

This is a football?



Full disclosure... this article is not really about football. Some of you are very disappointed; others are relieved.

Whether you're into football or not, most likely you have heard of the famous Hall of Fame NFL coach, Vince Lombardi. He was the coach of the Green Bay Packers (my home team, which is struggling this year. Sorry, I got sidetracked!) In just 7 years, Lombardi led the Packers to 5 national championships, including 2 Super Bowls, back in the 1960s. He has quite a legacy.

Among a long list, one thing he is most famous for is a single-sentence utterance. Do you want to know what that was? He walked into the locker room at the beginning of the 1961 season training camp and very solemnly said, **“Gentlemen, this is a football.”**

That statement has become indelibly linked, not only to Vince Lombardi, but to football and sports training in general. Let's take a brief look at the original context of this now-famous statement.



Very often, when a team struggles to perform, it's not because they lack the ability to successfully carry out advanced trick plays or they don't have the best athletes in the league. It's often tied directly to not executing the fundamentals of the game (e.g., tackling, securely holding on to the ball, etc.). Coach Lombardi wanted to stress that.

He wanted to start with a clean slate, ensuring each team member had the fundamentals down so well, that they would be second nature to them. Starting with “This is a football,” would be about the simplest place to start, getting their attention and emphatically making his point.

What can we learn from this? I believe the Christian community is struggling “this season.” We have gotten away from the fundamentals. We have great concerts, wonderful conferences, fascinating podcasts, impressive apps on our phones, tons of Christian books, videos, you name it. However, despite this, there seems to be more biblical illiteracy within the church than ever.

What happened? One of the most significant factors is that we have gotten away from the fundamentals. Among these fundamentals would be deep, personal Bible study, learning doctrine and evangelism, and serious, consistent, focused prayer. It's as if we need pastors to stand up in the pulpit next Sunday and say, “Church, this is a Bible.”

Many pastors do a tremendous job of leading their congregation. They've covered the basics very well, continue to ensure these are the cornerstone, and also go well beyond, with a membership that comes ready for “meat” each Sunday, moving beyond the simplicity of “milk.” This is not the case in every church, however. It is important to note, that each of us individually is responsible for our own

Question of the Month

growth. The pastor can play an important role, but it is ultimately up to us to ensure we continually grow and make a difference in the lives of those God have placed around us.

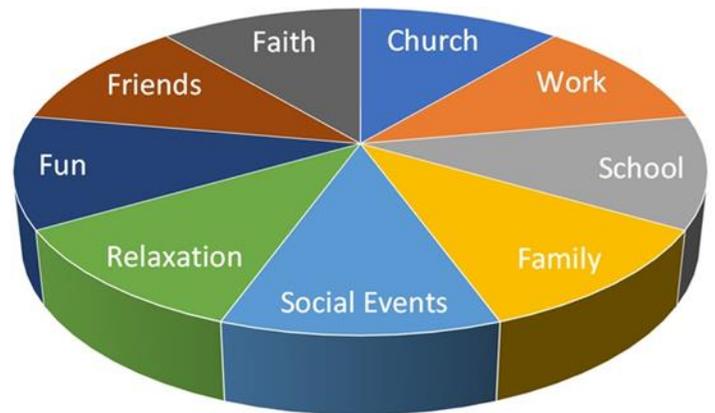
Too many Christians attend church like they would a sporting event or a concert, which is primarily to be entertained or served. It is also, fairly often, the only spiritual part of their week. From Sunday afternoon until the next Sunday morning, they live in a different part of the “pie of life.”

Many see life as consisting of different facets, and you move from one to another from day-to-day or hour-to-hour. Many times these areas that occupy our time are not related to each other in any significant way. That’s a problem, and that’s not what the Christian life should look like.

In reality, the pie should look more like the second one, with our faith (i.e., our personal relationship with Christ), being at the very center, driving what all of the other areas look like and helping us make decisions as to what we do when involved in all other activities.

We desperately need to “get back to the basics” if we have any hope at all of navigating a culture that is growing increasingly hostile to Christianity. Our only hope is to stand firm on the truths of God’s Word and not rely on our own faulty, sin-tainted reasoning:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6).



I’ve mentioned it many times before, but many Christians are not well-positioned to address some of the most basic aspects of the faith. When skeptics ask us, “How do we know that God exists?” or “How do we know the Bible is the Inspired Word of God?” we often lack a coherent, well-thought-out response. What does that say about what we believe? Nothing good. In reality, it is not a commentary on our faith, but on our own understanding of our faith.

Imagine the following strange, made-up scenario. You meet someone at an event who raves about a particular restaurant. They claim it is the best restaurant on the entire planet, and you absolutely have to check it out. Then you ask them some very natural, basic questions, such as, “What kind of food do they serve, and where are they located?” They respond by saying, “Um, the food... well, they

Question of the Month

have different things, and a variety of options, like, well, I can't remember right now. And I'm not sure where it is, because I was, well, I think it might be somewhere, like around where they have other restaurants in this state, or maybe it was somewhere else, I think, but I'm not certain."

You would probably, justifiably, conclude that the restaurant wasn't really that memorable, and the person you are talking to is a bit "different," to put it kindly. This may very well be how skeptics view us when we fumble around trying to answer the most basic questions about what we believe.

I've also stated, "You can't give someone something you don't have." If we, as adults, lack a deeper understanding of our faith, what chance do our children have, who largely depend on us to mentor them.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:5-9).

Let's make a concerted effort to "get back to the basics" so that we are much better positioned to protect and equip our own families and reach out to a lost and dying world with a message of the only true hope, Jesus Christ.

If you have any questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us!](#)