

“15-10”
February 15, 2010

Message Pt. 1:

Annie Abell: Good morning, my name is Annie Abell; my dad is one of the Pastors here at The Garden. After some long discussions with the management and coaching staff, we have decided to rest Dr. McCoy and my dad for the remaining regular season games until Easter. We decided that since Easter is the most important game, er uh, Sunday of the year, we just couldn't take a chance of either one of them getting hurt...therefore, I will be preaching until Easter.

Stan: Thank you Annie. Now, if you don't exactly follow all that...if you're not a big football fan, let me tell you what that's all about. I'm guessing most of you are aware that the Indianapolis Colts ARE in the Super Bowl! Yes, they'll finish the game sometime late this evening after my bedtime so that people live on the West Coast can see the game at a reasonable time.

So anyway, yes, the Colts are in the Super Bowl, and that was the master plan right? Of course *every* team starts the season planning on being in the Super Bowl, but our Colts really planned their season, at least the end of it, specifically with the Super Bowl in mind.

You may recall that entering their game with the Jets on December 27th...not the AFC Championship Game, the regular season game, the Colts record was 14-0 and chasing that elusive perfect season and Super Bowl win that only the 1972 Miami Dolphins have achieved. BUT, with **5:36** remaining in the third quarter and the Colts leading 15-10, Peyton Manning and several other starters were pulled from the game. As most of you are painfully aware, the Colts went on to lose that game with key personnel sitting on the bench.

That decision by the coaching staff was made in an effort to protect Peyton and the other starters...to rest them for the Super Bowl because the Super Bowl is *the* game; moreover, the Colts had already won the division and secured home field advantage throughout the playoffs. What was to play for, right?

So hold on to that thought, I'll come back to it...With that bitter loss still rolling around, I was watching the NCAA Championship Game between Alabama and Texas. For college football this is THE game...the winner of this game is the national champion. Well, midway through the 1st quarter, Texas' mister everything quarterback, Colt McCoy (no relation I don't think), took a big hit and had to leave the game. Gosh, what a shame, I hope it's not too serious so he can come back for his team in such a big game.

A few minutes later, one of the commentators for the game said, "We'll there goes Colt McCoy's dad to the locker room to join the doctors and trainers with his son. I'm sure the first thing on his mind is his son's future in the NFL..."they wouldn't want to do anything to jeopardize that."

Oh now come on! Time Out! Wait a minute! I came off the couch on that one...I thought to myself, umm, and I believe out loud too...what about the game you're playing in right now? Isn't that important? What about your teammates on THIS team? What about playing for the sake of playing...playing for the moment you're in? And what about the Colts? By now they had already lost a second game in Buffalo with this same tactic of looking forward to some greener pasture. I don't know why this stuck in my crawl so badly, but it did. I just kind of thought again...what about this game, this time...this moment? What's the matter with living in the moment your in, instead of always keeping an eye on some bigger prize.

Arguably, the Colts made the right decision...I guess. We're in the Super Bowl. Arguably Colt McCoy made the right decision. He didn't risk further injury. His draft potential is still high and he'll likely get untold millions. In both cases with the Colts and McCoy...we are left wondering "What if?" Could the Colts have been the only team to go 19-0 and win a Super Bowl? Could Texas have won the national championship if McCoy had returned to the game? "What if?"

That's really not my concern this morning though...I bet we'd have a healthy debate on whether we should have gone for 16-0 or whether it was the right thing to do to rest players. I have three points I want to make today—I know we're only supposed to make one, but I have three anyway, and here's the first. "What about playing for the moment your

in? What about playing for the everyday?" Think about it, what if we lived our everyday lives with an eye on this metaphorical "Super Bowl?" What if we decided to not give our best effort every day in our jobs, our relationships, in school?

Message Pt. 2:

Okay, so we have one point out on the table..."**What about playing for the everyday?"** I think our Bible passage this morning kind of helps glue the first and second points together. Listen to this reading from 1 Corinthians: **You've all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win. All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You're after one that's gold eternally.** (Please keep on screen)

Look carefully at this passage...look at what it says...it says *Run to win*. Run to win, not run half-heartedly...run to win. But wait a minute. At the same time it clearly says run to win, it doesn't say run to win at all costs. (Return to camera) Now hang on...I want to slow this ride down for just a second. I want to be clear that I am not suggesting the Colts should have played to win at all costs no matter what, or that Colt McCoy should have sacrificed his career...what I'm trying to do here is have my cake and eat it too. And I believe if you look closely again at the Bible passage it helps achieve this...oh yes, it does say run to win, but it goes on to say.... **All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades.**

Aha...nothing like a little proof-texting to prove my point. The Super Bowl, the NFL contract...while nice...will tarnish and fade. I believe when we have ourselves convinced that only if we win the Super Bowl are we winners, then we are "training" for the wrong reason. In my way of thinking the destination can be nice...always good to have clear goals, but when we play only for the destination, we miss the beauty of journey.

Which gets me on my second point...**What does it mean to be a winner/what is winning?** Again, we're not winners unless we win the Super Bowl? I was listening to a sports talk show the day after the AFC Championship game and these two guys were debating if Peyton Manning was the all-time best ever quarterback.

The one guy's response was, no...not until he gets TWO rings. Oh so Peyton Manning will be a real winner only when he wins two Super Bowls.

What about all the people around him he has consistently made better his entire career on and off the field? My guess would be that the children who receive care at the Peyton Manning Children's Hospital think he's a winner.

The reason Peyton Manning and the Colts are playing in a second Super Bowl is precisely because Peyton Manning has played every game at 100%, even when we were 3-13 and the laughing stock of the NFL. It seems odd to say, but it was out of that losing that came winning. Do you have to win to be a winner?

Message Pt. 3:

Okay, so I've covered two points...**Playing for the everyday, and What does it mean to be a winner/what is winning?** There is one last point I want to make, and it has to do with priorities, and I think it kind of ties all of these ideas together. So, I'll just put it in the form of a question...**What are our life's priorities?**

The theologian Paul Tillich talked about priorities in this way; he put it in the context of the "ultimate concern?" So, instead of saying what are your life's priorities, he would say "**what is your ultimate concern.**" For Tillich the object of ultimate concern was God. When we make God our ultimate concern in life, good things happen, and the biggest problem is we mistake what he called "primary concerns" with the ultimate concern. Primary concerns are things like money, houses, clothing.....or perhaps, tarnished and faded gold medals.

So, what should the Colts have done? Should they have gone for 19-0? If they win the Super Bowl this evening, will we have some sense of disappointment of what might have been? You know the pundits will bring that point up. And, what if they don't win...is all lost? Of course there is no concrete answer for any of these questions. Moreover, that's football, and we are talking about life.

I will say this though, it has been my experience in life that I have often set priorities that have not honored the day to day...not appreciated the journey. Instead, I have "pulled my best players

casting my eye on some seemingly loftier goal...some greater thing. Moreover, when I have been really diligent in attaining a goal like this, most often the destination proves to be empty because along the way I missed the journey. It is most often the case for me that the real priority is usually right here within reach...and I often miss it looking forward to some grand scheme.

CLOSING:

My prayer this morning is that in our lives when the score is 15-10, that we do step back and really prioritize...really appreciate the experience we are in, and know that winning or success might look and feel very different than we had expected or imagined.