

Everyone Matters

March Madness. It is an electrifying time of year for sports fans, concluding an exciting 2023-2024 basketball season. We have particularly noticed women's basketball this season because of players like Catlin Clark. She eclipsed the all-time NCAA women's scoring record and later passed Pistol Pete Maravich as the leading scorer in NCAA history. Clark raised interest in women's sports nationwide.

To be perfectly clear, this devotion isn't about one player but the culture of an entire team. The University of Iowa seeks to be a team where "everyone matters." Their coach, Lisa Bluder, said: "... one of our values is everyone matters. It doesn't matter to us if you're the leading scorer or if you're a person who seldom gets off the bench. To me? Everyone matters."



How do they live out that philosophy when one player receives so much national attention? As Catlin Clark was nearing the national scoring record, you would think she would be taking all the shots. After all, this was her time! As she closed in on the all-time scoring record, sophomore forward Hannah Stuelke had a career night against Penn State. Stuelke averages 14.4 points a game, but against Penn State, Stuelke couldn't miss. In the Penn State game, Stuelke made 17 of 20 shots from the floor, scoring 47 points. How did Clark help? Clark had 15 assists in that game, as she did her part to get Stuelke the ball as often as possible. For Clark, it was about making her teammates better.

Coach Bluder said about her team culture: we "praise the assist." The team blends the unique skills of every player on the roster, translating to the team's success. Each person's role is *their purpose* on the team. There is no jealousy about the attention given to one player. Clark celebrates the contributions of everyone on the 14-player Iowa roster. Even though Clark leads the nation in scoring (32.3 points per game), she also leads the nation in assists (8.7) per game. A big part of her success is how she makes everyone else better. Her unselfishness is contagious to the rest of her team. In the face of the pressure from over-the-top media coverage and sell-out crowds, Coach Bluder says Clark is "humble, compassionate, and selfless."



We all have an opportunity to assist others. In our everyday lives, how do we assist others in achieving success? How do you respond to the needs of others? Does everyone around you matter?

We are on multiple "teams" – whether as a family, in the workplace, as members of an organization, or just a group of friends. We each bring our unique God-given abilities to blend in with others for success. Using our unique abilities is *our purpose in life*. Team success is not necessarily "winning it all" but accomplishing more collectively than we could achieve individually.

Use how God has gifted you and celebrate the gifts that others bring. It is a winning formula. The "ball is in your hands" as you play a role in the lives of others. How can you assist someone else in their success?

The Bible says: *For the body does not consist of one member but of many (1 Corinthians 12:14)*

Prayer: Dear Lord. We pray that we will contribute to the success of others, not for our glory, but for yours. Amen.