



## **Finding Trust and Obedience in March Madness!**

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March Madness, the NCAA's version of post-season basketball always brings incredible surprises, and massive disappointments. For some it is the thrill of a lifetime. For others, it's the ultimate letdown after a season of promise. Trust and obedience are the common denominators in March Madness. Without them a team will surely fail...with them they can shock the world.

Jerome Coaxum of the University of South Alabama went down with a severe ankle sprain with less than two minutes left in the 1998 Sun Belt Conference Championship. With his team up by 3 with only seconds to play, Coaxum let the coach know he could give him one good defensive effort. Coaches have to know their players and decide whether to trust them in a given situation. Coach Bob Weltlich trusted the senior, and Coaxum didn't disappoint, blocking a three-point attempt with only seconds remaining to send South Alabama to the Big Dance!

How is it that a player who has missed almost every shot he has taken in a game can step up and make a game winner? Just ask Ty Rogers who hit a 25 foot three-point shot to lift Western Kentucky University past 14<sup>th</sup> ranked Drake in the first round of the 2008 NCAA tournament. His teammate, Tyrone Brazelton had scored a team high 33 points, including 6-10 from behind the arc, but gave the ball to Rogers when the game was on the line.

It requires trust to give up the ball to your teammate when the game is on the line. To the average fan, it just happens, yet it takes a lot of things to come together in order for it to occur. A team must possess a passion for what they believe in. Each player has to live with dedication; daily practicing his actions until he doesn't have to think about them. He becomes naturally obedient to what he's practiced, and to the value of those around him.

In your spiritual walk, you must trust God through all kinds of situations. Daniel was known for serving God continually. His reputation was well-known among his enemies. They sought to use his faith against him but God used it for His glory instead. If you study the sixth chapter of the book of Daniel you will find that he had an excellent spirit, was faithful, and was known for his obedience. Daniel made Godly decisions under pressure. Based on these qualities, Daniel would have been the perfect teammate. Proverbs 18:16 teaches that a Godly lifestyle will give you favor with the right people. "A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men." Daniel was taken into captivity as a teenager, trained by his captors and was ultimately exalted as a Governor, but then he was cast into the lions den as a result of the trickery of men.

Yet Daniel never forgot his God nor did he back off the laws of God just because the law of man changed. Do you rely on man's laws to save you? Politics and leaders change, including coaches and athletic directors. They cannot rescue us from all things, even if they sincerely want to. King Darius labored all day because he wanted to find a way to spare Daniel's life. Ultimately, even the best and most powerful leaders will admit their limitations.

Psalms 34: 7 and 91:9-12 teach that reverence and respect for God are crucial to deliverance from times of trouble. In short, faith and obedience bring deliverance. When we say that we trust God, we must back it up with our faith which is manifested by our obedience to God's will. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

The steadfast believer can have great influence on a team and bring glory to God. Daniel had a testimony because he was faithful and King Darius, an unbeliever, praises God as a result. If you want to become a great teammate or even a leader on your team you must possess a passion for whom you believe in (Christ). You must dedicate yourself to daily living out the lessons God teaches you; practicing Biblical concepts, not just being a "good" person. Once you become naturally obedient to Biblical principals in your life, others around you will notice and trust you for your consistency.

This is not a ritualistic obedience, borne out of condemnation but rather it is a heartfelt conviction of a man's heart that causes him to obey naturally without much thought or inner debate. Satan is the author of condemnation. This form of obedience causes us and others to step back, away from God. The Holy Spirit is the author of conviction, which compels us to step closer to God. Team unity borne out of condemnation is destined to fail as soon as the heat is turned up. Teammates whose trust is born of conviction will find that they can achieve the impossible in the midst of all the madness.



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