

# **Let's Go to the Ballgame**

## **Discipleship: Not a Spectator Sport**

### **by Chris Famisaran**

Let's pray, Father, thank You, Lord Truly, it is only by your grace and your love that we're even here. As we continue our series on discipleship, not a spectator sport, be with us in Jesus name, amen.

Stephen Shankland shares a story of a man by the name. Forgive me if I say this wrong. Chiune Sugihara. He was the ambassador to Lithuania for the country of Japan in the 1930s. And as a child, it was his dream to one day be Japan's ambassador to Russia. By the 1930s. As he was serving his stint in Lithuania, he realized that his dream was probably not going to become true. Because at that time, what was happening? Germany was on the rise. And they were trying to get rid of the Jews. And there were many Jews who had fled from Poland who were in Lithuania, trying to find safe passage. And so Sugihara I believe he was a Christian, I learned that there were Jews who were fleeing, and they were seeking help from him to get Japanese pieces that would permit them to escape the German Gestapo. So three times, three times Sugihara wired Tokyo for permission to provide these visas and three times he was rejected. And so he had to choose between his dream and doing the right thing in the lives of these individuals. And so for the next 28 days, Sugihara chose to disobey orders. And he wrote visas, by hand, barely sleeping, barely eating. When he was recalled back to Berlin, he was still as he was departing, he was still writing visas, and shoving them through train windows, into the hands of these Jewish Russian refugees running alongside the train. Ultimately, it's said that he saved 6000 lives back then. And when he got back to Japan, the last of his days were spent selling light bulbs. He went from a position of nobility, prestige and honor to selling light bulbs. Later, when his story was eventually told, his son was asked how did your father feel about his choice, and he responded with my father's life was fulfilled when God needed him to do the right thing. He was available, do it. Statistics say that not only did he initially save the 6000 Jews at the time, but because of their children, over 100,000 people are alive just because of him. Imagine that making a difference in people's

lives literally saving their lives. Sugihara was an ambassador and as we've studied in the past, what is it what is the role of the ambassador to be a spokesperson to talk with the needs for the country that they come from. And so gotta live by principle trying to do the right thing.

So as we're continuing our series now, today, we're going to talk about let's go to the ballgame. We talked about you know, a fan, we love our team, we love our favorite sports team. And we also not only have a love for the team, but we want to share that same love with others, much like an ambassador as well as sharing not only the hopes and the dreams, but also the concerns. For their rep.... They're the people that are the country that they're representing. In this case, we are representing God we are representing Jesus we fell in love with Jesus and He wants us to share the Good News of the Gospel, a life changing news to others. So what are we going to talk about today? Well, why do we love our team? Why did we love Jesus and does our love for our, for instance, our favorite team, or Jesus want us to share the great things? So I'm going to read some teams. What do they have in common? The New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox. Real Madrid vs FC Barcelona, Duke UNC basketball, Alabama, Auburn football, Iowa, Iowa State football, New Orleans Saints vs. the Atlanta Falcons. Boston Celtics versus the Los Angeles Lakers. The Boston Bruins, and the Montreal Canadiens. And Michigan and Ohio State football, what do all of these team pairings, they are rivalries. All right. And rivalries aren't just a casual affair. Okay? If you grew up in the 80s, like I was blessed to be, it was the Lakers and the Celtics they took, they took most of the NBA championships between these two teams, and actually for several decades, and then along came the Pistons and the Bulls and yadda yadda yadda. But for the Lakers and the Celtics, they ruled for decades, and especially in the 80s, I got to witness this great battle. It was awesome, and it was amazing. But you also have plenty of other teams to the Yankees and the Red Sox. I didn't, I'm not from there. But I can only imagine that there was no love loss when they would get together, right? People are passionate about their teams they'll fight for and try to defend the honor of their favorite teams, especially against their rival. Well, we're going to talk about why is it important that we should serve as ambassadors.

So I've left a couple of text here. And so as you can see, I'm just going to leave them here because I'm going to it's going to take up too much space on your

handout. So I'm just leaving them you can write them down, if you're online. But let's just kind of go back to we've already talked a bit a little bit about Matthew 20. I just wanted to highlight it. What did Jesus say? He said to cut he, then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, Therefore go and make disciples of all nations. So as the gospel is supposed to be going out to just a few people or to everyone, everyone, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you. So as ambassadors, what is God calling us to do, to teach to share the things that Jesus has shared with them, even to today? And then at the end, he says, surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. But also in finally men that famous letter that Paul writes to Philemon, he also says in Philemon 1:6 I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. So all of the good things that God has done in our lives. Let's share that with others.

Now, when it talks, when we talk about being a fan or even an ambassador, why should we even what's the foundation? The foundation is our love for Jesus and others is the foundation for sharing Jesus. Terry Muck shares the story of I think a letter was written to him where there was a man who he wasn't a believer, but yet he knew his neighbor. They had a close enough relationship that, Hey, can I borrow your lawnmower? Can I borrow? Can I have some salt? Can I yeah, they had a casual relationship that hey, as neighbors, it's good to know your neighbors in case anything happens. But he had no interest in knowing who God was because his neighbor he was a Christian. He tried to minister to him. Yeah, he said, Now it's not for me, is his believing neighbors said Okay, that's cool. No worries. Eventually, however, this man's wife got cancer. And within three months, she passed away. Imagine the love of your life gone. What do you do next? How do you move forward? Well, for him, he was in total despair as he wrote, I went through the funeral preparations and the service like I was in a trance. After the service, I went to the path along the river. And I walked all night. But I didn't walk alone. My neighbor, who was concerned for me, afraid for me, I guess, stayed with me all night, he didn't speak, he didn't even walk beside me. He just followed me. And when the sun finally came up over the river, he came over and said, "t's go get some breakfast." I go to church now, my neighbor's church, a religion that can

produce that kind of caring and love, my neighbor showed me is something I want to find out more about, I want to love and be loved like that for the rest of my life.

So Terry doesn't share who this person was. But that's the kind of impact that we can have. Is there somebody in your life that you know who is willing to walk alongside you in your darkest of moments alongside the river? I hope you do. And if not, I pray, let's be that neighbor. And the good times, and in the hard times, sharing the good things, but especially in the hard times, having somebody to walk alongside and not even having to say anything, just being present, is a form of showing love. And it's important that we love people, because imagine if you're not a loving person, if you're an angry person, how successful are you going to be trying to share Jesus with others? Have you ever met an angry Christian? I've pastored at a number of churches, unfortunately, I've met a few angry Christians. In fact, there was one time where I was, I was with my family. And there was a man speaking through a bullhorn and telling everybody why they were wrong, and why they're going to be ending up in an unpleasant place. And he spoke with conviction, I had to admit, I mean, he spoke with conviction, but the center of his voice, and the things that he was saying was anything but Christ's loving. And my first thought was, how do you expect to attract people to this form of gospel that you're trying to share? And yet, what was it doing? Number one, people were thinking, Oh, it's just the crazy guy on the corner speaking through a bullhorn. And he was holding his Bible. And it just to me, it was the craziest thing. And this is, this is when I was a teenager, and I realized, I do not want to be that person. And yet, you have to think about this too. Who influences you? You're they say, you're influenced by the five closest people in your life? And what type of people are they? Are they happy people? Are they angry people? Are they sad people? Are they sarcastic people? Who are they? And how do you reflect? What reflection are you passing on to them? And we have to think about this as a church to if we had an angry, horrible pastor, Lord have mercy. The leader influences the people I hope I'm not an angry person. Right? But it's a reflection. What kind of reflection are we putting out of love and kindness or anger? So, love, share because you love people to have a genuine love for people. And hopefully we pray have a genuine love for God. Because I'm sorry, you can be in the church but you may not necessarily Love God. Love, easiest and hardest thing to do, amen.

So how can we positively share Jesus with others? How can we well Also, it's important to also recognize when you're sharing Jesus with others as you prepare write these things down. In fact, First Peter, okay, first Peter three, verses 15 and 16. Let's go to First Peter 3:15 and 16. For those of you maybe this is your first time opening the Bible We'll open the Bible up, and you're gonna go towards the back. And First Peter is towards the back. It's near Revelation, but not quite. It's a few books over, look at the top or the top corners. And it'll usually say names. And there's, there's the first and second, we want to go to First Peter, chapter three. When you get to chapter three, go to verse 15. And we'll also read 16. Okay, chapter three, verses 15 and 16. And it says, but in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord, acknowledge that Jesus is Lord is what he's trying to say here, okay. And then he says, always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. Now, those of you who have been here, we've already studied this passage a little bit already, especially in our small group. But there's something that really sticks out here, what sticks out about this passage? Towards the beginning revere Christ, but what does Peter say right after that? Always be prepared. Now, certainly, the Lord will be ready to inspire you with the word sometimes, right? But wouldn't it be good practice for us, as faithful believers to think about ahead of time, what we should say to others, amen. Have an idea of what you want to share with others? Because if you don't prepare, what could happen, you could probably say something you're going to regret. Right? Especially maybe the first couple of times? Do you always get things? When you're trying something new? Do you always get it right the first time? No, usually No, unless you're really gifted. And all most of us probably envy that person. Right? But ya know, be prepared. Think about what you want to say to other people about how Jesus has impacted your life. So write down how Jesus has changed your life. Okay? Write down how Jesus has changed your life. What are some of the big pivotal points in your life, where you realize God has been faithful in your life, you were sick, and you were healed? You lost a job, God blessed you with an even better job, or gave you opportunities to be able to spend time with your family? What are the good things God has done in your life? Those are life, Faith affirming events in your life that you can share with others on why God is important in your life? How has God been leading and guiding and

providing your life? How has God saved you from certain physical destruction? Especially maybe as a young person? Amen. Have you ever maybe looked back and realized, I probably did not make the best decisions in my life, especially when there was peer pressure, jumping off cliffs into water that maybe was a little more shallower than it should have been. I'm not speaking from experience. But possibly, or riding a motorcycle, driving fast in a car that you should not be driving fast. And all of these things are opportunities to share how God has been good in your life. Why should we write these things down? Well, number one, it helps you to remember, right? Especially writing things down, it's easy to think and okay, I want to make this point. But then we get to the point where we're talking to somebody's like, I can't remember what to say. It helps you to remember, and it helps as you write down as you think it helps to bring you clarity in your mind of what you want to say. What is it you want to accomplish sharing? What are the priorities and what are your intentions. And as you do this, it helps to be honest, it helps keeps you motivated. And it helps you to process maybe even why these things are important. You look back and you write down all the things that you God has done in your life and you realize, Well, God has been way more active in my life than I thought. And maybe as life continues, continue to write down the good things don't stop and then ultimately leads to a feeling of gratitude.

So there is even a passage of what we should write down Psalm 96. Let's go to Psalm 96. So if you're, again, one of the first times you're reading Psalms 96 is kind of in the middle of the Bible. It's to the left of Proverbs and Isaiah. There is like a 150 Psalms. So go towards the middle of Psalms, Psalm 96. verses two through four. Okay, it's still here, a little bit of page turning, by the way, thank you as well, everybody for representing your favorite teams. I don't see Boston in here. Somebody said they were going to wear Boston why? Okay. I'm kidding. All right. Sing to the Lord. Praise His word. His name, proclaim His Word. Salvation, how long, day and night, day after day, declaring his glory among the nations his marvelous deeds among all peoples, i.e. all the good works God is doing for Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise. He used to be feared above all gods. So even scripture says, Write down remember and share the good things God has done in your life, sing and praise. And so if we've experienced God's goodness, God's faithfulness, why not share it? There are many God moments that we all have that supposed to build up our faith.

Anybody done any intentional strength conditioning, CrossFit? Anybody doing CrossFit? So I was a young man, back in the day, 13 years ago, 14 years ago, now that I think about it. I walked in to Team CrossFit Academy and I thought, everybody is so much bigger and stronger than I am. And you know what I started with, I wanted to start with a barbell. You know what my coach did to me? He gave me a PVC pipe. how demoralizing when everybody started now with the 45 or 35 pound bars? And nope, I know you're relatively fit. But I'm going to start because technique was always more important than volume. Okay, get it right. Do it right. Practice. Right. And you will do it right in the future. Yeah, gave me a PVC pipe. Oh, how demoralizing. But he was right. I had to crawl before I could walk before I could then run. And especially with the barbell 45 pound barbell is not something that huge chunk. And that's just without the actual weights, the plates and the bumpers. Getting the right technique down. And it's important that we know what we're talking about. Amen. So study scripture, have conversations grow, get the technique, right, knowing who God is. And eventually you will be able to grow. In fact, you know, relatively strong young male can probably dead 300 315 pounds. If they put some time into it, it's not going to happen necessarily overnight. But within a year, they can probably deadlift 315. But to go from 315 to 500 pounds, let's do 100 pound increase, it's gonna take some time could take a couple of years, to even now where you see guys who are squatting or dead lifting 5, 7, 800 pounds. That takes years of intentional preparation. I'm not saying we all have to do that. But as we grow in faith, as we become more wise and committed, it's going to take sometimes years of study, but also intentionally practicing every day. Getting to know God and sharing God. We grow by faith, and our experiences gives us courage so that we can trust God and exercise our faith.

You know, we talked about trusting God and we know we're supposed to, but if we're being honest, sometimes we just feel a little hesitant because we're afraid God will not always come through or deliver us in our time of need. Amen? Let's be honest, sometimes we're like, we're a little shy to try something new. But you have to try because if you don't try, you're never going to learn. You're never going to grow. And just like everything else, learning to play an instrument learning how to ride a bicycle, learning how to drive, learning how to sing learning how to memorize a script, you may not always get it right the first time. But it takes

gumption. It takes desire. And you learn from your mistakes. More often than not, you don't learn from your wins. Learn from how you lost, or how you didn't get it right the first time. Those are the ones that you really learn from. And it's not something that we should try to beat ourselves up. Oh, it's wrong. So you know, we, we, we have to try. And if we get it wrong, what can we learn from let's not beat ourselves up over that. Sometimes it's embarrassing. First couple of times, I tried to share Jesus with others. I look back and I cringe on those horrible moments. But pretty soon, you keep doing it. And God's gonna place you in places that you never thought that you will be sharing Jesus with. So, continue to move forward. share Jesus, ask God, how can I be a blessing to others and give me opportunities?

Now, reflection, what resources do you have to use in sharing Jesus with others? How many of you have a lazy boy or couch in your home? Some of you, how many of you have a microwave? Okay. How many of you have a refrigerator? Okay? You all have a new personal opportunity to throw a Superbowl party. All right, or maybe an NBA championship party. All right. Or maybe a little American Idol party or whatever. The latest one, by the way, have you heard of this kid name? Iam Tongi. Oh my gosh. He's amazing. Okay, Google him. He made me cry. Not gonna lie, his first his audition, he made me cry. As a son, you'll get it. I'm not going to share why, but you'll get it. Listen to him. Provide opportunities in your home to share Jesus with us. And you don't have to say hey, Jesus needs to know who you are. Or you need to know Jesus. Just love your neighbor. Love your coworker. Love those who you come in contact with and provide a safe place for them to come to and hang out and feel loved. How many of you have golf clubs, a basketball, go to the park. Go invite your neighbor to go play golf or a co worker. How many of you have a car to be able to help people go and get groceries or go to the post office? How many of you know how to knit or crochet and can make blankets for new babies or even our senior citizens? How many of you have tool sets or lawnmower that you can go and help maybe help on smaller house projects? Or maybe somebody's yard needs to be taken care of.

Luke Mickelson He's the president of sleep and heavenly places. He was on the micro podcast, I think maybe a year or two ago. And he shares how what can he teach his kids his sons to be able to make a change in people's lives. He built beds. Most of us take for granted the idea that we have a bed with a mattress, amen.



But believe it or not, there's a lot of kids who don't have beds. And so what he did was in his own town, he said, we're going to build beds because there was no beds in his kids town for kids. And so now it's He not only started that ministry, but it's spread throughout the country where there are chapters where they build beds for kids. And they're all started with the Boy Scout troop thinking hey, how can we be able to make a difference in people's lives? You want to listen to that go to Microsoft podcasts? I think it's number 251.

Finally, the challenge. Ask God for wisdom is a scary thing. Ask God for opportunities to be a blessing to others. May you represent and be an ambassador to share the love of Jesus with others. Discipleship is not a spectator sport. You're not going to be on the lines. God wants us to be proactive. Amen.

Next week Bill is going to talk about how we can be better equipped to be able to be in the game and participate. You want to be actually on the court making a difference, or do you want to be the person who's always yapping on the sidelines? We want to be in the game.

Father in Heaven Thank You, Lord for your Do it in your mercy endures forever. Help us, Lord to be the ambassadors that you have called us to be that Paul talks about in Second Corinthians five leading guidance give us opportunities to serve, but also equip us enable us and give us with the words that you want us to share with others in Jesus name. everybody said, Amen. Grace and peace everyone.

Have a great week! Don't run off yet.