



FUNDAMENTAL #4

JOINING TEAM JESUS

Responding to the Offer on the Table

As I write this chapter, we are in the midst of an NCAA Evaluation Period. It's a specific time of year when college coaches are allowed to watch an athlete compete in person or visit their school. Based on the evaluations, coaches can make offers to players whom they think will bring success to their programs in the future. In response, players can accept an offer by making a formal commitment to that program or they can hold out for a better offer. It's all part of the recruitment process.

During the NCAA evaluation period, highly sought after players could be playing in AAU tournaments on opposite sides of the nation; therefore, it becomes necessary for assistant coaches, recruiters and scouts to help in the recruitment process. The overall objective is the same—to woo the highly skilled athletes to their respective basketball program. But ultimately, the athlete has to answer the question: should I commit or hold out for a better offer that may never come?

I'm like one of those recruiters. My mission? To woo you to the team that has yet to be stopped! There's no reason to hold out for a better offer because the greatest offer you will ever receive is on the table—an offer of a lifetime that will usher you into victory today, tomorrow and forever. You get to decide the outcome. Will you rise up in victory by committing to Christ or will you lie down in defeat without him? The offer will never be retracted. But why wait? John Wooden, one of the greatest college coaches of all time said this of his faith: "I have always tried to make it clear that basketball is not the ultimate. It is of small importance in comparison to the total life we live. There is only one kind of life that truly wins, and that is the one that places faith in the hands of the Savior." The offer awaits. Will you say yes?

Maybe you don't feel worthy to join "Team Jesus." I can assure you of this: no matter who you are or what you've done, God loves you with a depth of love that you cannot begin to comprehend! The Bible says it's an endless love; beyond measurement. It transcends our understanding. This extravagant love pours into you until you are filled to overflowing with the fullness of God (Eph. 3:17b-19 TPT)!

God wants you on his team! He wants you to experience his love and lead you into victorious living! Your journey of faith begins with a decision and commitment that is made in your heart. If you are ready to begin that journey, share that commitment with Jesus today through prayer. Ultimately, he wants to hear from *your* heart, but I have included some prayers that might help guide you. You may also use the space provided to write you own prayer. Luke 15:10 says, "there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

If you make the decision to follow Jesus, I also want to rejoice with you! I invite you to share your decision with me by emailing me at Kari@karikieper.com.

REMEMBER: There is no such thing as a magic prayer! If you choose to use one of these prayers, please understand, it's not the words in the prayer that saves you. Only Jesus Christ alone has the power to save. Salvation is a matter of the heart, not a matter of words.

Post-Game Victory Prayers

Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, that you died on the cross to rescue me from sin and death and to restore me to the Father. I choose now to turn from my sins, my self-centeredness, and every part of my life that does not please you. I choose you. I give myself to you. I receive your forgiveness and ask you to take your rightful place in my life as my Savior and Lord. Come reign in my heart, fill me with your love and your life, and help me to become a person who is truly loving—a person like you. Restore me, Jesus. Live in me. Love through me. Thank you, God. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.²

Lord Jesus, for too long I've kept you out of my life. I know that I am a sinner and that I cannot save myself. No longer will I close the door when I hear you knocking. By faith I gratefully receive your gift of salvation. I am ready to trust you as my Lord and Savior. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming to earth. I believe you are the Son of God who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead on the third day. Thank you for bearing my sins and giving me the gift of eternal life. I believe your words are true. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, and be my Savior. Amen.³

Dear God, I know that I am a sinner and there is nothing that I can do to save myself. I confess my complete helplessness to forgive my own sin or to work my way to heaven. At this moment I trust Christ alone as the One who bore my sin when He died on the cross. I believe that He did all that will ever be necessary for me to stand in your holy presence. I thank you that Christ was raised from the dead as a guarantee of my own resurrection. As best as I can, I now transfer my trust to Him. I am grateful that He has promised to receive me despite my many sins and failures. Father, I take you at your word. I thank you that I can face death now that you are my Savior. Thank you for the assurance that you will walk with me through the deep valley. Thank you for hearing this prayer. In Jesus' Name. Amen.⁴

Father, I know that I have broken your laws and my sins have separated me from you. I am truly sorry, and now I want to turn away from my past sinful life toward you. Please forgive

me, and help me avoid sinning again. I believe that your son, Jesus Christ died for my sins, was resurrected from the dead, is alive, and hears my prayer. I invite Jesus to become the Lord of my life, to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. Please send your Holy Spirit to help me obey You, and to do Your will for the rest of my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.⁵

Dear God, I have come to realize that I have placed other gods before You. I have worshipped things and people instead of the One true God. I confess, with my mouth, that I am a sinner in need of a Savior, not just for today, but for always. Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for me, carrying all my sin and shame on His shoulders so I could be set free from the weight of my mistakes. I accept your free gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. I am ready to allow you to control my heart, my decisions, my thinking, and my life. Send your Holy Spirit to be my coach, my counselor, and my guide. Beginning now, help me to walk in your ways and to obey the guidelines you've lovingly given through your Word. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen. (Kari Kieper)

Write your own prayer below.

See book, *No Other God, Pursuing Your Passion for Jesus and Basketball*, for citations.