

NEVER MAKE THIS CUT IN YOUR LIFE

I shared with you last week how I have taken on a new job coaching my daughter's basketball team this year. We had our tryouts on Tuesday and Thursday nights last week. Many coaches have told me tryouts are one of the hardest parts of the experience because you want to leave a good impression not just on the potential players, but their parents as well. Surprisingly, I was not too nervous heading into tryouts. I was well prepared and planned out a very thorough practice in order to get a good evaluation of each player. I also met with the parents outside afterward and explained to them my coaching philosophy and what to expect over the course of this season. I did not find tryouts as hard as many told me it would be. What I found hard though is what coaches have to do once tryouts are over.

Sadly, you can only have so many players on a team, and I had to cut one player from our team. I had to decide between two players who would be given the tenth and final position on the team. Both girls had never played rep basketball before, so I could not go on experience. The decision came down to skills and where they were at in their development as basketball players. On Monday I had the joy of being able to share with the one player she made the team but had the tough task of telling the other she did not. I wanted to word my e-mail to this girl and her parents in a way that showed sensitivity and care despite knowing full well the disappointment they would feel. So, I shared with them in the e-mail all of the qualities I recognized in her. I then let them know about other teams who were still having tryouts in the area in case she wanted to attend them. I also told them if that did not work out to playhouse league this year and go to various skill camps. It was a hard e-mail for me to write. It is not pleasant having to cut somebody from the team. If somebody were to ask me making cuts is the hardest thing about coaching, not conducting tryouts.

It is never easy having to cut people out of certain things. The pandemic has forced us at times to have to do this very thing. I have conducted several funerals, as well as weddings, through the pandemic and it has been very difficult for these people to decide who could and could not attend. In these situations, you always worry you might offend, anger, or disappoint somebody by cutting them out from attending. As a pastor I have been put in this position many times deciding who could come to church or not based on the social distancing restrictions. I would truly hate to have to tell a new person they could not come because we are at our capacity due to COVID

restrictions. It is a worry isn't it when you have to cut a certain person out of being part of an event in life. We hope we are not making a bad choice or mistake by who we have cut.

One person that we should never cut out of an event or circumstance in our life is Jesus. Maybe, during the pandemic we have found ourselves inviting Jesus into more and more circumstances in our life. With kids getting back to school, parents returning to their workplaces after working from home, and activities like kids' sports returning many of us will become busy again. When life becomes too busy, we may begin to think we need to cut certain things out of our life. It is here where some people begin to cut Jesus out of their lives. They may cut back the prayer time or devotional time that they adopted when life was less busy during the pandemic. They might cut back from spending Sundays in worship whether in person, or on-line. They might even cut back from serving Him or looking to Him for guidance and direction. This would be a big mistake on anyone's part to cut Jesus out in any of these ways now that life is getting busier again.

There is a story in the Bible where one couple could have cut Jesus out of an important event in their lives. The couple was about to be married and they invited Jesus and His mother to the wedding. Jesus had called His twelve disciples just prior to this event and brought them along as well. It is most likely these twelve disciples were not on the original guest list, and this couple could have said to Jesus we have to cut them out from attending. If they had cut Jesus' disciples out from attending would Jesus have stayed? We don't know. They wanted Jesus there, so they accepted the disciples too. At some point in the week-long celebration this new bride and groom ran out of wine for their guests. This dilemma might not seem a big deal to us, but in those days this incident would have brought considerable shame and embarrassment to this couple. Thankfully for this couple Jesus was included in their guest list. He performed His first recorded miracle here by turning water into wine. He not only saved them from shame and embarrassment, but also revealed how He will provide for our needs no matter how great or small they are.

As life becomes busier for us let us make sure that we do not make the mistake of cutting Jesus out of any part of our daily lives. By keeping Him at the center and focus of our lives we will always have the assurance that Jesus is not only aware of our struggles and needs but will also respond to them in the best way. I was reminded of

this as I made my final cut on my team. I prayed a lot over the decision I had to make. I just felt Jesus was leading me to award the final position to this one player over the other. The reason for this became evident to me after I offered the position. When I informed this girl's mother over the phone, she said to me, "You do not know how happy this will make her. A year ago, this very week, her dad died of cancer. It has been a tough year on all of us. She hoped to make a team and fulfill her love and passion for basketball." I had no idea about this loss they experienced a year earlier. Jesus knew, however. Jesus used this situation to show care and love for this girl who has experienced such loss and grief. I have been praying for the player that I had to cut. I know that Jesus is fully aware of her passions and desires too. I know in my heart of hearts Jesus will lead this player I had to cut to the right team at the right time. When I encounter her on the basketball court playing for another team, I will smile and say, "Thank you Jesus!"

It was not easy having to make the cut I did as a coach. But, by keeping Jesus in the picture, I know I made the right decision with the player I chose. It was His way of answering this grieving girl's prayer. I know He will take care of this other girl as well. Hopefully, from my experience and from the married couple's as well, we all understand the importance right now of not cutting Jesus out of our daily lives, no matter how busy things become.

God Bless and Keep Safe

Pastor Dean