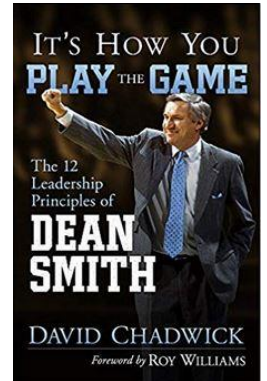


## It's How You Play the Game – Part I

A trademark of a successful leader is that they care more about others than their own personal achievement. Many successful leaders develop their leadership philosophy on biblical principles and the example of Jesus Christ. God enables them because their motivation is to serve the Lord by helping others. I recently finished reading the book, "It's How You Play the Game," which chronicles the leadership philosophies of Dean Smith. Dean Smith was one of the most successful college basketball coaches in America. The book points out 12 leadership principles that are attributable to his faith as a Christian. If you are not a Carolina fan or even a sports fan, that is OK. These principles are important for any Christian leader. During the next 3 weeks I will outline those principles.



**Leadership Principle 1 - Be Loyal:** Coach Smith always put his players ahead of everyone, including the university President and other dignitaries. The book calls it “reciprocal loyalty:” If you are loyal to others first, they’ll be loyal to you. God is loyal to you first. He cares about you and will never leave or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). In response to God’s love and commitment to you, be loyal to Him.

**Leadership Principle 2 - Provide a Family Environment:** We are all part of God’s family where everyone is loved regardless of their shortcomings. Dean Smith was noted for treating all his players like family with each person equally important. Coach Smith had all players on the bench stand and applaud whenever a Carolina player came out of the game. They cheered each other on. Read Colossians 3:13. .

**Leadership Principle 3 - Be a Friend Forever:** Coach Smith maintained a friendship with his players forever. It wasn’t a matter of having a relationship just during their playing days. He desired for them to be successful at life, not just on the basketball court. God loves us unconditionally. Your relationship with the Heavenly Father is forever -- eternal.

**Leadership Principle 4 - Put the Team Before the Individual:** Each person brought to the team specific skills which melded together to form a strong team. Everyone was important, from the superstar to the student manager. Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. The team was stronger than the sum of its parts. In your leadership style respect and appreciate what each person brings to the effort.

**Leadership Principle 5 - Be Flexible with Your Vision:** Coach Smith said “we don’t have a system, but a philosophy that is flexible and innovates.” Basketball is all about fundamentals performed well in changing game conditions. Life situations are ever changing. Once you buy into God’s philosophy – the fundamentals of faith -- you will be able to make the right decisions in life, even during crisis situations. Coach Smith was innovative in a creative way. He didn’t plan every new strategy. They just happened because they were the right thing to do. Understand the main themes of the Bible and you will make the right choices.

**Leadership Principle 6 - Get Better, and the Team Gets Better.** Coach Smith knew that as players refined their skills their value to the team improved dramatically. You can contribute to God’s plan as you develop and use the abilities and heart the Lord gives you and you can enable others to succeed.

**Closing Prayer:** Heavenly Father. We pray that we will follow the example of Jesus Christ. We pray that we will be loyal to you and treat everyone as equals. We pray that our philosophy of life will match yours. Amen. This is the first of a 3-part series on Christian leadership. The traits described in all 3 parts are exhibited by Dean Smith, the former University of North Carolina basketball coach. In this series he is just a recognizable example of a person who exhibits traits of Christian leadership that are also observed in other Christian leaders. Dean Smith’s Christian attributes are described by Rev. David Chadwick, in the book "It's How You Play the Game." Chadwick played for Coach Smith and is now pastor of a large church in Charlotte, NC.