

GIVING OTHERS ONE OF THEIR BEST EXPERIENCES

My first year as a head basketball coach has come to an end. Many people shook their head in disbelief when I told them I would be coaching basketball this year. Some of these people questioned if I had the ability and skills to do so. It was a fair question, having never played basketball myself. I knew I would have to prove myself to my players, my assistant coaches, and even the parents that I have what it takes to be a head coach. Others questioned whether I had the time to do so being as busy as I am as a pastor.

Coaching a basketball team does require a lot of your time. Most weeks it would require about 10 hours of my time to plan out practices, travel to and from the facilities, and run the team through the various drills. On the weeks we had games on a Saturday or Sunday coaching would take sometimes 20 hours out of my already busy week. Tryouts took place at the end of August, practices started in September, games began in December, and the Provincial Championship was played this past weekend in Ottawa. Add it all up it was a lot of time, and travel put into head coaching this year. Now our season is over.

One of the goals I had for the season was to try and make this year one of the best experiences the girls had playing basketball. I knew many of these girls were disappointed they had lost out on playing basketball as a result of COVID. When COVID lockdowns began in March 2020, many of these girls were training hard to play at the Provincial Championships that year. Naturally, the season shut down and the championships were cancelled. These girls not only lost out on that experience but did not play the entire 2020-2021 season either.

Knowing how much these girls had lost out on over the past two years I tried my best as a coach to make this year as special as possible. Our girls were really excited about heading to Ottawa for the Provincials this weekend. That was great to see. Our players played with such heart and determination this weekend. They were able to beat the top ranked team in one of the games but lost very close games to the eventual silver medalists and to a team from Huntsville. It would have been so nice if we could have ended the season with a medal, but we fell short due to the many injured players we had. In fact, in the final game three of my players had to play the entire game due to so many being

injured. Even my two assistant coaches were sick before the final game and could not be on the bench with me.

After the final game, I gathered my players together and shared with them how proud I was of how far they had come as a team. They had overcome so many adversities, and yet had never given up trying their best. After I finished speaking, one of my players spoke up and said, "I just want to thank all of you for making this my best experience at the Provincial Championships ever!" What I found so interesting about her comment was she had played with other teams at these championships in her earlier years. Some of the teams she was on actually won medals at these championships.

To hear this player say what she did could not have made me happier. It was not just my contribution as a coach that made this year the best experience playing basketball this player has had. Her fellow teammates, my assistants, as well as the parents also contributed to all of this happening. For me, all of the time I put into being a coach and stepping out of my comfort zone to take on this position, was all worth it to know it helped somebody to have the best experience playing that she has ever had.

The reason why I wanted to share this story in my mid-week message is to hopefully inspire other people to do the same and try **to help somebody experience one of the best memories in their life too**. We all have busy lives like I do as a pastor, yet we can still find time to **invest in others**. We all have gifts and abilities given to us by God that we can use to invest in other people's lives. While I had never played or been a head coach in basketball, God has given me the gift to teach, and I knew this would help me greatly in bringing the best out in my players. Wouldn't it be nice if each one of us decided to take such a journey with God and let Him use our gifts of time and talents to make somebody experience one of their best memories in life. Imagine as a grandparent doing this for one of your grandchildren, or as a parent doing it for one of your children. Imagine doing this for a friend, an acquaintance, a colleague, a neighbour, or somebody you worship with at church.

If we are uncertain who that person might be, or what situation to invest these gifts of time and talents into, then we can **pray and ask** God to reveal it to us.

One of the reasons why I stepped up as head coach is because I prayed, and He revealed this is what He was calling me to do in this season of my life. **God will do the same for each and every one of us if we ask.** Whatever we decide to put our time, energy, and abilities towards with the desire to help somebody enjoy one of their best experiences ever, we will be able to come away from it as I did this weekend and say, "It was all worth it to know they will have that experience and memory forever!" Don't be surprised if you come away from it as I did and say, "It was one of my best experiences too!" When this player said what she did after the final game, I wonder if God was smiling and said, "That is exactly the experience I wanted for both of you." Hopefully my experience will be an inspiration for each one of us to **trust God and walk in faith to use our gifts of time and talents to create a special experience for somebody.**

I have a little bit more time on my hands now that basketball season is over. Looking at my lawn right now I think it is going to need the gift of my time to make it a better experience to look at for anyone passing by.

Keep Safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean