

Being a “Player-Coach”

We refer to people who are assisting and encouraging spiritual growth and maturity in others as “player-coaches.” Although they have a “coaching” role in helping others, they themselves are also “players,” because they are running their own race as Christians. The player-coach must determine where each person is starting and where that person needs to go from here. The person being coached, however, must take personal responsibility for his or her own spiritual growth with God.

The responsibilities of the Player-Coach are as follows:

C = Communicate Love: Relating in a loving manner is the most important skill.

O = Open the Bible: Seeing Jesus as the Coach is necessary to know God’s truth and will.

A = Ask God for Specific Requests in Prayer: Praying must be a priority.

C = Cover the Content: Caring for a new believer means giving what is needed.

H = Hear the Needs: Meeting people’s needs requires flexibility.





Being a COACH

C = COMMUNICATE LOVE

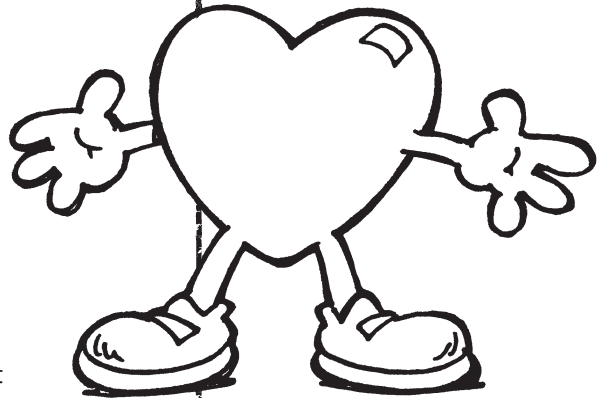
The Necessity of Building Relationships

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

—1 Corinthians 13:4-7

A Heart to Love Others

Showing a genuine, caring interest in another person is a way to communicate love. Relating to someone in a loving manner is a most important skill. The important truths of God's Word are more easily transferred from you to another person on a "bridge of relationship."



Authentic love is the prerequisite for effective, relational discipling.

- Love avoids the impersonal approach and doesn't require a religious vocabulary.
- Love is never intent on serving just to relieve conscience. Out of real concern for another, love takes time to listen.
- Love sees the heart-needs of others.
- Love is not in a hurry. It is patient and flexible.
- Love doesn't seek to make people over or dictate behavior. It points to Jesus, who is able to change people's hearts and lives.
- Love does not substitute methods for a living, loving relationship.

Can you add some other qualities of love to this list?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A few ways to demonstrate your love and concern for others:

- Give of yourself by spending time regularly with the people you are meeting with.
- Be interested in others, with the primary motive of loving them.
- Don't just start strong at the beginning; be consistent and keep going.
- Practice the ministry of listening. Use questions carefully and appropriately.
- Accept people as they are, but realize that God is changing His followers to be like Jesus.
- Be a source of encouragement whenever possible.
- Be **HOT** – **H**onest, **O**pen, **T**ransparent. You don't need to have all the answers or have no problems in order to help someone else. Are you growing?





Being a COACH

O = OPEN THE BIBLE

The Importance of God's Word

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

—2 Timothy 3:16–17

Eyes to See Jesus

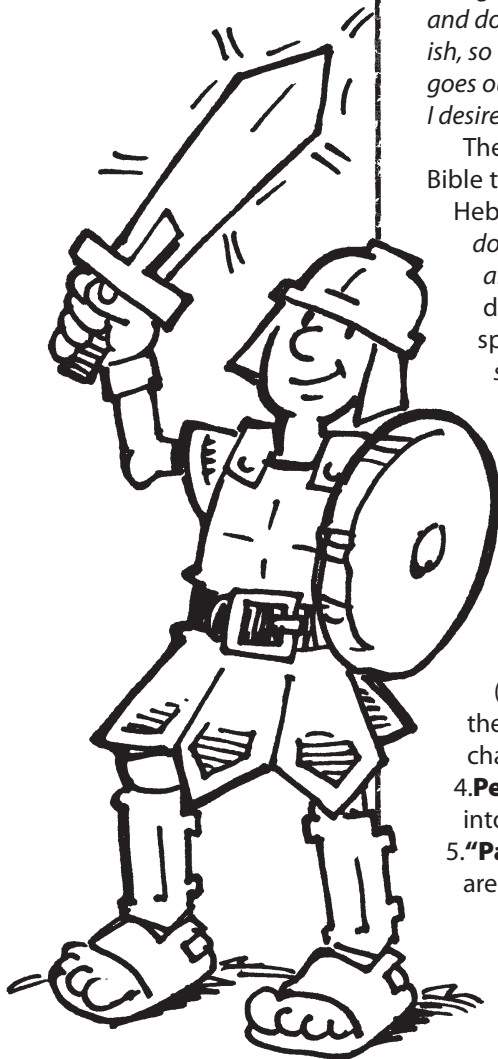
God's Word equips us to know and be and do what God desires. Through the Scriptures, we may see and know Jesus (as the "Head Coach"), as well as understand and apply God's truth to our lives. The Bible wasn't given merely to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives!

Relating to people in a loving way is important; but exposing people to what God has said in His Word is also necessary for spiritual growth. God will accomplish His plans and purposes through His Word: *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it"* (Isaiah 55:8–11).

The content of the Operation Starting Line curriculum is centered around Bible teaching. The Word of God is compared to a surgical instrument in Hebrews 4:12: *"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."* It is also described as a sword that can be used offensively and defensively in spiritual battle in Ephesians 6:17: *"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* The Spirit of God will use the Word of God to produce a man or woman of God by the grace of God.

Five principles will help maximize a study of the Bible:

1. **Original Investigation** – people read and study the Bible itself, not some other book or what someone else says about the Bible.
2. **Written Reproduction** – people write down discoveries they make and are able to come back to this record of their study in the future.
3. **Consistent and Systematic** – people study the Bible regularly (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.) and use some method (or system) to help them do different types of Bible studies (question and answer, verse or chapter analysis, topical, study of a person, etc.)
4. **Personal Application** – people allow God to change them by putting into practice what they are learning in their study.
5. **"Pass-on-able"** – people are able to "pass on" to someone else what they are learning in their study of the Bible.





Being a COACH

A = ASK GOD FOR SPECIFIC REQUESTS

The Priority of Prayer

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 4:6-7

Hands to Pray and Praise God

Many people distinguish five different types of prayer:

1. **A**—Adoration or Worship – Praising God for who He is and what He is like
2. **C**—Confession of sin
3. **T**—Thanksgiving for God's blessings
- S**—Supplication (This is often divided into two types of prayer.)
4. Intercession – Asking God for people's needs and concerns
5. Petition – Asking God for our own needs and concerns

The focus of this section is on the priority of praying for those we are helping. As we have seen already, assisting people in their journey to spiritual maturity requires building friendships, as well as pointing him or her to the Word of God to see and know Jesus better. Also required is faithful, frequent prayer for those we are helping.

God sees the needs of the heart, and He knows how to meet those needs. As we become aware of needs in our own lives and in those we are helping, we can confidently bring them to God. As an old hymn states:

"What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!"

The Prayer Page

As you experience specific areas of need and concern in your own life, as well as in the lives of those you are helping spiritually, bring them to God. In Step Nine of the Lessons, we are going to present a tool called a "Prayer Page." Why not start using one today?

On the next page is a sample of the Prayer Page. You can write down what you are asking God for or requesting Him to do (with the date you first started praying it). Then, when God answers your prayer, record the answer and the date you became aware of His answer. Many of your requests will be answered soon, but you may bring some requests to God for months or years!

It is not our prayer that changes people; God changes them. Prayer influences people by moving God to influence them!



Another part of being an effective facilitator is asking good questions. Be careful not to ask too many questions. Because a question expects an answer, each question can place a “demand” on a person. Although we may think we are showing interest by asking many questions, the person on the other end may feel uncomfortable with too many questions.

Using general, open-ended questions is a natural way to begin a conversation: “Hi. How are things going?”; “How has your week been?”

Don’t forget that you can occasionally use any of the initial four questions based on Hebrews 12:1–3.

- **What are you discovering about Jesus as the Coach?**
- **Are you aware of any hindrances or sins that could prevent your spiritual growth?**
- **What do you think God is saying to you about running your daily race?**
- **What is helping you to keep moving forward in your race?**

Using these questions will refocus a person’s attention on the original goal. Using them too often, however, may seem rather mechanical!

Additional material on the use of questions will be included in the lesson-by-lesson tips and suggestions, which begin on page 31.





Being a COACH

H = HEAR THE NEEDS

Being a “Servant-Leader” by Meeting Needs

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

—John 13:14–15

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing . . . And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

—1 Thessalonians 5:11,14

Ears to Hear the Needs

Hearing and responding to people’s needs require sensitivity and flexibility. These materials are focused on meeting the spiritual needs of a new follower of Jesus, or one who has:

- confessed sin and the need for a personal Savior
- placed faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior
- decided to know and follow Jesus in life’s journey.

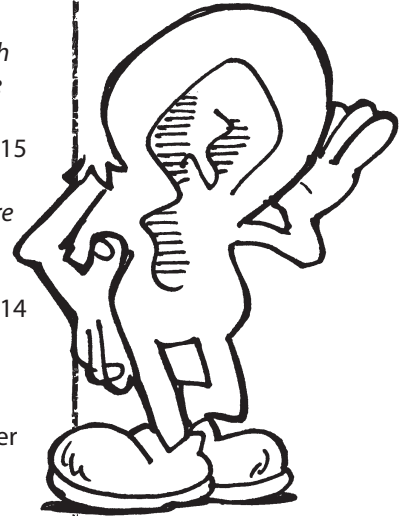
However, these aren’t the only needs that people have. You may have to interrupt your training session if a person’s (or group’s) need must take priority.

To review some of the “General Characteristics of Incarcerated Men and Women,” see Appendix E on page 92. This list will help you to be sensitive to many of the needs you will become aware of.

Sometimes a Christian Will Experience Ongoing Problems

Some problems may require outside help, but sometimes these problems are symptoms of an inner spiritual issue that is unresolved. If this is the case, the following questions may be useful in determining a root problem in a person’s life:

1. Is there any area of life (secret or known) that is being withheld from God’s attention? (The issue of Christ’s Lordship in all areas)
2. Is regular, meaningful fellowship with God taking place? (The issue of being in a “connected” relationship with God)
3. Is a particular Bible truth or command continually being disobeyed or violated in some way? (The issue of sin)
4. Is some Bible truth being over- or under-emphasized to an unhealthy extreme? (The issue of balance)
5. Is there some basic biblical truth (about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Satan, self, the Bible, the church, etc.) that is not being understood or applied? (The issue of knowledge and obedience)
6. What strengths and associated weaknesses does the person have? Are some of these going to be present throughout the person’s life? (The issue of ongoing areas of need)



One Final Reminder

A need in a person's life may not always be a weakness to correct. Sometimes the need will be:

- a strength to develop
- a goal to achieve
- a responsibility to fulfill
- a normal area of growth (based on the person's maturity level)
- a specialized training program for personal growth.

Notes

