

Productive Christian Life

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[0 : 00] Now I realise that today there's more than just the Dunbar boys and their leaders here, but I'm going to take absolute and complete and pure advantage of the fact that they're here and I'm going to preach from this passage, but I'm going to use a very strong illustration all the way through it and that is football. It's been tough for me, I'm only really hard just to think about football, but I thought just for the boys' sake that I would use football as an illustration, okay? So if you don't like football today, that is for our American friends, soccer, then I apologise, but I hope that you'll get the illustrations today that I'm using. I don't often do that because people in the congregation have complained if I use football illustrations. I should use illustrations about horse riding and things like that, but I tend not to because I don't know much about that, but I do know a little bit, a very little bit about football. So can I just ask you guys, first of all, I take it you like football, you got a football camp, you do? Okay, how many of you here support the best team in Scotland, which is Hibbs? Look at that, that's a negligible percentage, that's great. What about even better team Ross County? One or two, there's some bigger

Ross County fans. Aberdeen? I can't think, is there any other teams? Dundee United? Ness? Arleigh Way? Back? Oh, Cali Thistle? Oh, immediate. Who have I not mentioned? I haven't mentioned all the big teams. Are there any teams left? Celtic. There's no Celtic fans here, are there?

If you are, you're too embarrassed to put your hands up, rightly so. Rangers? Oh, it's always good to support the teams in the lower leagues. I always think that's a good thing.

I can say that now as a Hibbs supporter. Okay, so I know your leaders are also going to use football as an illustration during their camp talks, and I apologise if I'm jumping in before them here, but I'm sure that theirs will be much more relevant and significant than mine. But I want to do something, start with a quote from someone that none of you will probably have heard of because some of the older people here will have heard of them.

[2 : 46] Have you heard of a guy called Bill Shankly? One or two of you have. Bill Shankly was probably one of the greatest football managers that ever lived, and he really made the whole Liverpool team what they are and the whole ethos of Liverpool. And he said he was a Scotsman, although he was proud to be called a scouser, he said, someone from Liverpool. He said some people are not saying his accent. Some people he said, say football is a matter of life and death.

I'm very disappointed with that attitude, he said. I can assure you, it's much more important than that. That's what he said. Now, Bill Shankly was a great manager. He was an outstanding tactician and leader of men, but he was absolutely categorically and completely wrong when he said that. And football is a great sport and it's a great thing to be involved in, but it's a rubbish idol. It's a rubbish thing to put first in your life. It's simply not important enough to do that. And so what I'm going to speak about today is about the importance of Jesus Christ and the church, the gospel and following Christ. Because this letter here to 2 Peter that we read together, or that Stuart read to us, is a letter to a young church. I don't know if they were young all in age. This demographic here is very young. There's lots of young people. You've brought the average age of the congregation down a great deal today by coming here, the boys from the camp. Others, one or two people that bring it up to the top end as well. But they hadn't been Christians for a long time.

They were a young church. And sometimes they were attacked from the outside. A lot of people didn't believe in Christianity in the society they lived in, so it was difficult to be a Christian, quite like today. But this letter is about problems they were having from inside the church, from bad teaching, from the ministers and from people that came along who didn't teach from the Bible, who said, don't really need to believe the Bible anymore or the teachings of the apostles. You can just live any old way. You don't need to follow Jesus and be obedient to Him. Just live for today and just take the

grace of Jesus and forget about everything else. But just live for today and you don't need to be holy and things like that. So the church, the people in the church, all they could see was the difficulties of being a Christian, how tough it is. And maybe that's the same for some of you. They'd lost the attraction of being a Christian. They'd lost sight, in other words, of Jesus. And if you lose sight of Jesus, you're really struggling. And so they were in danger of forgetting the truth. So last week when we looked at the introduction, Peter was reminding them of the foundation that they had. What was really important. Now as fruit bowlers, you've got to remember foundations are important. And you'll hear a lot of your coaches talking about going back to basics. So it was important to go back to basics. Brazil have forgotten about the basics. Okay? So you've got to go back to basics. And that's what Peter's doing at the beginning. He says, grace and peace to you in abundance. And because he wants to remind them of the peace that they have as Christians from believing and trusting in Jesus Christ. They're forgiven. And they're friends with God. And the biggest problem that they all faced, and the biggest problem you all face and I face is that we're going to die. And that problem had been dealt with by Jesus. He'd taken the sting out of death. And they would go and live with him forever in heaven when they trusted in him. So there was that, that greatest big problem. I know it doesn't seem like that to you when you're young and energetic and fit. But not only was it peace, but the grace of God was theirs.

They had this great identity. And Jesus could change them from the inside out. So sometimes you look all great. You're all young, handsome. Most of you. Well, all the boys are. Some of the leaders are struggling in that. But inside, you know, all of us are pretty ugly.

[7:12] And we think the wrong thoughts and we do the wrong things and we can be hateful and jealous and proud and selfish. And the grace of God, the forgiveness of God comes in and changes that and make can change that ugliness on the inside and make us like Jesus Christ.

So this church, it was like a young footballer who had lost confidence. They just, they'd lost confidence in playing, they'd lost confidence in their ability, they'd lost confidence in their coach and they stopped. You know, some players lose confidence and they just can't play anymore. Who's the greatest example of that? Torres or someone like that. Torres, he's such a great player. He seems to have lost confidence for whatever reason. And he struggles. He's lost sight of the beautiful game. He's lost sight of the basics. And that is what was happening to this church. They'd lost sight of Jesus and they'd lost confidence and they couldn't, they weren't following him the same way. So Peter talks about the power of God and the promise of God in that section that we looked at last weekend. I'm not going to spend time on that, obviously, because we've looked at that. But it introduces this section that I'm going to look at with you by use of a football illustration. So what he's saying to them is, you've got to remember who Jesus is, got to remember his grace and the peace that he gives you, and also that he empowers us to live the Christian life with his power and with his promises. But then he goes on to say, in this section that we're going to look at, I'm wanting you to live this Christian life. I'm wanting you to do it. You see, God is big and we saw that in the Catechism. We learned that he's sovereign, that he's powerful, that he's great, that he is glorious. And sometimes we emphasize that. Now, careful what I say, I don't see we emphasize that too much, but what I'm doing is that we lose sight of a balance. We often talk about the fact that we are chosen as Christians, God chooses us, we elect, that's absolutely right, that he is sovereign, that we can't live the Christian life on our own, that's absolutely right. And sometimes here, maybe I emphasize a lot of the importance of being a being Christian rather than a doing Christian, it's about what we are rather than what we do, and that's right. But also, the Bible makes clear we've got a real responsibility to act as Christians as well, when we become Christians. Now, we can't earn our salvation, do you know that? You can't earn your favour with God, you can't earn your way to heaven, nobody can do that. It's a gift of grace by God, absolutely His work. He does it all for us, it's a gift. We saw that last week. But we have to work out that gift in our day to day living. Now, okay, that's the truth of this passage. Now, I'm going to use an illustration from football. And the illustration from football is that all of you here, you guys particularly, you were all born with a gift to play football.

You may not have known it at the time, but you were born with a gift, you got a ball at your feet, you probably got a ball at your feet all the time, you probably break all the ornaments in your house, because of balls at your feet. That's what happens in our house, we have no ornaments. The only thing we've got things over 12 feet up high, that haven't been broken by a ball with three boys who have played all the time. Okay, you're born with this gift to play. But you know, don't you? You

know, it's really important if you want to develop as a footballer that you work at that gift. It's not good just swanning on the pitch and saying, I've got a gift for football. I'm brilliant, I'm a genius. You know, you've got to work at that gift. Thomas Edison, who was a phenomenal inventor from America, he said that genius is 90% perspiration and only 10% inspiration. So he was saying, basically, you can have great ideas, but you've got to really work through them. And the same is true of football, same is true of your Christian life. But you know, you think of the best players in the world just now. Who do you think is the best player in the world just now? Who? Ronaldo, Messi, any British ones? Vaguely? Anyone? Who? Bale. Yeah, maybe someone like Bale. But all these guys, if you find out about these guys, none of them just turn up for a game. Most of them, the greatest players are the ones they stay behind after training. You know, you don't, I know you don't think that with someone like Ronaldo, because he looks like such a poser, but he spends so much time on the practice field, practising his free kicks, practising his passes. When everyone else is gone, he's dedicated, he's devoted, he's always there, that's why he's great. He has a gift, yeah, but he's worked at that gift. And some of the greatest tragedies that I've seen over the years in football is guys have got great gift, fantastic gift, but who are idle, who don't do anything with it, who don't practise, who are not fit, and who end up on the scrap heap by the time they're 25 or 26. So I'm going to invert this passage here, and you could apply this passage to football, and then I'm going to apply it much more importantly to Christianity. So you could say, say verses 5 to 10, more 5 to, no, 5, 6 and 7, you could say, because this is the illustration, make every effort to add to your natural footballing gift, what do you add to it? Teamwork, knowledge of the game, coaching, persevering. When you fall, get back up, no divers, no Robins this week, okay, you all got to get up. Practice, add practice, add skill training, add exercise, add diet, help others in their game. And when you do that, you will, when you possess these qualities and increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your football development. Otherwise, you're blind. You're wrecking your future chances, you've forgotten what you've learned in the past and you'll be no good in the present. Now that's, that's what Peter is saying here, but obviously he's not saying about football, he's saying about the gospel, and he's saying about Christ, and he's saying about Christianity, and that, see, I love football, I love football, but it's nothing compared to Christ, and it's nothing compared with the gospel. Football is just sport. It will let you down, it's full of impurity, it can't change your heart, it can't forgive you, it can't give you the foundation for life you need, it can't defeat death, it can't be what gives you grace in your life. It's only a sport, guys, remember

that this week. Remember how great it is as a sport, terrible idol, but we can use it as an illustration. Christ matters so much more. Christ is the one who loves you and who went and did the most ultimate thing he possibly could, was to went to the cross to die for you, to die for your sins so that what separates you from God can be dealt with and the barrier between you and God can be dealt with, so that you can be friends with Him again. That's the great thing about the gospel. You know, when it's like when you fall out with a friend, maybe they hack you on the football park really badly. It never happened to me and I never did it, but if you do that, then there's usually a barrier between you and your pal because they did something, they were vicious to you. And so usually, if that's going to be put right, someone has to say sorry, someone has to apologize, okay? Now a much more significant level sins separates us from God, so badly that eternally lost eternity, hell. And the real, it has to be put right, we can't put it right just by saying sorry. We need to recognize that someone pays the price for us, we can't pay ourselves. And Christ does that for you. He does that for you and He does it for me. And that's hugely important as a motivation for you to go on once you become Christian and live the Christian life with the gift of salvation and then working out what it means to be a Christian. Can I give you another example of what I mean here? It's another quote from Billy, from Bill Shankley.

[16:08] I like this quote, if you're a footballer, you'll like this quote. If you're not a footballer, you might not be so keen. He said, the trouble with referees, he said, is that they know the rules, but they don't know the game. And that's quite true. And you know, sometimes people who come to church can be like that. They can know the rules of Christianity, but they don't really know the Saviour of Christianity. What it's about, what the core of it, the core of it is grace and loving Christ. And that is a motive that we obey Him. And it's possible for you, maybe particularly as young boys to think, church is about rules and regulations and stuff like that. But it's about the person of Jesus. And when we know Him and love Him, just like you would learn to know and love and respect a coach or your leaders, but at a different level, then you will seek His way and seek to follow Him. So

Christ is hugely significant and He encourages us therefore, as Christians, and Peter here has encouraged the people of Christians to add to this foundation they have. And He gives these various qualifications to develop the gift of salvation in their lives, just like you develop the gift of football by practice and training and coaching and learning and listening. And that's what we must do as believers. We need to add to our faith goodness. Okay, so this is a list of things, wholesomeness, rightness, knowledge, knowledge of God, knowledge of Jesus through prayer and relationship, through the Bible, through discussions. You know, one of the great things for you guys this week will be that you'll be able to discuss what the leaders have said in their talks in your terms. That's a great thing. Make use of that. Speak to them, ask them. Don't ask them difficult questions just for the sake of it or to catch them out, but ask them questions that you want and look for answers to in the Bible.

And if they don't know the answer, they'll come back to you. They'll say, well, I'm not sure about that, but I'll think about it and pray about it and look it up and come back to you. Use these opportunities to learn, gain in knowledge of Christ and of who He is. Self-control. Now interestingly, I just kind of make sure that everyone, broaden it to everyone that we recognize that these, there are two great qualities here. Self-control and perseverance, the Christian line. Now self-control is really about the way we treat good things. Okay? So that in other words, not becoming self-indulgent with good things.

You know, good things are right in and of themselves, but not to become selfish or self-indulgent in the way that we use God's gifts, not to pig out on the good things, not to just indulge ourselves. So we need from the Holy Spirit, from God dwelling in us, self-control. And perseverance, the other side of that, is more about the ability to keep going in our response in bad times. So self-control is how we respond to the good things God gives us. Perseverance is how we respond to the bad things, is that we don't give up, is that we keep going. You know, that's what you want most from a footballer in a team. When things are going back, you know, worse, did any of you see the Brazil game against Germany? Did you see that? There's something amazing happened in that game. I don't know in their minds of the Brazilians, but when two, three, four goals went in, they just gave up. I don't think they could do it. It was like they were paralysed. It's the strangest thing. But you know, sometimes we're like that as Christians. When things are difficult, we just give up, or we blame

God, or we say that God isn't being fair. But he teaches us and reminds us that we'll struggle, and there'll be suffering, and there'll be difficulties. And we're in the bad times, persevere. In the good times, show self-control and not just indulge ourselves, but we are to follow him. We are to be godly, you know, like God, like Jesus. Be like Jesus, wherever we are, in the dorm, in your reactions, responses, in your honesty, with the way you treat the other boys and the leaders on the football park, in our workplaces, where we study, in our marriages, God like Jesus, aware of his lordship, aware of his significance. And he goes on to talk there, and it's not an exhaustive list about brotherly kindness and love, that we work out our salvation in the way we treat one another and in our reactions to other people.

There's a great emphasis today that the Bible is only about me and God, and what I think about God, and my personal faith. But it's not. It's much more than that. It's about how we treat one another, and the outworking of grace in our communities. It's a team effort.

[21 : 23] It's a community we have together. So, we have that list, and then Peter goes on to say, that will, if you possess these qualities, increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's hugely significant. God says, in our Christian lives, he wants us to be productive and effective.

So it's an ongoing reality, an ongoing relationship with him. We don't become a Christian and then stop. You don't become a footballer and just stop. You develop and you grow and you mature. You don't become an adult and just stop. You don't just go to the high school and just stop. You grow and you become effective and you become productive in your life. And it's like the manager who says to you, you're playing centre half. This is how I want you to play. You're playing centre forward. Go on to the pitch and play this way. Play according to the structure of the team. And Jesus says exactly the same with us spiritually, that he wants us to be effective and productive in our Christian lives.

So one of the responses to this as you read it and think about it is, am I? Did I just believe in Jesus and come to faith in Jesus and then left him there? And I'll pick him up again the day before I die so

that I've got my insurance policy to heaven. Or am I growing? Am I effective? Am I productive? Am I developing as a Christian? I can't answer that question for anyone other than myself. The people that I'm closest to, we can share truth and accountability with one another but generally speaking, this is how responsibility, it's your responsibility, yes with the help and support of others.

That is the challenge that, and particularly for young people, that you don't either think that Christianity is for old people or that Christianity is just a decision you make and then you get on with your life as if nothing's different. It affects everything because Christ becomes your Lord and your God. And the great thing about this, and with this I'm going to finish, okay? The great thing about that is that God is, and this is what I, obviously any illustration I use in football is an illustration, it's only, it's very imperfect, it's just a picture, it's just an illustration. But the amazing thing about this is that God is with us, okay? God is with us in this Christian life. Christ is with us as Lord and Savi, the Holy Spirit is in us to enable us to live this life. So, he says, therefore my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure that if you do these things you will never fall and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If you don't do these things, what does he say? He says, you're blind, you're short-sighted, you can't see ahead, you've forgotten that you've been cleansed from past sin. Remember we sung that Sam, Sam 51, being cleansed from sin. So you've forgotten that past. And so often that's what we're like, aren't we? We just live for today and we've forgotten the past and we've forgotten what lies ahead. That's why in the Christian church God gives us the Lord's supper, he gives us a sacrament of the Lord's supper. He says, remember, remember, remember the cross, remember what I've done, remember because our tendency is to forget. So, we don't forget and we keep this future vision that it's not just about today, it's not just about this week, it's not even just about our lives, it's about eternity and that's very important. But God, we're told in this last passage, God is with us, okay? God has elected and called you. If you're a Christian, that's an amazing truth that you've been chosen by God. No one can take you out of his hand. He is from before the foundation of the world, chosen you to be with himself. The price has been paid, you're safe. It's not like football, you know, football will let you down and even if you have great times in football, eventually they'll come to an end. Think of, for example,

[26 : 05] Spain this year. Man, they were riding on the crest of a wave, won the European Championship, they won the World Cup. Greatest team, whipped, 5-1 in the first game, World Cup. All comes to an end. But it's different. You're not all going to be on the winning team this week.

You'll lose sometimes and even if you are on the winning team this week, maybe you'll go home and you'll play and you'll be on the losing team. You can't guarantee that. But if you're in Christ, if you put your trust in Christ as your Savior, if you come and accept the gift of faith to believe in Him, you will always be on the winning side. You're in the side of victory. You're in the side of life. You're in the side of protection.

You're in the side of eternal life because He has elect you and He has called you. But this great paradox of the Bible, and it's difficult for us sometimes, is He takes that great truth of God being with us and He says, now, make your calling and election sure.

You work it. Yes, in my strength. Yes, with my grace. Yes, with His great knowledge that you're chosen, but go and work out your Christian life. Now, you know, it's like that great moment, isn't it, when you're in the dressing room, a big cup final and the manager comes out and he pins the team to the wall and you're there. You've been chosen. You're part of that cup final team. But it doesn't end there, does it? Now, nobody can change that choice.

The fellow players can't change it. The media can't change it. The crowd can't change it. You are in the team. You're going to be there. You're going to be on the pitch. But you don't just stand there when you get on and say, I'm part of the team. Or you don't just sit in the changing room and say, well, I've been picked. That's great. I've made it. Don't do that, do you? No, you go out there and it doesn't end there. You play. You play and you repay your faith in the one who's chosen you. And you work your hardest for the team and you use the gifts you've been given to the best of your ability. Now, it's only an imperfect illustration. How much more, though, should we as Christians? And that's what's been said here. Be all the more eager because of what Jesus has done, because of His choice, because of His election, because of His faith that He's gifted you, because of the life and the hope and the joy that He brings. You make your calling and election sure. You work it out of your faith. You follow these things and you add to your faith goodness and knowledge and self-control and perseverance and godliness. You do that. Yes, you do it with His help.

[29 : 05] You do it in His strength. And that's the greatest, not like a football coach who, once you're over the white line, you're on your own. That's what they say, don't you? I can't do anything now. Once you're over the white line, you're on your own. It's not like that with grace. God didn't send Jesus to die on the cross and then offer a salvation and say, now you work it, you're on your own. You just live and be a Christian. You're on your own. Not, He says, I am with you. I will send my spirit and the spirit will be in our hearts and He will enable us to be Christians. And He is, of course, the greatest coach, if you talk in these terms of all. So can I encourage you to think about heaven? I know it's maybe the last thing on some of your minds. But as Christians, we're encouraged to remember the welcome, the rich welcome that we receive into heaven when we remember the gift that we've been given and when we work through that gift with lives of holiness and obedience. So let us do that and let us hold firmly to that foundation. And can I encourage the boys this week to really think about these things? I know you're young and all football is just majorly important and having the crack and good fun and all that's right and all that's good. Have a fantastic week. But don't not think about the most important thing of all. In our church, at Denomination, camps have been the single most significant thing, sorry, one of a better word, that we've done evangelistically. Most of many of my friends, including myself, came to faith at camps over many years that's happened. So please remember that God has really blessed them and God's brought you here to enjoy and to meet new friends. But hopefully, if you don't already know Him, know the greatest friend of all, the Lord Jesus Christ is your Saviour. So will you think about that? Will we all think about that and pray for the boys and their leaders, for their safekeeping and for their blessing over this week? And all, obviously, of ourselves also. So let's bow our heads and pray together. Father God, we ask and pray that you would help us to understand the Bible and understand its truth and understand that although it's a word and it's written, it's actually about you, it's about a person, and so much so that you're called the word.

And we ask and pray that you would be real to us and that the motivation for lives of obedience and service and holiness and love to one another is the grace and the peace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. May these things become very real and very important in our lives and our hearts. And may you bless everyone who's here today, both the lads from the camp and others who are visiting with us and our own people, our own congregation and our own family. May you also bless the many of our own number who are away at this time. We pray that you'd bless those on holiday and those that are down at Kessok.

We pray that you bless that time of fellowship and teaching that they receive there. And that you would remember all of us in our strength and our weakness and our needs and in all things Christ would be given the honour, the praise and the glory. So remember as we pray and help us to remember you and go before us by your grace and in your favour free in Christ. Amen.