

MVPs Don't Always Win the Super Bowl  
1 Corinthians 12:12-27  
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I suspect that most of us here are aware that today is Super Bowl Sunday. According to the media- some consider it to be a high holy day- with the cathedral located today at the Sun Life Stadium in Miami. Worship begins at 6:26 PM with Peyton Manning and Drew Brees as the high holy priests, and hundreds of millions of us the congregation. I don't go quite that far- even if the Bengals or Broncos were participating... but I did find this cute little clip showing a football coach giving his game day speech. Take a look...

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I had to chuckle ; sometimes we take our sports way too seriously... and watching those kids jumping up, trying to slap that sign on the way out just made me laugh out loud. Something you may not have heard in that football coach's speech was an exhortation to "put your teammate on your heart." I've thought a lot about that this past week, and how important teammates caring for each other can be to any team's success. It isn't like tennis or golf, where one person can reign victorious; it takes a group all pulling together for any of them to come out winners.

This past week, Connie and I went to see one of the Oscar-nominated movies- a Sandra Bullock film named, "Blind Side." It's not likely to win the best picture award, but we found it an entertaining and thoughtful flick, and I can recommend it to you without reservation. The title- "Blind Side" comes from an awareness of how important

the quarterback is to any team's success, and how important it is to protect the quarterback's "blind side." When a quarterback sets up to pass the ball- his back is vulnerable to what is usually the other team's best pass rusher... who tries to come in from his blind side to tackle him before he can throw the ball. That puts a real premium on whoever it is that protects the QB's blind side... hence the name of the movie describing how Sandra Bullock rescued a young boy from the ghettos of Memphis, giving him a chance to escape the street violence into something else... a true story, based on a young man currently playing professional football for the Baltimore Ravens.

Most of us know about Super Bowl QB's Peyton Manning and Drew Brees; how many of us know the names of who will protect each quarterback's blind side? If Jermon Bushrod or Charlie Johnson fail to do their job- it will be a long day for one team or the other. Peyton Manning may be the reigning MVP- but without the rest of the team... he's going to get pretty beat up, and likely lose. MVPs don't always win the Super Bowl.

The Apostle Paul made much the same observation when he wrote to the church in Corinth, although he used a different metaphor than football. There'd been some conflict in that church over who had the most significant spiritual gift- and he wanted to point out that everyone had an important contribution to make. Here's how he put it in 1 Corinthians 12:

**(READ 1 Corinthians 12:12-17)**

No single body part is more significant than another; if you have a toothache, it can ruin your day; break a toe and it'll slow you down big time. Get a headache, or a backache, or a tummy ache... and life can get all of you down. Every part needs every other part if the body is going to work well, and it's the same way with the church.

We all need each other. We've been talking about that it means to be a community of faith over the past four weeks, and it should be apparent by now that none of us can do this church thing by him or herself. The devil can "blind side" any one of us if someone fails to pray, or if gossip is allowed to emerge. We can stub our congregational toe on self-centered behavior, or wrench our corporate back with immoral living. There are times when something happens to take us out of the game- grief, or sin, or fear, or sadness, or whatever... but every church needs to have folks ready to step up.

Remember when the Bengal's Carson Palmer went down? What a gift ol' what's-his-name (Jon Kitna) was! You may want to know that Jermon Bushrod's back-up as left tackle for the Saints is named Zach Strief and that Charlie Johnson's back up for the Colts is Tony Ugoh... and you can bet- and some do- that each of them is more than ready to step up if needed; they're part of the team.

How about you? What's your role on the Crestview team? Or- to use the Apostle Paul's metaphor- what sort of body part are you? Are you a muscle part, eager to help out? Are you a heartbeat whose best quality is that of loving as Jesus loved us? How about a hand- eager to reach out to shake the hand of a newcomer? Maybe your spiritual gift is one of service... we need some folks to help serve coffee on Sunday mornings- should that be you stepping up to play a part- check with Karen Limoseth if that's the case. We could go on and on... but I think you get the point. For this church- or any church- to thrive, we all have a part to play or a role to fulfill. What's yours?

If you don't- the body is at risk just as much as Drew Brees will be running for his life if Jermon Bushrod falls down on the job... no matter how accurately Brees throws the ball. What's more, if you don't exercise your gift, you'll begin to lose it. A concern

for the Colts today is that one of their stars- Dwight Freeney- was injured and unable to practice the past two weeks. Will he be up to playing? He's a ferocious defender; will he still have what it takes to make a difference? We'll know soon enough; how about you? God has given you the gifts, a skill set, the intelligence, life experience... are you willing to use them to make a difference as part of the team... the body?

I think the Lord needs you to step up, and so does this church if we're to accomplish our mission. Our mission really isn't to win the Super Bowl... it's to help those around us know that the love of God moves among us and into the world around us. We want to be strong internally- that's where teaching the children or serving coffee or ushering or checking up with each other is so important... "How's it going? Missed you Sunday- is everything OK? How'd that job interview... doctor appointment... final exam go? Sure appreciated the music Sunday- didn't know you were part of the bell choir- thanks!"

*"Love one another as I have loved you, Jesus said- "by this, all will know you are my disciples."*

Inwardly strong to help us remain outwardly- missionally- focused. Where does God want to use you? If a school teacher, which of your charges will you dote on this week? If an office worker, who will you speak an affirming word to this week? If you're to volunteer- who will you call, and where will you go? Can you make a point of saying something friendly to every clerk, server or helper you encounter this week- even the slow ones? Who will you invite to come with you to church next week? What mission is Christ sending you on?

You see- we each have a part to play- what's yours? This table is where we come to be nourished by God to do as he asks... reminded of Christ's sacrificial love, and filled with Holy Spirit to go out to serve. Football players may get Gatorade, and bodies benefit from multi-vitamins... and Christians receive the sacrament of Holy Communion... so, let's pray: