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Super Bowl Champions

Domination! Brilliant defense and special teams lead Seahawks to a major Super Bowl romp. Champs! Seattle dominates Denver for first Super Bowl title. Thus were the headlines in the Seattle Times the day after the Seahawks beat the Broncos 43-8 in Super Bowl XLVIII.

2013 was an awesome season. Since their inaugural season in 1976, the Seahawks had never won the sport's biggest game. Even the days of famed wide receiver Steve Largent or the 2005 NFC Championship year could not bring the Lombardi Trophy to Seattle. All the success of 2013 and being crowned World Champs by winning Super Bowl XLVIII did not happen overnight. It started 4 years ago.

When Coach Pete Carroll and general manager John Schneider came to Seattle in 2010 they were tasked with turning the Seahawks around. In 2008 and 2009 their record was a combined 9-23. The team was too slow, too old, and too small. In their first season they made an astonishing 283 roster moves. They weren't afraid of making changes nor were they afraid of changing the culture.

In 2011, much to fan disappointment, Matt Hasselbeck was not resigned as the Seahawks began looking to the future.

Their future came on April 27, 2012 when they drafted Russell Wilson, an undersized quarterback, in the third round. Interestingly enough, they signed free-agent quarterback Matt Flynn for \$26 million the month before. They both competed in training camp and a month before the season began, Carroll named Wilson the starting

quarterback.

After 7-9 records in 2010 and 2011 the Seahawks took a big step forward in 2012. In his rookie season Quarterback Russell Wilson led the Seahawks to an 11-5 record and a perfect 8-0 at home. In the Wild Card Game the Seahawks beat the Washington Redskins 24-14 but then lost to the Atlanta Falcons 30-28 in the Divisional Playoff Game. The Seahawks trailed Atlanta 20-0 at half and rallied to take the lead 28-27 with 34 seconds left in the game but the Falcons moved down the field quickly in two plays to set up a 49 yard winning field goal. The Seahawks vowed to never let that happen again. This bitter loss motivated them in the off season to come back in 2013 and do something really special.

The Seahawks were focused in the off season and all their hard work paid off. They beat team after team and when the dust settled Russell Wilson had led the Seahawks to a NFC best 13-3 regular season record and a first round bye in the playoffs. The Seahawks D had performed with passion and deadly shut-down skill the entire season. The playoffs saw more of the same efficient offense and dominant defense and in the divisional round on January 11, 2014 the Seahawks beat the New Orleans Saints 23-15 and then a week later they advanced to the Super Bowl by beating the San Francisco 49ers 23-17 in the NFC Championship game.

Russell Wilson is an amazing NFL Quarterback. Now with two years under his belt, he has a winning percentage of .756 (28-9 regular and post season record). For the record, that's the most wins by a quarterback in his first two seasons. He's been elected to two Pro Bowls. He also tied Peyton Manning for the most passing

touchdowns as a rookie. His QB rating over two years is 100.6 and he's completed over 63% of his passes throwing 52 TD passes against 19 interceptions.

What makes Russell Wilson so great is not natural athletic ability. Nor is it his accurate arm or ability to scramble and avoid a sack. By pure physical standards, Wilson may not even be in the top half of QBs in the league. He does not have the arm strength of a Colin Kaepernick, or the speed of a healthy Robert Griffin III. However, what separates Wilson from the other young quarterbacks is preparation, leadership and accountability. You can have a quarterback with all the physical tools in the world, but without preparation, leadership, and accountability it is near impossible to even stay in the league.

If you live in Seattle you know that Russell Wilson likes to use clichés when doing press conferences or interviews. A cliché is a trite or overused expression or idea. Russell uses them all the time. I love them because they give us a little insight into who he is. Let's dissect a few and see what makes Wilson a winner.

Why Not Us?

When Russell Wilson was growing up his dad used to always ask him, "Why not you, Russ?" So in the beginning of the 2013 NFL season Russell pulled a team meeting and asked, "Why not us? We have a great team with great players. Our coaching staff is outstanding." He continued, "Why not us? Why can't we do something really special this year?"

Winning a Super Bowl takes great players with great individual skill sets. For example,

Russell Wilson is an excellent QB but would make a terrible offensive lineman. His skill set centers around throwing the football. Earl Thomas is an excellent safety but is too small to be a running back. His skill set centers around defending against the pass. Steven Hauska is one the best field goal kickers in the NFL but would probably make a poor cornerback. He's gifted in kicking field goals. You get the point.

Well, guess what? God has created you, too, with unique gifts and skills that make you different from everyone else. Check out 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. It says: *God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful: wise counsel, clear understanding, simple trust, healing the sick, miraculous acts, proclamation, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues, All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when. (The Message)*

Russell Wilson's father believed in his son which translated to Russell believing in himself. Russell Wilson has the gift of being able to play quarterback in the NFL. He's one of the best. He knows it's one of his God given gifts. Being a professional athlete and now a Super Bowl Champion opens doors for him to minister to others. He's using his gifts to the fullest! You can, too!

So, I have a few questions for you. What drives you? What motivates you? What are your passions? What are your dreams? What gets you up in the morning? Once these questions are answered, you'll have a better idea of what you were put on earth to do. You have specific gifts and talents that when used will benefit those you come in contact with.

So, why not you? Why can't you do something really special with your gifts and talents?

Separation In The Preparation

In the Levi's 2012 #GoForth commercial, Wilson talks about the three Ps of advice his father use to give him: always *PERSEVERE*, always have a great *PERSPECTIVE*, and always have a great *PURPOSE* in your life. This is great advice to live and compete by, but Wilson may actually be better known for an additional P: "The separation is in the *PREPARATION*."

In early December 2013 on Monday Night Football, the Seahawks beat the Saints in dominating fashion 34-7. Coach Pete Carroll said he felt like his team was practicing as well as it did at the end of the 2012 season, when it won 5 straight by an average score of 38-12.

Wilson couldn't agree more saying, "The way we practiced this week was the best week we've ever had. That preparation was big. I think it really showed up tonight."

Russell Wilson's work ethic has become legendary among the Seahawks camp.

Former Coach Jon Gruden has praised Wilson's study of the game and called him

“exactly the kind of quarterback I would want to coach.”

Wilson prides himself on being well prepared. He arrives at the Seahawks facility bright and early at 6:00 am and is reportedly the last player to leave some 14 hours later. The quarterback meeting room has become Wilson’s home away from home. Known now as Wilson’s ‘office’, it’s where he breaks down tape, play after play, reviewing his own mistakes as well as analyzing opposing defenses. For Wilson, preparation leads to consistency, which is the foundation for sharp execution. When a player executes well, it puts him in the position to capitalize on every opportunity. In a sport with such a limited sample size, seizing every fleeting opportunity can be a game-changer. Instead of being spoon fed a game plan, he meets with the coaches to have direct input into what they’ll call in a given week.

In conclusion, "I get satisfaction on preparing the right way," says Wilson. "Like I always say, 'the separation is in the preparation' and making sure that I’m preparing the right way. And then, come game day – you know, there’s no better day than game day – just hitting the field, going out there and playing the game of football is such a blessing."

Wilson leaves nothing to chance. His success on game day is a result of his preparation leading up to Sunday.

How about you? Wilson’s chosen profession is playing quarterback in the NFL and he separates himself from the competition by being well prepared. How do you prepare to be successful in your chosen profession? Maybe you’re a sales rep for a top 500 company. Do you spend time preparing to be the best sales professional possible or do

you just leave it to chance? Do you study the competition and learn how your product can give you a competitive advantage? Do you watch DVDs and listen to CDs to improve your sales skills? Do you prepare in advance for the next sales call? You get the idea. To separate yourself from the competition you have to prepare. You have to work smart and hard. Don't leave it to chance.

On a personal level perhaps you want to be a better husband or father. There are lots of resources available that will teach you how to be the type of husband and father that you desire to be. Don't leave it to chance. Work at it! Maybe your relationship with your son is less than you had hoped for. Well, guess what? You can change it. It might not happen over-night. It may take time but you can do it! Perhaps over the years your wife has turned distant and cold. Maybe the passion and romance is gone. Take heart. You can change that, too, but it begins with you. As the man, you need to be the one to initiate love in your marriage. You need to learn what it means to be a godly husband. All of this takes time. You need to prepare yourself to be the father your son needs and the husband your wife deserves.

In Ecclesiastes 9:10 it says: Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.

The fighter Joe Frazier said, "You can map out a fight plan or a life plan, but when the action starts, it may not go the way you planned, and you're down to your reflexes - that means your (preparation:). That's where your roadwork shows. If you cheated on that in the dark of the morning, well, you're going to get found out now, under the bright lights."

Margaret Thatcher said, "Plan your work for today and every day, then work your plan."

Russell Wilson prepares to be a great quarterback. That's how he separates himself. Likewise, you should prepare yourself to be great in whatever God has called you to do! Whether you're a salesman, teacher, husband, banker, athlete, father, doctor, musician, student, or a fireman.....whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. Be purposeful in working your plan. Remember that you, too, can find separation in the preparation!

Developing a Championship Mentality

During an interview after starting the 2013 season with a 7-1 record, Wilson said, "I think the biggest thing for us is just staying focused on the now, staying focused on the moment and staying focused on this week and this practice. I think that's what we've done so well this year. Every game – we've played a lot of big games so far; when you think about some of the teams we've played it hasn't been easy. I think the biggest thing for us is we stay focused on that want-it-all mentality. Can we go 1-0 every week and can we have that championship mentality day-in and day-out? I think that's what we bring to the table and what allows us to play at a high level and gives us a chance to win come Sundays."

For a young quarterback, Wilson exudes extraordinary leadership both in what he says and in what he does. He preaches focus for both himself and his teammates. Wilson has said, "Winning the Super Bowl begins with a championship day, off season, season, and year." In other words, your focus entering training camp in August can't be on the Super Bowl but rather the daily practices leading up to the opener. During the 16 game regular season the focus is not on finishing with the best record in the conference. That

may be the goal but the focus is on playing the games one at a time and doing everything possible to prepare yourself for success come Sunday. The focus is on the next opportunity and to play each game to go 1-0. That's what it means to have a championship mentality.

How can we develop a day-in and day-out championship mentality in our own individual lives? Again, let's see what we can learn from Russell.

For a young quarterback Russell Wilson is a pretty cool cucumber. On any given Sunday, he's always calm and in control. When things are going well, he challenges himself to keep executing. When things aren't going so well, he remains the calm in the center of the storm. He "stays in the moment" and focuses on executing one play at a time. This attitude has a snowball effect on those around him, bringing out the best in all his teammates.

How about you? Are you always calm and in control? It's easy when things are going well but what happens when there's a storm in your life? What happens then? When there's a storm on the gridiron, Russell Wilson stays in the moment and focuses on executing one play at a time. For example, maybe things aren't going so well at work. The fiscal year is half over and you're only 50% to plan on your sales quota. Your boss is all over you and you're feeling the heat. Are you calm and in control and focused on executing one play at a time or do you cave and throw in the towel? What's the use? I'll never make quota. Russell says that amnesia is required when dealing with those poorly executed plays. He stays in the moment and focuses on the next play. You, too, need to develop the same attitude. So, you're 50% to plan. That was your performance

in the first six months. It has no bearing on the future. Maybe there were things out of your control like the economic recession of a few years ago or a delayed release of one of your products. Whatever the reason, you need to have amnesia and put it to rest. Instead, focus on tomorrow and the remaining six months. Stay in the moment and focus on executing the next play. Think about what you can do today that will boost sales in the next six months. It could be something as simple as one extra sales call per week, developing a strategy to increase sales through an educational email marketing campaign of one of your products, or improving your sales skills by attending seminars. You get the point.

Now, let's talk about developing a championship mentality at home? For the sake of time, let's look at one area where God has called you. As a husband God has called you to love your wife sacrificially and unconditionally – a love marked by giving and not getting.

In Ephesians 5:25-28 God has called you to love your wife just as Christ loves the church. It's a love that puts your wife first in your life. Now I'll be the first to admit that loving your wife this way is a daunting task but it's a standard I'm committed to. After all, Jesus Christ is God and I'm not. I have so many inadequacies. I fail my wife in so many ways but I'm always striving to be more "Christ like" in my love for her.

Russell stays focused on the moment. He isn't distracted by the "noise" that surrounds him. Russell preaches that winning a world championship starts with developing a championship mentality. In other words, winning the super bowl begins with what is done in the off season, training camp, and the regular season. Your commitment to

giving 100% of yourself each and every day is what results in championships. It's about developing the mentality that today I'm going to put in the work to be the best I can be.

Developing a championship mentality in your marriage centers around the following question: *how can my love for my wife be more Christ like today than it was yesterday?*

I've already mentioned how loving your wife the way Christ loves the church can be a daunting task so how can we make it less daunting. For starters try breaking it up in to bite size nuggets. In other words, stay in the moment and focus on the task at hand.

Don't worry about what your "Christ like" love will look like in a month, or year, or decade. Focus on how it should look like today and then go and do it! If you need a little help you can always go to 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 for some guidance. It says: *love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

Look for ways to serve your wife. Look for ways to love your wife unconditionally and sacrificially. Look for ways to put her first in your life. Don't worry about what your love will look like tomorrow or what it looked like last month. Put into practice Russell's philosophy. Focus on one play at a time and stay in the moment. Ignore the noise and distractions that surround you. Philippians 4:13 says you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. You can do this. It may not happen immediately but focus on one day at a time. Develop a plan and then work your plan one day at a time. Christ

will help you love your wife the same way that he loves the church.

Summary

Being successful in life and becoming all God wants you to be isn't easy. Putting the contents of this ebook into practice will help get you there but remember it's a daily journey. Change doesn't happen overnight. It's a process.

First, believe in your strengths and abilities. Russell Wilson asked, "Why not us?" You should ask, "Why not me?" You have been put on this earth with very specific gifts that make you unique. Nobody else has what you have. Your strengths and talents suit your make up and personality. Being successful in life, having that championship mentality all begins with a confidence and belief that you have what it takes to be successful.

Second, if you don't have a strong work ethic start developing one. Remember you have been given all that's necessary to be successful but it's your responsibility to develop what you've been given. I'm talking about your strengths and abilities.

Developing them will take effort and time on your part. Russell Wilson's work ethic is legendary as we've already seen. He prides himself on being well prepared. He's found that "the separation is in the preparation" leads to success both on and off the field. You, too, will find the same thing true.

Third, treat each day with a championship mentality. Winning a Super Bowl begins with the work that's put in during the off season, training camp, and the regular season. Just as the

Seahawks were committed to giving 100% of themselves each and every day you, too, need to develop the same commitment. Start developing the mentality that today I'm going to put in the work to be the best I can be. Stop worrying about tomorrow, next week, or next month. Focus on the day at hand.



Al Letterer poses with Russell Wilson at the Russell Wilson Passing Academy held in Tukwilla, WA in July 2014. Al is a loyal, faithful 12th Man. Russell happens to be his favorite player.