giver of every good and perfect gift, how can anyone say that he or she has something good because of luck?** How do you think God feels when he hears that? How would you feel if you gave someone something valuable and later overheard him tell another person that he has it because he “just got lucky”?

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

1.f.5)c) Equally egregious, Bible translators are not as careful as they should be. The above meaning of the English word “happy” is not carefully enough considered, and is used in contemporary English translations throughout the Bible, but the main original Old Testament Hebrew words (אֲשַׁר [’āshar] and אֲשֶׁרִי [’ashrê]), e.g., Psalms 1:1; 33:12; Proverbs 31:28 and New Testament Greek words (μακάριος [makarios]), e.g., Matthew 5:11; John 13:17; Romans 14:22, often misleadingly rendered “happy,” are thus more accurately translated “blessed” and “joyous” together with its derivatives, e.g., “joy,” “rejoice,” “joyful.”*

* In the light of the above, see S. H. Blank, “Happiness” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. E-J, George Arthur Buttrick, Dictionary Editor (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 523. B. Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, 1963), p. LII. F. Hauck, μακάριος, μακαρίζω, μακαρισμός, D. The Word Group in the New Testament, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 4, Ed. Gerhard Kittel, Trans. and Ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), esp. p. 367. For more, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology \(PPT\)](#).

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

1.f.6) Not only negative words but also negative deeds provide opportunities for us to observe—and help others see—God's Providence. Football is a contact sport; indeed, it is one of the toughest of the contact sports. Therefore, many injuries occur, some serious. The average length of career for NFL players is only 3.3 years, which means that some players have less. Unsurprisingly, running backs have the shortest careers.*

Therefore, when a player avoids a serious injury on the field, or when he is examined and diagnosed to be OK, or when he has a rapid and complete recovery, such as Travis Hunter did in the game with Colorado State University that we'll discuss shortly, we can clearly see God's hand in that situation, and we can acknowledge God's Providential care for the player that kept him from greater injury. For example, we can say,

* <https://www.statista.com/statistics/240102/average-player-career-length-in-the-national-football-league/>

Theology: The Doctrine of God

God's Providence

Football Segues or Gambits for Conversation about God, then Christ in Particular:

- “Thanks be to God, the player is OK.”
- “Providentially, he wasn't seriously hurt.”
- “Thinking about all the intricate planning, studying, and skillful execution of the plans, reminds me of God's creating us in his image, including the marvelous ability to do all that, abilities that no animal could ever come close to accomplishing.
- It's a relief to know that when people exceed their limits, God's believers are in his loving and all powerful hands. (Refer to John 16:33)
- What other thoughts come to your mind as to how you can use an aspect of a football game as a link to an aspect of Biblical theology?

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

Who are we; what are we like; and
what are we doing?

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

The Existence of Right and Wrong

2. As we see in our study of Theology, God created everything perfect. He created his special human beings in his image, part of which includes a genuine, albeit limited, free will. To enhance our freedom, God told Adam and Eve that they only had one rule to follow: Don't eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He also gave them a warning as to what would occur if they disobeyed. (Genesis 2:17)

So where did all this wrongdoing come from, including all the evil in the world, including on the football field? We study this question and related ones in Anthropology. Here we find that in spite of God's warning, the first humans misused their freedom and chose to disobey God, which corrupted his perfect creation, including themselves, and all their posterity, including us. As we also learned in Theology, God is holy, holy, holy, and he will not allow sin in his presence. Therefore, God separated sinful and corrupt people from himself. (Genesis 3:23)

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

God's Plan for Redeeming and Restoring His Creation

2. Throughout the whole Bible, the central focus of God's plan of redemption is the restoration of his creation in and through Jesus Christ with and through whom the Father created his perfect universe. (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2) Sin has so corrupted human nature that no solely human being has avoided, or can avoid, sin; therefore, we cannot earn our way into God's most holy and loving presence.
 - a. However, holy, holy, holy God is also all love. (1 John 4:8) Therefore, he is unwilling to allow all the human beings he created, who bear his image, and whom he loves, to self-destruct, diminish, and tarnish that part of his image that involves a true, albeit limited, freedom, but he will not force us to believe in him or his plan to redeem and restore us in his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Neither could he ignore human sin with its grievous injustice, which would violate his love and his justice, his righteousness as well as his holiness. Thus, knowing all this “before the world began,” the triune God planned to send his only begotten Son to come and fulfill all righteousness in our place to save us.

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

The Existence of Right and Wrong

2. Also in all of life in this age, where all of us are sinful and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23, *et al.*), bad as well as good plans will be made, and even the good plans will be unjustly carried out. In the Bible, both justice and righteousness translate the Hebrew (צֶדֶק [*tsedeq*]) and Greek (δικαιοσύνη [*dikaïosunē*]). With God's standard, we can distinguish right from wrong.
 - a. *All of life* includes football games. Sin occurs on the field as well as off the field. Sin results in unfairness, and such unfairness causes great harm, e.g., serious, even career-ending injuries that harm people God loves, who bear his image—and thus also harms their families—and some injuries are even life-threatening. Much less serious—but not insignificantly—such sin also affects the outcome of the game and much else.
 - At the same time, sinful people often disagree whether a specific act even occurred. Therefore, officials, referees and judges, are turned to for a judgment call. Since they, too, are sinful, their judgments are sometimes challenged by reviewing video coverage of the disputed play from many different angles. But each team has limits on how many times it can challenge a ruling on the field.

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

The Existence of Right and Wrong

Sin and Injustice on the Field: Players and Officials

2. Since all of us are sinful, even good plans will be unjustly carried out.
 - a. This reality includes football games. Sin occurs on and off the field by coaches, players, and referees (cf. judges from Old Testament times, e.g., Zephaniah 3:3). Such sin also affects the outcome of the game and much else.
 - 1) In many plays—especially when the play affects the whole game, the whole season, and sometimes a player’s health for his whole life—referees are turned to for a judgment call. Since they, too, are sinful, their judgments are sometimes challenged by reviewing video coverage of the disputed play from many different angles. An example is in the following video clip of one of—and in the minds of many analysts, fans, players, and officials—the worst football play calls ever.

The Existence and Judgment of Right and Wrong

Sin and Injustice on the Field: Players and Officials



[Click Here for Link](#)

The Existence and Judgment of Right and Wrong

Sin and Injustice on the Field: Players and Officials

2. Where all of us are sinful, even good plans will be unjustly carried out.
 - a. This reality includes football games. Sin occurs on and off the field; such sin also affects the outcome of the game and much else.
 - 1) NFL reporter, Mike Triplett, comments on one of the worst plays and calls. **“The play that changed pass interference, [Jan. 20, 2019](#). No surprise here. It might be the most famous officiating gaffe in NFL history, and it led to a radical one-year rule change in the offseason, allowing pass interference [PI] to be reviewed by replay for the 2019 season. The Saints and Rams were tied with 1:49 remaining in the NFC Championship Game when the officials missed a blatant PI call against Rams cornerback Nickell Robey-Coleman (who admitted that he intentionally ‘whacked’ receiver Tommylee Lewis to keep him from scoring). A penalty would have allowed the Saints to run out most of the clock and put them in better position for a TD. Instead, they settled for a field goal and the Rams came back to win in overtime.”***

* Mike Triplett, [“We were robbed! Most memorable officiating controversies for all 32 NFL teams: New Orleans Saints”](#) (Accessed 10/17/2024)

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

The Existence of Right and Wrong

2. Where all of us are sinful, even good plans will be unjustly carried out.
 - a. This reality includes football games. Sin occurs on and off the field; such sin also affects the outcome of the game and much else.
 - 2) Sinful behavior by players and officials, has very negative and far-reaching effects.
 - a) Some of the effects on the players in the Saints-Rams game include the following:
 - 1- The Saints' wide receiver, Tommylee Lewis (TL), was not only fouled by the Rams' Nickell Robey-Coleman (NR-C), but NR-C hit TL with helmet-to-helmet contact, a dangerous and illegal hit. NR-C never looked at the perfectly thrown ball by Saints' QB Drew Brees, he only tried to prevent TL from catching the pass in an illegal manner called pass interference, another foul. The NFL refused to overrule the referees' call on the field, but the league received such voluminous outrage for so many days after the game that they tried to rectify the situation by fining NR-C \$26,739.

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

The Existence of Right and Wrong

2. Where all of us are sinful, even good plans will be unjustly carried out.
 - a. This reality includes football games. Sin occurs on and off the field; such sin also affects the outcome of the game and much else.
 - 2) Sinful behavior by players and officials, has very negative and far-reaching effects.
 - a) Some of the effects on the players in the Saints-Rams game include the following:
 - 2- Record-breaking QB, Drew Brees, a Christian, and the rest of the New Orleans Saints NFL team would likely have won the game, but because of this egregious foul and failure of the referees to call it, the Saints were kept from winning the game and qualifying to play in the Super Bowl with all its attendant benefits.

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

The Existence of Right and Wrong

2. Where all of us are sinful, even good plans will be unjustly carried out.
 - a. This reality includes football games. Sin occurs on and off the field; such sin also affects the outcome of the game and much else.
 - 2) Sinful behavior by players and officials, has very negative and far-reaching effects.
 - b) The officials also are not only limited by their human finiteness but also by their sinful bias, as has been verified by empirical studies, such as those revealed here:
<https://time2play.com/blog/referee-bias-in-the-nfl/>
(Accessed 10/17/2024)

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

The Existence of Right and Wrong

2. In all of life in this age, on the football field or anywhere else, for something to be considered either right and wrong, it must be viewed in the light of a criterion standard of reference.
 - b. In football the criterion is the rule book. Every imaginable situation is stipulated as a rule in the book, which is the standard for the referees' decisions.

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

The Existence of Right and Wrong

2. In all of life in this age, on the football field or anywhere else, for something to be considered either right and wrong, it must be viewed in the light of a criterion standard of reference.
 - c. Here we see another illustration of Biblical teaching about life in this age. We live our lives each day with the understanding that we will have to give account of our sins—those we have done and those we have left undone—i.e., sins of commission and of omission. How do we know what is a sin and what is not? We turn to God and to his Word, the Bible, in order to know what is right and wrong. God has made it very clear, contemporary attempts to “nuance” it to the contrary notwithstanding. For just a few of these clear teachings, see, e.g., Exodus 20:1-17; Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

The Existence of Right and Wrong

Football Segues for talking about mankind, then specifically, about Jesus Christ:

- After a blatantly unjust and clearly wrong decision on the field is upheld on appeal—such as the one in the video in this section—a Christian can say, “It’s certainly unpleasant to see such injustice marring an enjoyable game, but it does illustrate life: Thanks be to God, the Bible explains clearly where such injustices come from and what God is doing about it in and through Christ Jesus.”
- A Christian can also say, “Thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, we don’t have to suffer with such injustice forever!”
- What other elements of football illustrate aspects of Biblical anthropology, that you can use as a gambit to open a conversation about Christ Jesus?

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like;
what has he done; and what is he doing?

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

God's Grace: Unearned and Sacrificial Love

3. The central focus of God's plan of redemption is the restoration of his creation in and through Jesus Christ. No solely human being has avoided, or can avoid, sin; therefore, by ourselves we are unable to enter God's most holy presence.
 - a. However, while God is most holy, he is also love through his whole being (1 John 4:8), including greatly loving us who bear his image.
 - 1) So he has put into effect his plan from eternity to save us from our sins—which have offended God so greatly—by sending his beloved and only begotten Son to take on himself the punishment we deserve. In order to take our place, Christ Jesus had to be both fully human and fully divine. He had to be human in order to fulfill God's command that the people who bear his image obey his commands—which we have not done and cannot do—in order to be fit for God's most holy presence. Christ also had to be fully divine.

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

God's Grace: Unearned and Sacrificial Love

- 3.a. In addition to being fully human, Jesus had to also be fully divine in order to fulfill the righteousness that God requires for a human to be in his most holy presence, which sinful humans cannot do. Yet, while God is most holy, he is also all love. (1 John 4:8)
- 2) In fact, "...God so loved the world, that He gave His **only begotten** Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16, NASB) He sent his **only begotten** Son—Christ Jesus, the Second Person in God's triune being and who has both a divine and a human nature—to live the perfect life, suffer, and die to take on himself the punishment we deserve as a result of our offensive sins in the most wonderful expression of love ever! **Very importantly, "only begotten"** refers to and **substantiates Jesus' divinity**, and by our faith in Christ Jesus, God credits to us Jesus' perfect righteousness. (Romans 4:23-25)

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

God's Grace: Unearned and Unearned and Sacrificial Love

3. No solely human being has avoided sin. Therefore, no one is able to enter God's most holy presence, except by faith in Jesus Christ.
 - b. By our faith in Christ Jesus, God credits to us Jesus' perfect righteousness. The Apostle Paul explains: "The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him [Abraham] alone, ²⁴but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." (Romans 4:23-25)

Thus, Jesus sacrificed himself for us. His motivation for doing so was and is love.

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

God's Grace: Unearned and Sacrificial Love

3. Only by faith in Jesus Christ can any of us enter God's most holy presence.
 - c. The head coach of the CU football team, Deion Sanders, a.k.a. "Coach Prime," showed a type of sacrificial love that points to Christ. Coach Prime's love points to Christ, because he is very vocal about his faith in Jesus Christ as his only Lord and Savior, and he lives accordingly.
 - The year Deion became head coach of the UC Buffaloes football team, expectations on him were high. The team had a multi-year losing streak. He is an NFL Hall of Fame "superstar;" was a very successful major university football coach; and was hired at a high salary to turn Colorado back into a championship team. His first year the team was having significant losses of both games and key personnel, including one of his best players, the dual-team outstanding cornerback/receiver Travis Hunter, who was seriously injured and his physicians didn't want him to play for at least three or four weeks so healing could occur.

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

God's Grace: Unearned and Sacrificial Love

3. Only by faith in Jesus Christ can any of us enter God's most holy presence.

c. The head coach of the University of Colorado football team, Deion Sanders, a.k.a. "Coach Prime," demonstrated a type of sacrificial love that points to Christ, primarily because he is very vocal about his faith in Jesus Christ as his only Lord and Savior, and he puts his faith into practice.

➤ After a devastating loss (42-6) the week before, and prior to the physician-stipulated time for healing being completed, Travis texted Coach Prime saying, "I need to play this week. We need to get everything we can so I can get back on the field. I'm not taking no for an answer."*"

* Brian Howell, "Buffs' Hunter not ready to return to field," *Reporter-Herald*, September 26, 2023, p. B1.

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

God's Grace: Unearned and Sacrificial Love

3. Only by faith in Jesus Christ can any of us enter God's most holy presence.
 - c. Deion Sanders, a.k.a. "Coach Prime," demonstrated a type of sacrificial love that points to Christ, because he is very vocal about his faith in Jesus Christ as his only Lord and Savior, and he puts his faith into practice.
 - "Coach Prime responded to Hunter by writing, 'No, you ain't ready and I care about you more than I care about this game. You're gonna change the game of football one day when you're healthy and ready. Your future is brighter than mine ever will be and ever was. Relax and get healthy. I love you son.'"* Deion, demonstrating Christlike love and humility, sacrificed his winning football games for the well being of a young man he loved...all in the name of Jesus Christ.

* Brian Howell, "Buff's Hunter not ready for return to field," *Reporter-Herald*, September 26, 2023, p. B1.

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

God's Grace: Unearned and Sacrificial Love

3. Only by faith in Jesus Christ can any of us enter God's most holy presence.
 - c. The head coach of the University of Colorado football team, Deion Sanders, a.k.a. "Coach Prime," demonstrated a type of sacrificial love that points to an aspect of Christ Jesus' perfect vicarious sacrifice in our place. Coach Prime's love points to Christ, because he is very vocal about his faith in Jesus Christ as his only Lord and Savior, and he lives accordingly.
 - Coach Prime's loving sacrifice powerfully pointed to the infinitely larger sacrifice Jesus made in love for us. Therefore, we, too, should...
 - 1) Remember and be grateful for Jesus' great sacrificial love for us that redeemed and saves us now and for eternity, and also
 - 2) be willing to make sacrifices—giving up something we want to do—for others out of love for and thanksgiving to Christ Jesus, indeed to our triune God, to help others in need and to point them to God's love and salvation in Jesus Christ. In so doing, we do **NOT** *try to earn our salvation, which we can't do but to show gratitude to God.*

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

God's Grace: Unearned and Sacrificial Love

3. Only by faith in Jesus Christ can any of us enter God's most holy presence.
 - d. The way Travis Hunter handled his injury is also an excellent witness that points to and reminds us of God's grace for us in and through Christ Jesus at a great cost to Himself in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever. As a result, those of us who believe in Christ are credited with His righteousness, are forgiven, and have a relationship with our triune God.
 - Solely humanly speaking, Travis' gracious and loving forgiveness of Henry, in spite of the unlawful and painful harm he did to Travis' body (e.g., the illegal late, vicious, and painful hit that lacerated Travis' liver), is an excellent example of how Christ's followers are to do as He did for us. Travis' experience and mature witness all points to Jesus' most gracious love in what He did for us." (E.g., Luke 9:22-26) Thus, we will return to this subject in the next section, Soteriology/Pneumatology.

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ Jesus

God's Grace: Unearned and Sacrificial Love

Possible Segues for Conversation about our only Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ:

- “Coach Prime’s sacrifice of an important upcoming game out of love for one of his players, reminds me of Jesus’ much greater sacrifice for us and puts the all of life in proper perspective.” (Regarding sacrificial giving, cf. Luke 21:1-4)
- “Travis’ Hunter’s gracious response to the injustice he suffered on the field is exceptionally Christlike.” (We’ll look more closely at this matter in the next section, Soteriology/Pneumatology.)
- What other thoughts come to your mind as to how you can use an aspect of a football game as a link to an aspect of the Bible’s teaching about Jesus Christ?

Soteriology: The Doctrine of Salvation
also called

Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Holy
Spirit
and

The Application of Redemption

Who is the Holy Spirit, and what does he do?
How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied?

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit

4. In theology, the fourth of the six loci is the only one that has more than one name. It is usually referred to as Soteriology (the doctrine of salvation), but it's also called Pneumatology (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, whose operation in a human being's heart and mind makes possible the faith in Jesus Christ by which the believer is saved, being credited with Jesus' righteousness (Romans 4)). This doctrine is thus also sometimes called the Application of (Christ's) Redemption. In this presentation, the first two terms will suffice.

Part of this doctrine is called the *Ordo Salutis* (or order of salvation, referring to the order of several steps in the process of salvation and maturing in salvation, the maturation in Christ, and the fruit that true belief manifests. (Cf., e.g., Matthew 7; Romans 8)

- a. One of the steps in the order of salvation is sanctification. One of the aspects of sanctification (the root word is sanctify < ἅγιος [*hagios*] holy, set apart, separate from common, including sinful, condition and use) is the Holy Spirit's help for believers in Christ Jesus to progressively mature in Christlikeness throughout this phase of life here on earth.

The Order of Salvation (*Ordo Salutis*)

Component	Who Acts	Key Bible Texts
1. Predestination, Election	God	Romans 9:18-24
2. Calling	God	1 Corinthians 1:9
3. Regeneration	God	John 3:3-8
4. Conversion	God	Acts 2:38
5. Faith	God and Man	1 Corinthians 12:3
6. Justification	God	Romans 5:1
7. Sanctification	God and Man	Philippians 2:12-13
8. Assurance of Salvation	God and Man	2 Thessalonians 3:3-5
9. Glorification	God	Romans 8:28-30

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit

Sanctification: Matching Word and Deed

4. In the order of salvation, one step the Bible emphasizes is sanctification, the process of maturing in holiness, being set apart to serve the Lord in ever more Christlike ways. That maturity is seen in producing fruit by obeying Christ Jesus' commands. (Matthew 7:21; John 13:34-35; 14:21; 15:1-21)
 - b. The Bible emphasizes the necessity of believers in Christ demonstrating the genuineness of their saving faith by deeds that are more and more in accord with the Lord's commands. Put another way, we are not saved by works but for works. (Ephesians 2:8-10)
 - 1) Words professing belief without corresponding action are worthless and do not save that person. (Matthew 7:21)

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit

Sanctification: Matching Word and Deed

4. In the order of salvation, one step the Bible emphasizes is sanctification, that maturity is seen in producing fruit by obeying Christ Jesus' commands. (Matthew 7:21; John 13:34-35; 14:21; 15:1-21)
 - b. We are saved not by works but for works. (Ephesians 2:8-10)
 - 2) Football illustrates that Biblical truth. Coaches and players have great ideas of how to play the game, but if they don't actually put them into practice for and in the game, they fail to produce the desired outcomes ...indeed, they lose!
 - c. This is another illustration of the major motif, or doctrine, reiterated throughout the Word of God, the Bible: the unity of word and deed, e.g., "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (James 2:26; cf. Matthew 7:21; Deuteronomy 12:28; 13:4,18)

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit

Sanctification: Matching Word and Deed

4. This doctrine is referred to as Soteriology/Pneumatology, because the Holy Spirit, enables saving faith, cf., e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:3. One of the steps in the order of salvation is sanctification. For more, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology](#).
 - d. One of the aspects of sanctification, maturing in Christlikeness, is developing the ability to genuinely forgive others and to keep on doing so always.
 - 1) That forgiveness is done with a never-ending clean break from the offense, i.e., we are not ever to use that forgiveness as a club over the other person's head to keep verbally hitting him or her by drudging up the past; that's not letting go and moving on, overlooking the offense.

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit

Sanctification: Matching Word and Deed

4. This doctrine is referred to as Soteriology/Pneumatology, because the Holy Spirit, enables saving faith, cf., e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:3. For more, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology](#).
 - d. One aspect of sanctification, maturing in Christlikeness, is developing the ability to genuinely forgive others and to keep on doing so always.
 - 2) To do so, it helps to ask the Holy Spirit for help and to remember that we, too, at times need to be forgiven by God and by others.
 - a) I find it helpful to forgive by praying, “Dear Lord, please grant your mercy upon all of us involved in this matter.” Remembering that we “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23) enables us to see that we’re all on the same level playing field. Since I’ve sinned, in God’s sight I’m not superior to the other(s).

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit

Sanctification: Matching Word and Deed

4. This doctrine is referred to as Soteriology/Pneumatology, because the Holy Spirit, enables saving faith, cf., e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:3. For more, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology](#).
- d. One aspect of sanctification, maturing in Christlikeness, is developing the ability to genuinely forgive others and to keep on doing so always.
- 2)b) While praying the Lord's Prayer, when we come to requesting the Father that he "forgive us our debts [< ὀφείλημα (*opheilēma*, debt)] as we forgave [ἀφήκαμεν (*aphēkamen*)]* our debtors [< ὀφειλέτης (*opheiletēs*, debtor)],"*** I quickly insert, "and please help us to do so."

* The original Greek word means debts, cf. standard English translations, e.g., NIV, ESV, KJV, NASB, NRSV. The preferred early Greek manuscript has *aphēkamen*, a verb in the aorist (past) tense.

** Matthew 6:12

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit

Sanctification: Matching Word and Deed

4.d.2)b) While praying the Lord's Prayer, when we come to requesting the Father to "forgive us our debts [< ὀφείλημα (*opheilēma*, debt)] as we forgave [ἀφήκαμεν (*aphēkamen*)]* our debtors [< ὀφειλέτης (*opheiletēs*, debtor)]," I quickly insert, "and please help us to do so."

The outstanding Greek scholar, R. C. H. Lenski, offers a wise, Biblically accurate, and comforting comment. "So great are our debts to God that we can never hope to pay them, and our only help is that God will remit them gratis, by way of gift, for Christ's sake. The aorist [past tense of the verb, *aphēkamen* (forgave)] expresses definite, final remission."**

* The original Greek word, ὀφείλημα (*opheilēma*), means debts, cf. standard English translations, e.g., NIV, ESV, KJV, NASB, NRSV. The preferred Greek manuscript has *aphēkamen*, a verb in the aorist (past) tense.

** R. C. H. Lenski, [*The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 269.

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit

Sanctification: Matching Word and Deed

4.d.2)b) While praying the Lord's Prayer, when we come to requesting the Father to "forgive us our debts [< ὀφείλημα (*opheilēma*, debt)] as we forgave [ἀφήκαμεν (*aphēkamen*)] our debtors [< ὀφειλέτης (*opheiletēs*, debtor)]," It's sometimes not easy, but with God's help we can, and we must, forgive: for the other person's sake, for our sake, and for God, so we can be the witnesses he's called us to be.

Lenski insightfully explains further, "The aorist ἀφήκαμεν [*aphēkamen*] designates an act that just [occurred]..., i.e., that we have now remitted although we may not at once have done so when we were sinned against. 'To dismiss our debtors' means that we no longer consider them as debtors. Their debts to us are as nothing compared with what we owe God. Our forgiving others is the evidence that God's grace has really wrought faith in us and made us his children."* We'll return to the subject of forgiveness shortly.

* Lenski, [*The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*](#), p. 270.

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit

Sanctification: Matching Word and Deed

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Three main domains or categories of human learning and development are seen in God's Word (some texts have all three in one verse, e.g., John 14:21) and are referred to in the field of education.

1. **Cognitive:** mental capabilities, factual knowledge. HEAD. Deuteronomy 6:1-2,4,6; Proverbs 10:14; Matthew 22:29
2. **Affective:** feelings, values, motivations, attitudes. HEART. Deuteronomy 6:2,4-6; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 4:23
3. **Behavioral:** action on and by the subject in life settings, application of knowledge, attitudes, and skills being learned to life. HANDS. Deuteronomy 6:1, 3, 7; John 15:8; Ephesians 2:10; James 1:22; 2:26; 1 John 5:2

Identify all three in Ephesians 4:11-16. All three appear more than once.

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit

Sanctification: Matching Word and Deed

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the **faith and in the knowledge** of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in **love**, as **each part does its work**. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Since human beings are created in and bear God's image; since Christ has brought his believers into a saving relationship with God; and since the Holy Spirit dwells within each believer; the Bible doesn't portray a "spiritual" entity as a fourth part of or domain in our being. Our whole being is in relationship with God.

1. **Cognitive**: mental capabilities, factual knowledge. HEAD. Deuteronomy 6:1-2,4,6; Matthew 22:29
2. **Affective**: feelings, values, motivations, attitudes. HEART. Deuteronomy 6:2,4-6; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 4:23
3. **Behavioral**: action on and by the subject in life settings, application of knowledge, attitudes, and skills being learned to life. HANDS. Deuteronomy 6:1,3,7; John 15:8; Ephesians 2:10

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Sanctification

Word and Deed, Planning and Execution

4. e. Football illustrates all three human learning domains. It is a physical game—it is very much a “contact sport”—but to behave in the needed ways to be successful, the players also have to put equal emphasis on preparing themselves cognitively and affectively to behave most effectively... to win!

As we’ve seen, football combines planning (a largely mental function) and execution (largely behavioral) and does so building upon a prerequisite motivation (affective desire) to study, practice, and work hard in order to win. The preparation is necessary and extensive, even involving a lot of science.

- 1) A lot of thought and study go into the preparation for a whole season and for each game specifically.
- 2) To prepare physically for the games, a lot of meetings, watching much game film, weight-lifting, running, and other exercise, is required to develop the strength to be victorious in games and have a winning season.

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Sanctification

More Word and Deed, Planning and Execution

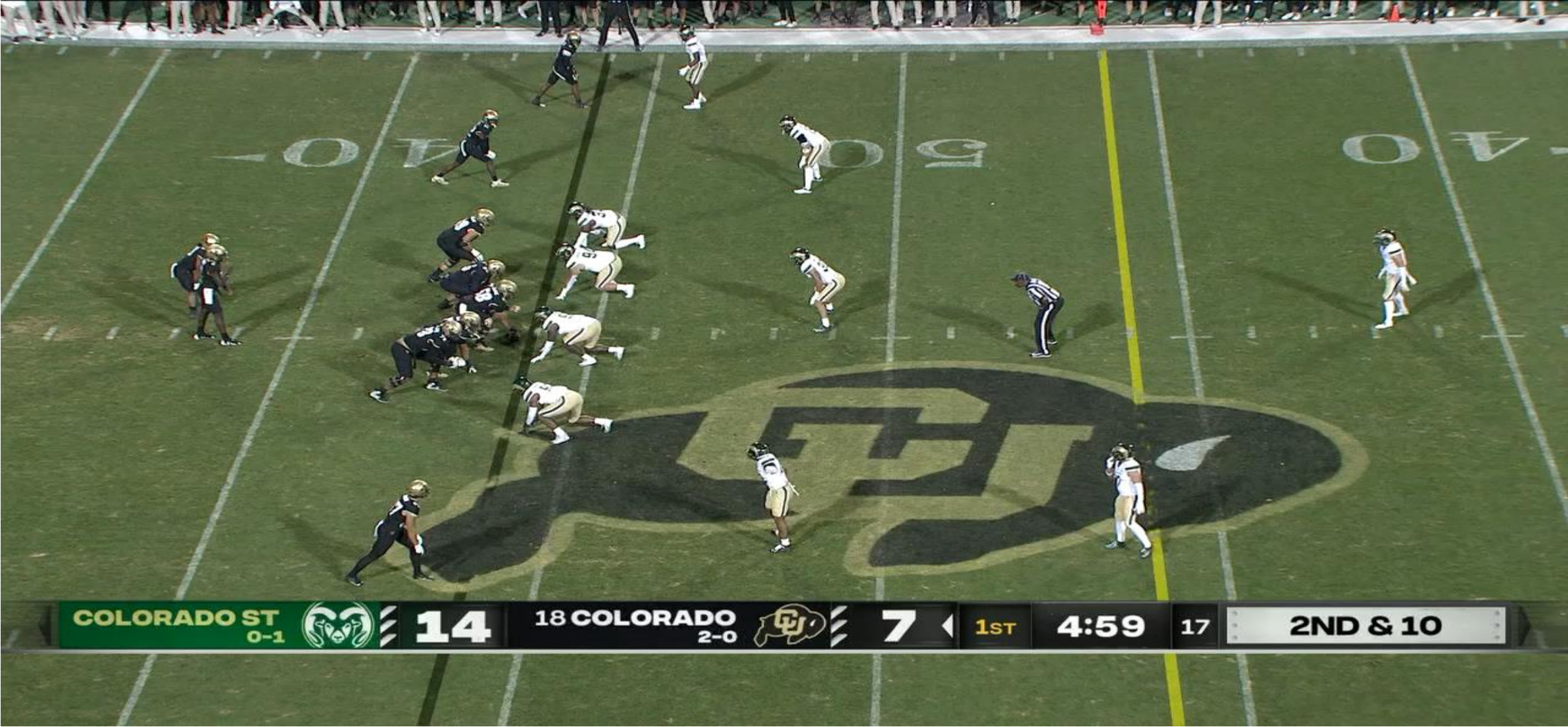
- 4.e. As holistic human beings, we need to balance our cognitive, affective, and behavioral activity for the greatest sense of accomplishment and well being.
- f. Similarly, the sanctification process for loving (affect) and serving the Lord combines prerequisite daily study of the Bible and regular memorizing of at least specific passages, with prayer, preparing, and planning (largely cognitive functioning) and execution (largely behavioral), e.g., “speaking the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15) The preparation is necessary and extensive.
 - 1) To prepare physically for our serving, we need to care for our physical well being through taking care of our bodies, by, e.g., eating, sleeping, exercising, and living a healthy, moral, indeed Christlike lifestyle.
 - 2) To serve most effectively, a lot of thought, study, and prayer, nurturing our relationship with our triune God, go into preparation for the next day and the rest of our lives, especially since we don’t know all that we will be encountering. Here, see another aspect of the Travis Hunter story.

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Sanctification

Word and Deed, Planning and Execution

- 4.f. Similarly, as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit—who dwells within all whom he has enabled to become believers in Christ Jesus—and thus with our triune God, we mature in the sanctification process, which prepares and enables us to serve the Lord ever more effectively as his witnesses.
- 3) Travis Hunter is a very unique football player. His exceptional skills enable him to excel on both offense and defense, as he did for the Colorado University (CU) Buffalos team. At the same time, his strong faith in Christ and his maturing in his relationship with the Lord enables him to prepare for and to witness powerfully for Christ Jesus, *even in the unforeseeable and thus unplanned adversities that arise in life, including in football*, as this illegal and dangerous hit that occurred in a game with CU's archrival, Colorado State University (CSU). This video is hard to watch, especially the replay, but watch carefully this clip of that injurious situation. What follows is very important.

Word and Deed, Planning and Execution



[Click Here for Link](#)

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Sanctification

Word and Deed, Planning and Execution

Grace: Unearned Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Travis was taken to a hospital. What was the outcome? Fox Sports begins the answer:

“[Colorado](#) star two-way player [Travis Hunter](#) recently said that [he has no ill will](#) toward [Colorado State](#)’s [Henry Blackburn](#), whose [late] hit on Hunter [caused him to suffer a liver laceration](#) that will [and did] sideline him for the next several weeks.

“Colorado [Head] coach Deion Sanders also made it clear that he felt the same way, as Blackburn [and his family received death threats](#) after their home address was posted online shortly after the game, according to Colorado State’s [Head Coach] Jay Norvell.

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Sanctification

Word and Deed, Planning and Execution

Grace: Unearned Forgiveness and Reconciliation

“Regardless, Hunter has continued to show grace toward Blackburn in the wake of his injury. The two have been seen embracing on social media on multiple occasions.

“A Colorado State spokesperson [told ESPN](#) that Hunter and Blackburn recently met for a charity bowling match between the two that will be shown on Hunter’s popular YouTube channel. The two each put money on the line with the total amount going to the winner’s desired charity.

“The two connected shortly after the game and eventually met up in Boulder, where Colorado’s campus is located and where Blackburn is from, according to ESPN.

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Sanctification

Word and Deed, Planning and Execution

Grace: Unearned Forgiveness and Reconciliation

“Hunter is considered one of the most dynamic players in college football and had played most of Colorado’s snaps this season on both offense and defense before his injury.”*

The following year, he won many nationally regarded awards, including the one typically most valued...the Heisman Trophy.

* <https://www.foxsports.com/stories/college-football/colorados-travis-hunter-csus-henry-blackburn-embrace-following-controversy>. Reporter, Brian Howell, added that CU Head Coach Deion Sanders condemned—and told fans to stop—the threats. Speaking of Blackburn, Sanders said, “he made a mistake. So I forgive him....Travis, he’s forgiven him. Let’s move on....Let’s pray for that kid, man,” he said. “That’s absurd for people to be threatening him. I don’t mind getting death threats; I get them every week. But a kid, that’s not good.” “CU Buffs Coach Prime condemns threats,” *Reporter-Herald*, September 20, 2023, p. B2.

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Sanctification

Word and Deed, Planning and Execution

Grace: Unearned Forgiveness and Reconciliation

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. In the Lord's Prayer we pray, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Do we in deed forgive, and what are the implications if we don't?
2. Will we forgive others the next time we are wronged? How will we know we do; what will that look like?



3. Is there someone I need to forgive right now? How about making a [Level III](#) objective for doing so? (See also Slide #176.)

https://www.instagram.com/p/CxwrFjlLcwn/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=9f28fe42-f50f-4c83-a9f8-d65982c4921e&img_index=1
(Accessed 01/09/2025)

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit Sanctification and Witnessing for Jesus Christ

Possible Segues for Conversation about the Holy Spirit, then Christ in Particular:

1. “Thanks be to God, the player is OK.”
2. “Providentially, he wasn’t seriously hurt [or hurt worse].”
3. “It’s a relief to know that when others exceed their limits, God’s believers are in his loving and all powerful hands.” (Cf. also John 16:33)
4. “Travis’ gracious and loving forgiveness of Henry, in spite of the unlawful and painful harm he did to Travis’ body (e.g., the illegal late, vicious, and painful hit that lacerated Travis’ liver), is an excellent example of how Christ’s followers are to do match our words with our deeds, demonstrating true faith and maturity in the believer’s relationship with Christ, sanctification. The Lord hates hypocrisy. (Matthew 23) True faith bears fruit. (Matthew 7)

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit Sanctification and Witnessing for Jesus Christ

Possible Segues for Conversation about the Holy Spirit, then Christ in Particular:

5. “Travis’ gracious and loving forgiveness of Henry, in spite of the unlawful and painful harm he did to Travis’ body (e.g., the illegal late, vicious, and painful hit that lacerated Travis’ liver), is an excellent example of how Christ’s followers are to do as He did for us. Travis’ experience and mature witness all points to Jesus’ most gracious love in what He did for us.” (E.g., Luke 9:22-26)
6. What other thoughts come to your mind as to how you can use an aspect of a football game as a link to a conversation about Christ Jesus?

Soteriology/Pneumatology: Salvation and the Holy Spirit Sanctification and Witnessing for Jesus Christ

Important to Remember

- **Witness now!** We saw above in the Introduction that Jesus' original word in Matthew 28:19, is μαθητεύσατε (*mathēteusate*, disciple) a verb (2nd person plural), and it is in the imperative mood, i.e., it's a command, and the tense of the verb is the Greek aorist, a past tense, indicating do it **now!**
- **Don't pressure people.** All the Lord is requiring us to do is to make disciples by telling them about Him. Look for ways to initiate such a conversation, as by football or other conversational gambits, and be preparing ourselves (e.g., daily reading and studying God's Word, prayer without ceasing, and regular worship in a Biblically faithful church) to respond to others' questions (1 Peter 3:15, NASB). **NOTICE:** Jesus is not requiring us to convert people. No force. No pressure. Only the Holy Spirit can enable people to believe. (1 Corinthians 12:3) All we need to do is inform them. The Holy Spirit does the converting.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

What or who is the church, and
What is its purpose?

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team Unified

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential. This is one of the most beautiful and effective parts of the game, of church, and of the rest of life.

“²⁵...there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?”
(1 Corinthians 12:25-30)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church, United with a Purpose

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential. This is one of the most beautiful and effective parts of the game, of church, and of the rest of life.

³“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” ⁹(What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (Ephesians 4:3-16)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

The Church Has a Mission. Success Requires Unity of the Parts.

Planning and Execution as a Team

5. To succeed in church and in life, planning and execution are essential. This is one of the most beautiful and effective parts of church, football, and the rest of life.

“¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:16-20)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

The Church Has a Mission. Success Requires Unity of the Parts.

Planning and Execution as a Team

5. To succeed in church and in the rest of life, planning and execution are essential. This is one of the most beautiful and effective parts of church, football, and the rest of life.

A common, but flawed, saying is that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” This belief has been demonstrably disproven by empirical cross-cultural research, which reveals three essential elements, principles that recur in the art, music, and other work of people through the ages and throughout the world, that are present in something that is considered beautiful.

- Harmony—a consistent and orderly arrangement of the parts of a whole
- Proportionality—the proper balance of the elements (e.g., size, shape, quantity, degree, intensity, severity) of an entity
- Complexity—the composition of many detailed and interrelated parts

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.
 - a. **PLANNING**: National Football League (NFL) personnel spend countless hours scouting high school and college players; viewing video taken of opponents' previous games, studying carefully every detail of what each player does in certain circumstances, then developing strategic defensive and offensive game plans for how to counter those players in similar circumstances when facing them in a game are just a few of the plans formulated in the week prior to the game with them. Then plays are designed to exploit the opponent's weaknesses, and each play is given a code number that the whole team has to memorize. Called the playbook, each team member has to study all the plans and know what he has to do in each play, including knowing where all the other team members are and what they are doing in each play.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.
 - a. **PLANNING** Cont'd.: An aspect of planning that is a key to success in football is balancing the production of both of the main dimensions of the offense: passing and running. When both the passing and running games are effective, a team achieves the goal of ball control; every minute that team controls the ball, it is out of the hands of the other team, thereby increasing its ability to score and reducing the opposition's ability to score.

Balancing the passing and running games also removes the ability of the other team focusing on the one part that is going well. For example, if the offense is not able to run the ball, the opposing team can then focus on also stopping the passing and further reduce the ability to score. Here's an illustration of how this balance succeeds.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team United

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.
 - a. **PLANNING** Cont'd.: An example of effective ball control and its results was seen and reported in an NFL playoff game between the Buffalo Bills and the Denver Broncos. As Associated Press (AP) reporter John Wawrow wrote, “[Quarterback] Josh Allen and the Buffalo Bills’ spread the wealth approach on offense that was so productive in the regular season, proved unstoppable in their playoff opener...the Bills leaned on a balanced attack in a 31-7 win over the Denver Broncos....
“I don’t think there was one certain thing over another. We just wanted to come out and execute well’ Allen said...‘and I feel like we did that today.’
“With Allen completing 20 of 26 attempts for 272 yards passing and two touchdowns, and the running game combining for 210 yards, Buffalo methodically wore down the Broncos...in a game where the Bills finished with a 23-minute edge in time of possession [ball control].”*

* John Wawrow, “BUFFALO STAMPEDE: Bills end Broncos’ season with rout,” *Reporter-Herald*, January 13, 2025, p. B1.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team United

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential. This is one of the most beautiful and effective parts of the game and of life.
 - a. **PLANNING** Cont'd.: AP sports reporter, Pat Graham, further explained...

“In the playoff loss at Buffalo, Allen’s ball-control offense kept [Broncos’ quarterback Bo] Nix on the sideline.

“The Bills had the ball for nearly 42 minutes thanks to converting 8 of 16 third-down situations, while the Broncos had it for just over 18 minutes (2 of 9 on third downs).”*

* Pat Graham, “Broncos’ Nix already thinking about next step,” *Reporter-Herald*, January 15, 2025, p. B4.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team United

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.

b. **EXECUTION:**

1) The preseason and pregame study then has to be practiced carefully and intensively in order to be executed flawlessly in order to win. The personal study and planning in team meetings then is practiced for as many days prior to the game as possible. On game day, the quarterback calls the code number in the huddle or elsewhere prior to each play—but sometimes changes (referred to as calling “an audible”) occur, e.g., when the quarterback approaching the line of scrimmage (where the teams line up and the ball is hiked), “reads” the defensive scheme, and observes the play called in the huddle won’t work. He signals in several ways and calling out several numbers that his team is listening for—but that will confuse the other team—which is also calling out its own numbers to change its strategy. Pass plays are exceptionally pleasing. In certain plays, when the call is made, and the ball is hiked, the quarterback throws the ball to a place where no one is, but then a receiver cuts over and arrives right when the ball does. Beautiful! Planning and perfect execution of the plans. **Observe.**

Planning and Execution as a Team United



[Click Here for Link](#)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team United

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.

b. **EXECUTION**:

2) However, no matter how much planning goes into the preparations before gametime, situations will arise during every game that can be classified in at least two categories: unplanned developments and errors:

a) Unplanned developments occur in the game in at least two ways.

1- The other team has also been doing its homework. Those coaches and players, too, are planning strategies offensively and defensively in order to win the game.

2- Also, during a play an athlete's exceptional ability and/or experience will enable him to react in a certain way that alters the outcome of the play.

These developments illustrate at least two Biblical teachings:

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team United

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.

b. **EXECUTION:**

2)a)2- Unplanned developments occur in the game. This illustrates at least two Biblical teachings:

a- Only God is all knowing and unlimited; only God can do all that is in his will to do. He created us in his image, which means that we have in microcosm, some of his attributes that he has in macrocosm.

b- Therefore, human beings are limited; we cannot know or think of everything—in football, in church, or in life. The other team will do what is unexpected and unplanned, requiring our team to respond “on the spot.” How well that response occurs affects the outcome of the game.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team United

5. To succeed in football, in church, and in the rest of life, planning and execution with unified cooperation of all parts of the whole are essential.

b. **EXECUTION:**

2)a)2-b- Therefore, since human beings are limited; we cannot know or think of everything—in football or in life. The other team will do what is unexpected and unplanned in order to exploit our team’s limitations and weaknesses, requiring our team also to respond “on the spot.”

➤ **REFLECT AND DISCUSS:** What implications do you see for our response to our opponents in the spiritual warfare we are engaging in this phase of life? (Ephesians 6:10-20)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team United

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.

b. **EXECUTION:**

2)b) Errors occur, mental and physical errors.

- 1- Mentally, players sometimes forget where they should be in a specific play, often resulting in not catching the ball or an interception; in not blocking for the ball carrier, resulting in no gain, a fumble, or worse; not blocking for the quarterback (QB), resulting in a sack (tackling the QB), a fumble, or worse.
- 2- Physical errors, such as rule breaking, which draws a penalty that can stall a drive toward the goal and lose the game. Some exceptionally egregious errors can result in heavy fines and suspensions for one or more games, which can cause the team to fail to make the playoffs and the championship, and much more.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team United

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and unified execution are essential for accomplishing the objective.

b. **EXECUTION:**

2)b) Errors occur, mental and physical errors.

3- Compare God's commands to obey in the Bible, and the results of not doing so. (Deuteronomy 28:1-2ff.; Joshua 1:7-8; Psalm 84:11; Matthew 7:21ff.; John 14:21; 15:9-12; Hebrews 5:7-9; James 2:14-23)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team Unified

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.
 - b. **EXECUTION**: View Slide 120 to see how every team member is needed.
 - 3) Successful execution occurs as each member of the team sees himself as an essential part of the team and as the whole team values unity.
 - a) I saw the outstanding NFL quarterback, Tom Brady, holding the Lombardi Trophy each year of his seven Superbowl titles, and in his interview, one of the first comments he made was to thank his teammates, clearly and rightly emphasizing that his win was a win by the whole team. That observation was abundantly clear watching his offensive line give him an extraordinary amount of time to “read” the defense and find an open receiver, contrary to what took place with other quarterbacks in that timeframe: they were laying on their backs, sacked, sometimes even without the ball, because their line couldn’t protect them. Every player is important, indeed necessary, for without each one—and each playing well in unity—the team will not win.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team Unified

5.b.3)a) **EXECUTION**:

Similarly, Travis Hunter, who has won many of the most prestigious awards presented to outstanding college football players, has credited his teammates. When he won the Paul Hornung Award, an annual honor given to the player considered the most versatile in major college football, an award which only he has won twice since the award was established 15 years previously, he said, “I’d like to thank all of my teammates and believe the awards I’m winning are team awards....Especially the Paul Hornung Award for the most versatile player. I couldn’t do it without **each** of my teammates [emphasis mine; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:7-30, esp. vss. 7,11-12,24-25] I want to thank...voters for blessing me with this award twice...Coach Prime for allowing me to do what I do and all the coaches and staff surrounding the CU football team. This is for all of us.”*

* Brian Howell, “Hunter nabs Paul Hornung Award,” *Reporter-Herald*, December 12, 2024, p. B1.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Necessary Unity of the Church

“⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.... ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. ¹²The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.... “^{24b}But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.” (1 Cor. 12)

Necessary Unity of the Football Team



“I’d like to thank all my teammates and believe the awards I’m winning are team awards...” Travis Hunter

Photo by John E. Moore III—Getty Images. Travis’ quote by Brian Howell, “Hunter nabs Paul Hornung Award,” *Reporter-Herald*, December 12, 2024, p. B1.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.

b. **EXECUTION:**

Planning that is well done results in winning, which everyone involved (e.g., fans, owners, management, coaches), especially the players, wants. One, commenting on the outcome of the planning that the NFL Denver Broncos defense did in preparing for an away game they won against the New York Jets, said, “I thought Vance [Joseph, Broncos’ Defensive Coordinator] called a great game as he’s done all year,” inside linebacker Justin Strnad said after making his first start of the season. “He prepared us so well and I can’t thank him enough.” *Denver Post* sports reporter, Parker Gabriel, wrote, “Joseph’s group was humming from the first play and came through about every time Denver needed it on a rainy, offensively challenged afternoon at MetLife Stadium.”*

* Parker Gabriel, “Road Warriors: Denver defense sacks New York QB Rodgers five times, holds Jets to three field goals,” *Reporter-Herald*, September 30, 2024, p. B1.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team Unified

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.

b. **EXECUTION:**

This principle of the necessity of unity and teamwork is unquestioned in football. Another testimony of this truth was offered by University of Michigan head coach, Sherrone Moore. Reflecting on his team's victory over Alabama, he "called Tuesday's 19-13 victory...a total team effort that bodes well for the Wolverines moving forward...No one person wins a game...no two people. It's always going to be a team sport."*

Here we have another illustration of how success in football and in life, requires teamwork. As we'll see, this principle is also necessarily operative in the church.

* Associated Press, "Michigan defense pressures Milroe, Wolverines beat No. 11 Alabama," *Reporter-Herald*, January 1, 2025.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team Unified

5. To succeed in football, in church, and in the rest of life, planning and unified execution are essential.

b. **EXECUTION:**

3) Successful execution occurs as each member of the football team sees himself as an essential part of the team. Each team member has special gifts and skills that he has developed and has drawn the attention of professional scouts who have notified their team, the leaders of which have then selected those players according to the abilities the team needs in order to succeed.

b) Compare the church as the Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to reveal in such letters as 1 Corinthians 12:4-31. He compares the human body to the church, the body of Christ (12:27).

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team Unified

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.

b. **EXECUTION:**

3)b) Compare the church, the body of Christ, of which each member is an essential part. Read the whole chapter; what is your part?

“¹²The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ...²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,...²⁴...God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team Unified

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.

b. **EXECUTION:**

3)b) Compare the church, the body of Christ, of which each member is an essential part. Read the whole chapter; consider carefully these verses in Jesus' fervent prayer for the unity of the church:

“And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.” (John 17:11, ESV)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.

b. **EXECUTION:**

3)b) Compare the church, the body of Christ, of which each member is an essential part. Read the whole chapter; consider carefully these verses in Jesus' fervent prayer for the unity of the church:

²⁰“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” (John 17:20-23, ESV)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and unified execution are essential to accomplish the objective.

b. **EXECUTION:**

3)b) As with the essential planning and unified execution of all plays by every player on a football team—functioning in harmony being necessary for accomplishing their objective—compare the church, the body of Christ, of which each member with his or her gifts being daily developed through study of the Bible, prayer, and regularly meeting together (Hebrews 10:25) is an essential part of accomplishing the mission. Every member of both teams needs to be “on the same page.”

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION: Consider carefully the following 10 comparisons between a football team and the church that are accomplishing their mission. Add any other comparisons you see.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team

Football Team Unity

1. Commitment to team unity
2. Participate in all meetings and games
3. Obedience to the head coach
4. Maintain communication with the head coach
5. Obedience to position coaches

Church Unity

1. Commitment to church unity (John 17:11,20-23; Ephesians 4:1-6)
2. Meet together regularly (Hebrews 10:25)
3. Obedience to the Lord (Matthew 5:17-19; John 14:21)
4. Maintain communication with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
5. Obedience to church leaders over you (Hebrews 13:17)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team

Football Team Unity

6. Position matched with gifts, skills
7. Knowledge, even memorize, the playbook
8. Function in accord with the playbook
9. Obeying the rules in the game
10. Submit to discipline for breaking the rules

Church Unity

6. Nurture and use your spiritual gifts to build up the church (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12-14)
7. Know, even memorize, the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
8. Function in accord with God's Word (2 Thessalonians 3:14)
9. Obey the laws of the land (Romans 13:1-7)
10. Submit to church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1-5)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team: Discipline

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and unified execution, including discipline, are essential for accomplishing the mission objectives.

b.3)b) As with the essential planning and unified execution of all plays by every player on a football team—functioning in harmony being necessary for accomplishing their objective—compare the church, the body of Christ. Each member daily develops his or her gifts through Bible study, prayer, service, and regularly meeting together (Hebrews 10:25), all being an essential part of accomplishing the mission. Every member of both teams needs to be “on the same page.”

Functioning in accord with the playbook and obeying the rules for football players, comparable with the church obeying God’s Word and His commands—thus “bearing fruit” (Matthew 7:17-23)—provides the essential unity on the football team and in the church that is necessary for success in each organization’s work. Failure to obey and to change, results in players and church members being disciplined.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team: Discipline

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and unified execution, including discipline, are essential for accomplishing the mission objectives.

b.3)b) Divisiveness destroys. Due to our understanding from our study of Biblical Anthropology, we are not surprised by divisiveness and other disobedience, sin, and evil. Because of our realistic anthropology, we are never surprised; in fact, we're prepared to deal with it, and quickly, in order to succeed in the accomplishment of our purposes.

In football, divisiveness destroys the team, in particular its unity, and prohibits the achievement of its objectives, including the major one: winning. In the church, disobedient divisiveness destroys its essential unity with the triune God (who will not allow sin and evil in his presence) and with the righteous members of the body of Christ, thus also destroying its ability to bear fruit, to accomplish its mission.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team: Discipline

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and unified execution, including discipline, are essential for accomplishing the mission objectives.
 - b.3)b) Divisiveness destroys. To illustrate, permitting continual and unrepentant immorality in the church not only disobeys God's Word (e.g., 1 Corinthians 6:9-20) but divides the church and fails to accomplish the mission our Savior and Lord has given us. As one pastor wisely observed, "The world is watching us, and no one living his or her life in the gutter will lead anyone to Christ." Such disobedience must be disciplined by the church, for the sake of the mission and for the sake of all who are involved (see, e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:5). In football and in the church, disobedience is disciplined, and the unrepentant will be dismissed. See also below, Eschatology. For more see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology](#).

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and unified execution are essential to accomplish the objective.
 - b.3)c) The Heisman Trophy winning CU cornerback/receiver, Travis Hunter provides another excellent example of how the principles of gifts, their nurture, team unity, planning and execution all come together in both football and the church.

In an interview when he won the Heisman Trophy, Travis was asked if other coaches would have allowed him to play on both offense and defense. “No other coach but Coach Prime,” he replied. “I trusted him. I knew he did it, and I knew he wasn’t going to tell no lies. I definitely trusted him.” Continued...

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a United Team

5.b.3)c) Travis Hunter provides another excellent example of how the principles of gifts, their nurture, team unity, planning and execution all come together in both football and the church.

The reporter adds, “It’s not lost on Hunter that Coach Prime’s coaching path lined up with his own playing career.”

With another reference to the overarching reality and perspective of God’s Providence, “‘It’s definitely God’s plan,’ Hunter said. ‘We say that all the time. We definitely believe in God. I definitely believe in God a lot. I go to church every Sunday I get off in season, but most of the time in the offseason I definitely go to church a lot.’”*

* Brian Howell, Buffs’ Hunter nabs Heisman: CU’s star two-way player claims college football’s highest individual honor, *Reporter-Herald*, December 15, 2024, p. B1.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team Unified

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.

Think how God feels when we plan and live well for him according to his will, executing well with his people, his team (the church, the body of Christ) in the mission he has given us.

➤ **PLANNING**: Instead of a “playbook,” we have the most important book of life: the Bible, also known as the Word of God. We not only read but study and memorize at least parts of it—each day (think of the difference if we all would do so as well as football players memorize their playbook!)—in order to learn how to obey God and—with the Holy Spirit’s help—be victorious.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team Unified

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.

Think how God feels, how pleased he is, when we plan and live well for him according to his will, executing well with his people, his team (the church, the body of Christ) in the mission he has given us.

➤ **EXECUTION**: Just as it's not enough to only know the plays and the rules in the game of football, it's not enough to just know God's Word: he expects us to put it all into action. (Matthew 7:12-21; 1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:14; 2 Timothy 2:5; James 2:14-26) In order to do so most effectively, we need to look to God, seeking his constant help throughout the day, i.e., "pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5:17) For example, "Dear Lord, how do I do this?" We also need to note well: the original Greek verb προσεύχεσθε (*proseuchesthe*) is in the imperative mood (a command), present tense (i.e., continuously), and middle voice (i.e., we do so because we are responsible to do so).

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

God's Help When We Fail

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential. But what takes place when we fail to execute what we've planned and we lose? Especially for those of us who are believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, God helps us in another application of his Providence.

Consider, for example, what the Philadelphia Eagles NFL team experienced between 2022-2025. They were narrowly defeated by the Kansas City Chiefs (38-35) in the 2023 Super Bowl. Much expected to return in 2024 and even win against the Chiefs, they didn't even make the Super Bowl that year. Many fans highly criticized the Eagles—players and coaches—and they directed the brunt of their criticism toward the outstanding quarterback, Jalen Hurts, and the head coach, Nick Sirianni.

How did Hurts and Sirianni, both strong Christians, view those defeats and that criticism?

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

God's Help When We Fail: Right Leader Facilitates Team Unity, Learning from and Being Grateful for Adversity

5. What takes place when we fail to execute what we've planned and we lose? Especially for believers in and followers of Christ Jesus, God enables us to see good in what has occurred, learn, and benefit from it. (James 1:17; cf. Genesis 50:20) Sirianni and Hurts explain, as reported by Josh Dubow of the Associated Press (AP).

“...Sirianni believes the celebration [of their 40-22 victory over the Chiefs] ...Sunday night at the Superdome wouldn't have been possible without the disappointment from 2023.

“‘Adversity has a tendency to bring you together,’ he said. ‘I look back on last year and how last year ended and I'm grateful. As crazy as it sounds, I'm grateful how last year ended because it shaped us to who we are today and where we're standing today.’”*

* Josh Dubow, “Hurts' rocky road leads to a Super Bowl MVP,” *Reporter-Herald*, February 11, 2025, p. B2.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

God's Help When We Fail: Right Leader Facilitates Team Unity, Learning from and Being Grateful for Adversity

Bible and Theology

- “Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 5:19-20)
- “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

Football Illustrations

[Dave Zangaro observed](#), “The Eagles faced a ton of adversity in 2023, when they collapsed, losing 6 of their last 7 games, including a blowout wild-card round exit.

“..., Sirianni was almost fired after the season.

“And it wasn't like the Eagles got off to an incredible start in 2024. They had a 2-2 record and many were wondering if the head coach would survive the season. He didn't just survive. He thrived.”

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

God's Help When We Fail: Right Leader Facilitates Team Unity, Learning from and Being Grateful for Adversity



NFL Philadelphia Eagles Quarterback, Jalen Hurts, with 2025 Super Bowl Lombardi and MVP trophies. AP photo



NFL Eagles Head Coach Nick Sirianni with Lombardi Trophy. Getty photo

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

God's Help When We Fail: Right Leader Facilitates Team Unity, Learning from and Being Grateful for Adversity

5. Especially for believers in and followers of Christ Jesus, God enables us to see good in adversity, learn, and benefit from it to build team unity. (James 1:17; cf. Genesis 50:20) Coach Sirianni brought the team together in a special way in 2024. Dave Zangaro explains.

“What made the 2024 Eagles so close?

“‘It’s the journey,’ Sirianni said. ‘You don’t know how close a team’s going to be until you go through the journey together. It’s hard to say this because we won 16 out of our last 17 games but even in the midst of that, adversity has a tendency to bring you together.’”

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

God's Help When We Fail: Right Leader Facilitates Team Unity, Learning from and Being Grateful for Adversity

5. Especially for believers in and followers of Christ Jesus, God enables us to see good in what has occurred, in particular adversity, learn, and benefit from it to build team unity. (James 1:17; cf. Genesis 50:20) Head Coach (HC) Sirianni brought the team together in a special way in 2024. Dave Zangaro continues.

“I think I look back at last year and how last year ended and I’m grateful. As crazy as this sounds, I’m grateful for how last year ended because it shaped us to who we are today and where we’re standing today. And the adversity at the beginning of the year and, shoot, the adversity through the season, through the injuries, through ups and downs, everything.

“I think that when you embrace adversity, it does something to you. It does something to you personally, each and every individual on that football team adversity does something to and it does something to you as a football [team] as well.’

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

God's Help When We Fail: Right Leader Facilitates Team Unity, Learning from and Being Grateful for Adversity

5. Especially for believers in and followers of Christ Jesus, God enables us to see good in what has occurred, in particular adversity, learn, and benefit from it to build team unity. (James 1:17) HC Sirianni brought the team together in a special way in 2024. Dave Zangaro continues.

“And he thinks that adversity of going through those things is what made this team grow close. But that’s not the only reason.

“‘They work their butts off to connect,’ Sirianni said. ‘They work their butts off, in a world where it’s all about your phone, they put their phones down and did stuff together. That was the first and foremost key. You can’t substitute the time that it takes to connect. The time that they had with dinners together, in the game room, in between meetings and all that different stuff.

“‘They were selfless. Just look at Jalen (Hurts) and A.J. (Brown) and DeVonta (Smith) and everybody. The group rush on defense, not caring who gets the credit and just wanting to win. There were so many things.’

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

God's Help When We Fail: Right Leader Facilitates Team Unity, Learning from and Being Grateful for Adversity

5. Especially for believers in and followers of Christ Jesus, God enables us to see good in what has occurred, in particular adversity, learn, and benefit from it to build team unity. (James 1:17; cf. Genesis 50:20) Coach Sirianni brought the team together in a special way in 2024. Dave Zangaro continues.

“The Eagles talked about how close they were for most of the season. How much they hung out together. How much they cared for one another. And that was evident in the winning locker room in the Superdome. The Eagles had a wild celebration....

“For a brief few minutes, safety Reed Blankenship lowered his protective ski goggles and explained what was so special about the 2024 Eagles.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

God's Help When We Fail: Right Leader Facilitates Team Unity, Learning from and Being Grateful for Adversity

5. Especially for believers in and followers of Christ Jesus, God enables us to see good in what has occurred, in particular adversity, learn, and benefit from it to build team unity. (James 1:17; cf. Genesis 50:20) Coach Sirianni brought the team together in a special way in 2024. Dave Zangaro continues.

“‘I’ve never been a part of a team this close,’ Blankenship said. ‘Through the ups and downs, we didn’t care about what anybody said. We had each other’s backs. We [formed] a brotherhood that will last forever.’”*

* [Dave Zangaro, “After Super Bowl win, Nick Sirianni is now grateful for collapse of 2023,”](#) February 10, 2025. (Accessed February 12, 2025)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

God's Help When We Fail: Right Leader Facilitates Team Unity, Learning from and Being Grateful for Adversity

5. FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION: (Ask God's help to answer and implement the answers to these questions.)
 - a. What applications for the church about fostering unity and managing adversity (in our church home and the global church) can we identify here?
 - b. What safety Reed Blankenship described is part of historic church fellowship, called *κοινωνία* (*koinōnia*): meaning fellowship, communion, association, partnership, sharing, participation, contribution, close relationship, generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism (Hebrews 13:16; Acts 2:42; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Galatians 2:9; Philippians 3:10; 1 John 1:3).
 - What can we do to facilitate, nurture, and expand this very special and much-needed experience where the Holy Spirit lives and moves quietly but powerfully among his people in our life together in the body of Christ?

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team Unified

5. To succeed in football and in church, planning and execution are essential.
 - **PLANNING**: Instead of a “playbook,” we have the most important book of life: the Bible, also known as the Word of God. The Bible clearly teaches that *God’s plan for the church is to function not only locally but in unity worldwide.* (Genesis 12:3; Revelation 7:9) As in the words of the original Nicene Creed, the most widely used creed in church worship throughout the world, “we believe in one holy catholic [i.e., global] and apostolic church.” We are one (in unity, unified) with fellow believers in Christ all over the world. Many are suffering and have huge needs.
 - **EXECUTION**: Therefore, we act. We volunteer and give offerings in and for our local church but also what we can for church needs throughout the world through denominational and interdenominational organizations, such as Samaritan’s Purse which meets physical needs in the name of Christ.

Ecclesiology: Planning and Execution as a Team

5. Think how God feels when we plan well according to his will and live well for him, executing well with his team (the church) in the mission he has given us.
 - **EXECUTION** Cont'd.: Coach Prime (*op cit.*) is not only the highly accomplished University of Colorado head coach, but he's a strong Christian, and his position is a special vocation (calling) from God that gives him many opportunities to teach the much greater aspects of life and eternity in a witness for Christ Jesus. As reporter Brian Howell wrote on one occasion, "We want to win. We want to win at all costs, but I value winning differently," Coach Prime said. "I don't want to win just on the field. I want to win in the classroom. I want to win in the communities. I want to win in all facets of life with these young men, and that's something I think we're on our way to do."* Because of his vocal witness for Jesus, all his students and many others know he is a believer in and follower of Christ, and what he is saying is from his Christian worldview and witness for the Lord. This is also God's calling for all of us in Christ.

* Brian Howell, "Buffs aiming even higher with 5 games left to play," *Reporter-Herald*, October 21, 2024, p. B3.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in life, including in the church, planning and united execution are essential. Here is one more example from many reports of how Christian football players are using their God-given opportunity to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As Coach Prime indicated above, not only he but a growing number of Christians in football and other organized sports see more to life than football; they see their calling, their vocation, as being part of the larger Biblical worldview and an opportunity to serve the Lord on and off the field. How The Ohio State University (OSU) players are doing so is told in the following quotes from an article in *American Family News* (AFN). *The Lantern*, referred to in the story is the university's award-winning student newspaper. For the purposes of this study, I've organized the quotes in the categories, planning and united execution.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in life, including in the church, planning and united execution are essential.
 - **PLANNING**: The players' plans are taking place in the larger context of a spiritual revival that is being led by the Buckeye football team and is being facilitated by the university. A faculty member told AFN, “...it’s a mighty move of God. Even beyond [the revival event led by many players on the football team, the revival is occurring] in the classroom...in the offices... with students.... I’m involved with almost every single Christian student org. on campus, and everyone is busting at the seams right now.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in life, including the church, planning and united execution are essential.

➤ **PLANNING**: “And [OSU], he says, has been open to the revival. ‘In fact, ... I give them [OSU] kudos. They’re really leaning into this and [developed] programs. Just a couple of years ago they [established] a free-speech policy that allows faculty and students to openly share whatever their beliefs are.’ And he credits the Buckeye football team, who’s committed Christians number more than 30 players.

“‘These guys are worshipped on this campus,’ he acknowledges, ‘but all they want to do is point that worship to Jesus....’

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in all of life, planning and united execution are essential.

➤ **EXECUTION**: At one event, “Almost a thousand students showed up outside of Curl Market on the Ohio State campus on [a] Sunday evening to praise God and hear His Word. The revival was led by members of the Ohio State football team, who gave an invitation that night and delivered several personal testimonies....”

Following his observation that the Christian football players don’t want to be worshipped, “but all they want to do is to point that worship to Jesus,” the professor added, “And so they got vulnerable, shared their stories – and at the end they did [an altar] call.”

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in all of life, planning and execution are essential.

➤ **EXECUTION**: “At least 60 students accepted Christ and were baptized right there on the spot. The Lantern, the campus newspaper, reported the next day that the event had been jointly hosted by various Christian churches and organizations based in Columbus.

““Around 8:50 p.m., roughly 50 attendees joined players on the stage and began praying as a group. A few minutes later, baptisms began, with attendees being submerged in the [four tub-sized] water buckets to complete the baptismal ritual,’ [wrote The Lantern staff](#). “Once individuals were baptized, event coordinators led them into the nearby Nosker House, gave them a copy of the Bible and guided them in a scripture reading.”

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in life, including church, planning and united execution are essential.

➤ **EXECUTION**: “Kami Kortokrax, a senior on the women’s softball team at OSU, told The Lantern she was inspired by fellow athletes using their platform to share their faith. ‘It’s just a deeper level,’ she said. ‘Everybody knows them as great football players, but it’s way more important for them all now to be known as great Christians.’”*

Not insignificantly, this year The Ohio State University football team won the first national College Football Championship in the history of the sport.

* Steve Jordahl, “Big Ten campus ‘busting at the seams’ for Jesus,” American Family News, August 30, 2024, <https://afn.net/sports/2024/08/30/big-ten-campus-busting-at-the-seams-for-jesus/> (Accessed 01/29/2025)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in all of life, planning and united execution are essential.

Writing for the Family Research Council's publication, *The Washington Stand*, Chuck Donovan demonstrates that this new movement of Christian faith being expressed in football is not limited to OSU and CU. Referring to it as "The Phenomenal Surge of Faith on the Field," Donovan describes it "as a pervasive expression of faith in the Bible and God's love and provision for the teams and players, win or lose," and he documents its occurrence in many other teams on many other college campuses, where Christians are using their God-given positions of respectability to witness for Christ, including the Texas Longhorns that Ohio State defeated enroute to the national championship.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in all of life, planning and execution are essential.

Donovan continues: “It’s hard not to notice the extent of this phenomenon, coming as it does from so many of the most prominent members of the squads, especially the quarterbacks — and the coaches as well. Take Quinn Ewers of Texas. After his Longhorns lost a hard-fought battle against the Ohio State Buckeyes, now the top-rated team still standing, Ewers [told the media](#), ‘What other people think of me won’t get me anywhere. [cf. 2 Corinthians 5:9] ... God has made me who I am, and that’s the reality of my whole situation. ... I fully opened my heart to what Jesus and God were telling me instead of relying on my own understanding — but I just wanted to fully give myself to Him and fully allow His will to be done in my life.’

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in all of life, planning and execution are essential.

Donovan continues: “Ewers’s remarks were swiftly echoed by Longhorn wide receiver Jahdae Barron, who held up his hand to stall the adjournment of the postgame presser. ‘I just want to say one thing,’ Barron [said](#). ‘I just want everybody to know, you ... sometimes don’t come out on top. ... We won. We truly know who our leader is, and that’s God and Jesus Christ. And ultimately, just having the ability to use the gift that He gave us, to share to the world, it’s been amazing.’ Barron went on to put the game in perspective and asked for thoughts for people dealing with the fires in California and the ‘chaos’ in New Orleans where a terrorist attack took at least 14 lives and postponed the other semifinal bowl game.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in all of life, planning and united execution are essential.

Donovan continues: ...“Something deeper...is afoot and it is more than the recent—and ongoing tragedies in America that seem to be inspiring it.

“ESPN made sure to stay onscreen as the crowd and national audience observed not only a moment of silence [to remember the victims of the horrendous terrorist attack in the French Quarter] but heard a prayer offered by Fred McClure, the former head of the Cotton Bowl Athletic Association.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in all of life, planning and united execution are essential.

Donovan continues: “[McClure said](#):

‘Loving father, we seek your blessings today for all those gathered here and especially for those on the field as we come together to celebrate the 89th Cotton Bowl Classic, we lift up the young men representing the Ohio State Buckeyes and the Texas Longhorns. Keep them safe from injury and harm. Instill within them a deep respect for one another and reward them for their perseverance.’

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in all of life, planning and execution are essential.

Donovan continues: “...an amazing story of faith and conviction has occurred across the spectrum of college football in 2024-25. Pinpointing a beginning to this season of spiritual revival is impossible, and hardly necessary, but one event does suggest itself to anyone who witnessed the occasion in person or on national television: the near-fatal injury to Buffalo Bills defensive back Damar Hamlin during Monday Night Football in January 2023. Hamlin suffered cardiac arrest after a tackle. Fans of football on any level see many injuries, but this one was different from the start. The game, the players, the crowd, and the national audience came to a halt as every available resource was poured into saving Hamlin’s life on the field and then at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in all of life, planning and execution are essential.

Donovan continues: “We know the outcome now and Hamlin astonishingly has returned to the field of play. We know as well how the broadcasters for that game reacted to the drama playing out before them. For a time, our nation has gone through round after round of cynicism about our dependence on Almighty God for our lives and our every blessing. Prayer, much less public expressions of faith, have been downgraded, dismissed, and distrusted. The phrase “offering thoughts and prayers” then in common use has been subjected to ridicule. But on that frozen night on the Ohio River shoreline the [broadcast hosts](#) at ESPN bowed their heads in fervent prayer for Hamlin. Where else could they and we turn? **[Yes, as always: the world has no answer or help to offer.]**

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team—Another Example: Ohio State

A Report from [*American Family News*](#)

5. To succeed in football and in all of life, planning and execution are essential.

Thanks be to God, Hamlin recovered. Donovan adds: “Today, Hamlin devotes himself both to the Buffalo Bills and to charity work on behalf of youth sports, health, and safety. His story is known worldwide. Football remains the most dangerous sport from which players, and their families, can reap great rewards but also assume enormous risks. And all of it to win a crown of temporal fame that will be the prize of one team, and one group of players....But in prayer we can see it as so many of these collegiate champions do. Faith bids us to know that the true trophy is available to us all, in chariots of fire that will carry us through our strivings toward a victory no one can take away.*

* Chuck Donovan, “The Phenomenal Surge of Faith on the Field,” [*The Washington Stand*](#), January 14, 2025.

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team

Possible Segues for Conversation about the church, then Christ in Particular:

- “It’s beautiful to see the unfolding of plans containing countless details, as every member of a team unified and unselfishly cooperates with each other member of the team to accomplish their objective. This unity is what our Lord Jesus Christ prayed for so fervently the night before his crucifixion.” (John 17)
- “It’s interesting and informative to see the parallels of the knowledge and skills of the different football players, all of which are needed for winning, and the gifts the Holy Spirit has given to each church member, all of which are needed for the church to do what Christ has called and commissioned us to do.”
- “It’s clear to see that in both football and in the church, knowledge and ability are not enough. To be victorious in the game and in the world, *we have to use* that knowledge and our abilities in order to produce, to bear fruit.” (Matthew 7)

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Planning and Execution as a Team

Possible Segues for Conversation Especially with Other Church Members:

- “Thinking about how every player on a football team—including every coach and administrator—has been carefully selected due to his (from a Biblical perspective God-given gifts) abilities; his serious, studious, and vigorous development of those gifts; and his use of these gifts in unselfish cooperation with everyone else on the team in order to accomplish the goal, *what can we learn about how* we can help fellow members of the church to identify their calling; to use their spiritual gifts; engage in studious, serious, and vigorous development of those gifts; and commit to using their gifts in unselfish (not caring who gets the credit: to God be the glory) cooperation with everyone else in the church to accomplish the mission to which our Lord has called us?”
- “What are your gifts? How are you—or how can you—use them?”

Eschatology: The Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

What will occur at the end—the end
of my life, and the end of history?

Eschatology: Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation Accomplishment of a Measurable Objective

6. Success is determined by the accomplishment of measurable objectives.
 - a. Consider just a few in football: 10 yards (not 9 or even 9.5, but TEN) yards of progress must be made (as measured by chains with that precise measurement) before a first down is achieved; the ball must cross the goal line before a touchdown is made; the ball must go between the two uprights in the goal post before a field goal or an extra point is achieved.

The game, as in all of life, has time limits. The game has four 15-minute quarters. Timeouts and other game-delaying tactics are limited, and penalties are imposed if the limits are exceeded, e.g., “It is a delay of the game if the ball is not put in play by a snap within 40 seconds after the start of the play clock.” The penalty is a loss of five yards.*

* [2024 NFL Rulebook](#), Rule 4. Game Timing, Section 6 - Delay of Game, Article 1. 40-Second Play Clock.

Eschatology: Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation Accomplishment of a Measurable Objective

6. Success is determined by the accomplishment of measurable objectives.
 - b. God has given us specific commandments for this phase of life to which he will hold us accountable for obeying. “So you shall keep my commandments and do them: I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 22:32; cf. Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 5:17-18; 12:36; Romans 14:12; Hebrews 4:13; 1 Peter 4:5)

The commandments demonstrate the righteousness that must characterize Jesus’ disciples in order to accomplish the purpose to which God has brought us together: to obtain a hearing, receptivity for the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Hypocrites don’t attract people to Christ, in fact, just the opposite. This is one of the big problems we have today that interferes with the accomplishment of our mission. It is also why one of the aspects of church discipline is to admonish one another. (Colossians 1:28; 3:16)

Eschatology: Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation Accomplishment of a Measurable Objective

6. Success is determined by the accomplishment of measurable objectives.
 - c. Two measurable objectives for this class:
 - 1) By the end of this class, each person in attendance will write on a 3 x 5 file card at least one ([Level III](#)) objective he or she will commit to doing—not including watching more football 😊—that will respond to the following statements:
 - a) the measurable behavior you will do for the Lord
 - b) under what conditions you will do it
 - c) how well you will do it
 - AN EXAMPLE: During this football season (b), I will talk (a) with at least one (c) person and mention at least one way (c) how an aspect of football illustrates an aspect of a Biblical doctrine and mention the doctrine (b), e.g., God, mankind, Christ, Holy Spirit, church, the end of life here on earth.

Eschatology: Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation Accomplishment of a Measurable Objective

6. Success is determined by the accomplishment of measurable objectives.
 - c. Two measurable objectives for this class:
 - 2) The first class after the Super Bowl, each attendee of this class will receive a 3 x 5 file card. He or she will write one word on it: either YES or NO, indicating whether the objective written in this class was accomplished. The card can be placed face down on the table upon leaving the classroom. At least 75% of the of the class will have written YES on the card.

Eschatology: Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation Accomplishment of a Measurable Objective The Reality of Winning and Losing in Football and in Life

6. Success is determined by the accomplishment of measurable objectives. The Bible teaches and football illustrates the reality of winning and losing. We also learn how to maximize the likelihood of the former, how to minimize the likelihood of the latter, and to cope with and manage it when it occurs.
 - d. In football, as in life, not everybody wins. In many aspects of life, many in this age of postmodernism are trying to do away with such evaluative processes as grading and evaluations. That philosophy and its employment are unrealistic and counterproductive—resulting in great, often permanent, harm—to the individuals involved, to many facets of society in particular, and to society as a whole.

Eschatology: Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation Accomplishment of a Measurable Objective The Reality of Winning and Losing in Football and in Life

6. The Bible teaches and football illustrates the reality of winning and losing. We also learn how to maximize the likelihood of the former, how to minimize the likelihood of the latter, and to address and manage it when it occurs.
 - d. In football, as in life, not everybody wins.
 - 1) Judgments are made (e.g., referees), which effect the game's outcome. Players who don't obey the referees, or the coaches, and who don't execute the planned and practiced plays will will be held accountable and may end up being fined or fired. Review the video in Anthropology.
 - 2) The game doesn't go on forever. The clock runs out; game over.
 - 3) A winner is declared; everybody doesn't win. Not everyone receives the winner's prize, the victor's trophy.

Eschatology: Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation Accomplishment of a Measurable Objective The Reality of Winning and Losing in Football and in Life

6. The Bible teaches and football illustrates the reality of winning and losing.
 - e. In the Bible, God's most realistic help for our daily life and for eternity—for all who faithfully follow the Lord—we observe His opponents don't win.
 - 1) Since God created—and therefore owns—the world, he has the right to set the rules. The rules he has set pertain to who he is, what he is like, and his purposes for his world. One of his rules is that though he is all love (1 John 4:8), he is also holy, holy, holy (meaning most holy in the Hebrew language of the OT [Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8]). Therefore, he will not allow in his presence sin that diminishes and destroys the beauty of his creation and thus offends him and harms people he loves. Because he is all love, he has provided one way to win. (John 3:16; 14:6; Romans 10:9) For those who will not obey his rules, they will lose.

Eschatology: Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation Accomplishment of a Measurable Objective The Reality of Winning and Losing in Football and in Life

6. The Bible teaches and football illustrates the reality of winning and losing. We also learn how to maximize the likelihood of the former, how to minimize the likelihood of the latter, and to address and manage this ultimate reality.
 - e. In the Bible, God's most realistic and hopeful help for our daily life, and for eternity, not everybody wins.
 - 2) In life, we have the time limit of our life span (120 years at most; Genesis 6:3). We can't plan on that long; don't delay vital decisions. When Jesus returns in his second coming, there will be a final judgment.

Eschatology: Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation Accomplishment of a Measurable Objective The Reality of Winning and Losing in Football and in Life

6. The Bible teaches and football illustrates the reality of winning and losing. We also learn how to maximize the likelihood of the former, how to minimize the likelihood of the latter, and to address and manage it when it occurs.
 - e. In the Bible, God's most realistic and hopeful help for our daily life, and for eternity, not everybody wins.
 - 3) The judge will be Jesus, and he will judge justly according to God's perfect criterion. (Matthew 7; 25:31ff.) Football judges, as do the players, make errors; Jesus never makes errors; he is, and forever will be, perfect.
 - f. For more on the end of life, see the section on eschatology (the Biblical doctrine of the end of life and of history) in [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#).

Eschatology: The Doctrine of the Last Things

The Significance of Time Limits in Football and in Life

Possible Segues for Conversation about the End, then about Christ in Particular:

1. “You know, games started out as, and still are, essentially learning tools. About the time limits, think about what that means for life in the real world! What parallels do you see?”
2. “It’s good to observe in this period of time—influenced so much by postmodern philosophy with its axiom of no objective criterion of truth, and thus no standard for judging between right and wrong—the recognition of the need for objective truth, and that truth is the standard for determining what is right and what is wrong.”
3. “It’s comforting to know that when Jesus returns, he will justly judge all the wrongdoing and that we who are on his team and obeying him, do not have to worry.” (Matthew 7; 25:31-46; John 14:21; 16:33; Romans 10:9)

Eschatology: The Doctrine of the Last Things

The Significance of Time Limits in Football and in Life

Possible Segues for Conversation about the End, then about Christ in Particular:

4. “Did you ever connect John 14:6, where Jesus says, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’ with football? His use of the definite article, reveals an objective standard, and many of the rules in football are based on Jesus’ value system, e.g., certain behaviors (like face masking [grabbing an opponent’s face mask and sharply twisting his head]) are dangerous and will be penalized.
5. “It gets you thinking doesn’t it? The time clock for all of us is ticking away, and this aspect of football reminds us to not waste time, to avoid game-threatening penalties, and to accomplish the objectives the Lord has given us.”
6. What other comments come to your mind as to how you can use this aspect of football as a link to a related aspect of Biblical truth about Christ?

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Let's talk about this subject. There are many other aspects of football that illustrate historic Christian theology, Biblical teaching, and life.
2. What comes to your mind? What questions or comments do you have?
3. How do you plan to use aspects of football—those mentioned in this presentation and others that come to your mind—as conversational segues to key aspects of Biblical theology, especially pertaining to God's plan of redemption and restoration of his creation in Christ Jesus?

Gratitude and Resources

1. The Rev. Dr. Robin Dugall, a great friend, and fellow pastor and seminary professor, has been a superb help in supplying thoughtful reflections and the video and computer technology and expertise required to produce this program. He has also helped with the graphics, as have others mentioned in Essential Christianity (#4), from which several of the graphics have come.
2. [Christian Education Goals and Objectives with a Focus on Level III Objectives](#)
3. [Curriculum Development and Lesson Planning: For Teachers & for Teachers of Teachers.](#)
4. [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity \(PowerPoint\).](#)

Gratitude and Resources

5. [Church Leadership and Administration](#)
6. Other resources for further information on the above theological subjects are available on the author's general and academic Websites. All these resources are free, as are all the other resources on these Websites, both of which are also secure. The URLs for the Websites are:
 - <https://fromacorntoak12.com> (can also be accessed by edwardseely.com)
 - <https://seelyedward.academia.edu>.

Copyright © 2025 by Edward D. Seely. Permission is granted to use this program, without changing the text and without charge, for Christian education and other Christian ministries worldwide.