

Faith & Football: A Look at Life through a Facemask

Josh Steed

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Josh Steed's Faith and Football isn't about passing, punting, and play-making. Instead, the author uses elements of football to construct a study guide for people who want to learn about Christianity or deepen their faith. He constructs analogies to deliver the message that Christian beliefs can guarantee eternal life.

Steed begins with the thesis that the Bible is life's equivalent to a football team's playbook—that is, a set number of plays intended to confront and overcome any possible offensive or defensive play launched by an opposing team.

"If you are really dedicated to the game of football," NFL player Corey Williams tells Steed, "if you really love the sport, then learning the playbook will be your top priority." This statement is juxtaposed with a quote from the Apostle Timothy: "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right."

Faith & Football is made up of eight chapters that carry out the football metaphor. "The One True Coach" discusses Jesus of Nazareth; "Making the Team" covers the requirements of Christian salvation; and "Game Time" deals with living as a Christian in every day life

For its framework, the book uses the author's interviews with three men deeply involved in football who are also professing Christians: Williams, who plays for the Detroit Lions; Mark Richt, head coach at the University of Georgia; and Steve Roberts, head coach at Arkansas State University. Also quoted are NFL veterans Matt Jones and Clint Stoerner, and other people active in various Christian ministries.

While many readers will appreciate the evangelical basis of Faith & Football, others might think the Biblical interpretations are manipulated to fit a certain perspective. For example, in the author's discussion of the necessities for living a Christian life, he cites Mark 10, 17-22, wherein Jesus tells a man to give all his possessions to the poor and follow him in order "to get eternal life." The author argues that the Christ did not mean this specific demand literally. He writes, "Now we know from scripture that God does not require us to give all our money and possessions away and become physically poor in order to go to heaven."

Although the writing is clear and straightforward and the book is well-edited, Steed has a tendency to say what he intends to say before saying it. This is doubtless a habit he picked up in his work as a public speaker. Rather than simply stating information, he prefaces statements with lines like, "I want to let you know about a few things Corey, Steve, and our next guest have to say about those who don't make it in football and why that is."

Steed holds a doctorate degree in international theology from the North Tennessee Bible Institute and Seminary. His message might resonate in the heart of a seeker who needs a practical reference point in a spiritual quest, but it is certain to appeal to committed Christians who desire a unique evangelical tool.

GARY PRESLEY (July 1, 2010)

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