



## It is only a game!

Let's take a look at the future of America. We see that it has changed considerably from the provincial makeup of its founding to a streamlined, all-inclusive democracy. The year is 2117, a mere 100 years from now. We will be eavesdropping on a history lesson that is beamed to millions of students who are gathered not into classrooms but rather are comfortably relaxed at home in their interactive study carrels with a virtual real-life view of the subject being presented.

The teacher begins today's history lesson by posing this question, "What were people preoccupied with 100 years ago? You might guess they were concerned about their living conditions or their local and national governments, or the management of the economy. These are good guesses but the wrong answers. Twenty-first century Americans were consumed with sports. *Plunkett Research* estimated that the U.S. alone spent 498.4 million per year on the entire sports industry. Sunday football was by far the most popular, even more popular than Sunday church services.

"In addition to the cost of attending a football game, there were those at home often paying extra for premium television channels that carried their favorite team. And, of course, there was a whole franchise of sports clothing so fans could dress up like their favorite player. It was not often that a star player made less than a million dollars a year for 16 games. Newspapers, before digital reporting, devoted entire sections to sports with every aspect of football covered. Sports broadcasters became millionaire celebrities because of their game coverage and analysis.

"According to *The Wall Street Journal*, a daily financial paper at that time, an average football game lasted a little over three

hours but the ball was in actual play for only eleven minutes during that time. Official time-outs were called frequently so advertisers could air some 100 commercials during the course of the game. Add in instant replays, positioning on the field and numerous huddles to make the game move ever so slowly. The average time of each down with the ball in play was less than six seconds, a very costly six seconds.

"How does this concentration on sports 100 years ago affect us in 2117? You have learned that the legacy of past generations determines what we must contend with today. If the citizens of the twenty first century had paid more attention to their resources, we would not have to struggle so hard to make our way now. If they had been truly involved in their governance, we could have avoided many civil conflicts. If the welfare of all citizens had been a priority, we would have had less dysfunctional poverty.

"Does this mean that sports were the downfall of twenty-first century America? No, it just means that many lost their perspective. They ignored what needed their attention and substituted the specter of physical prowess when critical thought and subsequent action were required. Sure, football is fun to play and to watch, but remember it is only a game.

"Stewardship, how we take care of ourselves and others, will determine what kind of life our children and grandchildren will live. We pass on unbelievable technology but if we shortchange the future of the basics—family, education, healthcare, equity, respect—then we have ignored the most important necessities of a good life."

Written by Ray Huss, member of our Stewardship Committee

## Everyday Stewardship

After years working for the Church, I can honestly say that even though I feel closer to God, I still cannot fully grasp all that is God. The complexity of God has been the source of many volumes by many writers and theologians. The crazy reality of growing in a relationship with God is that the more you get to know God, the more complex God becomes.

But I think that is true of human relationships as well. I feel like I can really peg a person one way or another after only meeting him or her a few times, but my wife and children continue to perplex me. Getting to know someone means you begin to uncover the layers of personality, feeling, and emotion that make up each human being. For those who see God as only a force or a light, God is simply defined. But for those who seek to be disciples of Jesus Christ, the God we find in relationship has many layers as well.

But that which we do know for certain about God comes to us primarily from the person of Jesus. He called us to a way of life by not only teaching us about how to live, but by showing us the example of his life. Our God is defined by generosity, sacrifice, compassion, and, of course, love. The more we incorporate these characteristics into our own life, the more we bear witness to the true nature of God. Then others can see a God that is a little less complex because they understand him through you and me. Our life will speak more than all the volumes written by all the theologians.

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