

# CHAPTER 10

## HEAVY LIFTING IS LIGHT WORK



Biblical Lessons for Students, Athletes & More

### FOCAL VERSE

Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.  
James 4:10 (NIV)

"No man can do me a truer kindness in this world than to pray for me."  
Charles Spurgeon

### CHAPTER TEN - GROUP EXPERIENCE HEAVY LIFTING IS LIGHT WORK

#### Introduction

In the late 90's, I had a short stint as a high school, cosmetology instructor. My class was exclusively young women, and it wasn't uncommon for them to tear each other down. They could be vicious. One particular day, I'd had enough. I directed the class to take out a piece of paper and write down three, positive characteristics about each of their classmates. When everyone was finished, I had the students read aloud the traits they had written down, per person. The exercise was uncomfortable for the students but highly effective! Many students were stunned to know that their peers (and adversaries) saw something in them that they didn't see in themselves.

We can likely agree that people, *of all ages*, who don't have a positive self-image feel better when they judge or talk bad about someone else; or at least in the moment. Odds are, they are motivated by their own insecurities. Truth is, speaking poorly of someone else, (especially when they aren't around to defend themselves), says more about *you* than the person you're talking about. And yes, the author of this study is guilty too! Let's heed the advice of Booker T. Washington: **"If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else."**

Let's take a look at how we can combat this battle against comparing, judging, and gossiping. Honestly, it's light work!

#### Page 65

At the bottom of page 65, I share an experience with a friend; a frustrating situation involving my son's inexperienced basketball coach.

### SESSION 9 FOLLOW-UP

Since our last session, did you have an opportunity to extend help to someone or ask for help? Has it become more apparent that God is your first "go to" for help?

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*"Be one who nurtures and builds. Be one who has an understanding and forgiving heart; one who looks for the best in people. Leave people better than you found them."*

—Marvin J. Ashton

When asked, "What is more important: prayer or reading the Bible?" I ask, "What is more important: breathing in or breathing out?"

*Charles Spurgeon*



At the bottom of page 65, I share an experience with a friend; a frustrating situation involving my son's inexperienced basketball coach. Her response was unexpected but perfectly suited for our Christian friendship. She asked, "Well, have you prayed for the coach?" Uhh...



Wow! What if, *just what if*, anytime someone began to complain about something or someone, we simply asked, "Well, have you prayed about it?" Would you be gutsy enough to ask this convicting question?

- **What difference do you think asking that question would make?**
- **What possible reactions might you receive?**

## Page 66

Negative feelings towards a coach, is nothing new. And as a coach, I can honestly say that coaches get frustrated with players and parents too. However, there's always a right way to handle conflict.

- **What types of situations lead you to be frustrated with your coach? If you're a parent, what frustrations, if any, do you have with your child's coach?**
- **When you are upset with the coach, how do you typically handle it?**
  - Do you bring it to your coach's attention? If so, has it helped or made it worse?
  - Do you tend to badmouth the coach to teammates or other parents?
  - Parents, do you badmouth the coach to your child or other parents, like I did?
  - Do you talk about your teammates' poor performance around other teammates?
  - Parents, do you criticize your child's teammates to your child?
  - If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, what affect do you think it has on your team? What affect does it have on you?

After my friend asked me if I had prayed for the coach, I was immediately convicted. As a follower of Christ, I know enough of God's Truth to realize that talking bad about people, or making fun of them for their shortcomings, is just plain wrong. It's one thing to think it, (which is still a sin), but it's another thing to vocalize it. Right about now, we probably all feel a twinge of conviction. Remember, conviction is a good thing! It leads us to repentance.

**So how do we battle this natural urge to vent out loud?** The first thing we need to do is confess any prior instances of engaging in the sin of slandering. And it is sin. Let's call it what it is. **Ephesians 4:29 says, Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.**" If we do a quick word study of the word "unwholesome," we quickly learn that unwholesome means "damaging to physical, mental, or moral well-being." When you put it that way, it disturbs me to think that I've contributed to damaging the mental, physical, and moral well-being of not just that particular freshman coach, but anyone I've ever slandered...even if they didn't know it.

If we truly understood how much our words damaged other people's physical, mental, or moral well-being, I think we would be *much* less likely to take part in slandering one another.

Once you're convicted about this sin in your life, the next step is to confess it and repent. On page 66, I share about my own conviction. Soon after, I entered into prayer, confessing my sin and began to pray for the coach.

I also confessed my error to my son and encouraged him to pray for his coach as well. I would never tell you how to pray because there's no wrong or right way to pray. However, I do want to offer some direction that was helpful for me during this frustrating time. In addition, instead of praying with a critical spirit, let's pray with a spirit of encouragement. For example:

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it might benefit those who listen.  
Ephesians 4:29”

- **OKAY:** *"Lord, you know (name) is a new coach and is pretty bad. Help him/her to be better; smarter!"*
- **BETTER:** *"Lord, I pray that (name's) inexperience will not make him/her feel inadequate. May your wisdom rule in his/her mind, in order that he/she make decisions that will benefit the team. Give him/her a spirit of courage as he/she coaches today."*
- **OKAY:** *"Lord, Jesus! Help me to watch my mouth today!"*
- **BETTER:** *"Father, may the words that come from my mouth today be words that lift others up. Guard my mouth. May it be used to bring forth life, not death. Help me resist any temptation to slander the coach or players. Help me to steer such conversations in a different direction."*
- **OKAY:** *"Lord, help (name) have lots of points, rebounds, and steals today."*
- **BETTER:** *"Lord, may (name) reflect your character on the court today, so that YOU may be honored. While points, rebounds, and steals are fun and good to have, those things are only temporary, but our character outlasts them all. If you choose to honor (name), in such a way, may (name) receive those gifts with humility and point the glory towards you."*

**James 4:10** says, **"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."** When I prayed these prayers of confession, and prayed for my son's coach with a pure heart, God honored those prayers. I didn't pray these prayers expecting "good stuff" to come our way, but God honored us in a beautiful way. My son scored thirty points that night and God taught me a valuable lesson! I love to share that lesson to this day!

## Pages 67-69

- Read through the applications, and answer the questions on page 68-69.

## Page 69

- End with post-game prayer.

## CLOSING COMMENTS:

Look for opportunities this week to extinguish conversations that are unwholesome.