Team Chaplain

INSPIRATION

Guide

A collection of prayers, poems, quotes and reflections to assist in your athletic ministry

THE NEUMANN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE
for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development
Thank you for sharing your gifts by currently serving, or seeking to serve, as a team chaplain. This extremely rewarding lay ministry helps athletes, coaches, even athletic administrators and others in your education or athletic community form deeper relationships with themselves, others, and God.

A team chaplain finds success by authentically and genuinely sharing his or her unique gifts and perspectives. As such, there is no one “right” way to be a team chaplain. Knowing when and how often to implement certain elements of team chaplaincy (for example, team prayers or reflection exercises) will come from understanding the nature and goals of your assigned athletic team. Find our free, downloadable Team Chaplain Guide, with direction on living out this unique role, on our website at isscd.org. It contains many useful tips and strategies based on Neumann University’s team chaplaincy program.

As you navigate the role of a team chaplain, use this inspiration guide as a resource for prayers, reflective prompts, poems and more, all of which may resonate with your athletes when used in the appropriate places and times. The insight to discern the best use of these tactics will grow alongside your ministry as a team chaplain.

Importantly, your interactions with team members should not be limited to only those items listed in this guide. Nor should they be limited only to established prayers, reflections or exercises. Often, the words to most effectively reach your athletes in the various unique situations they’ll encounter each season must come from within you. Again, your ability to discern the most appropriate interaction with your athletes will come as your grow alongside the team.
This guide is a living document and will be updated often; please check back frequently for the most up-to-date version. And, if you have a favorite prayer, reflection or quote, please send it to us (isscd@neumann.edu) for inclusion.

For additional resources, visit the Institute for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development online at [www.isscd.org](http://www.isscd.org).
An important element of a team chaplain’s responsibility is to enhance mindfulness, spirituality, and connection to self, others and God. The following selection of prayers and readings can help athletes uncover meaning in their athletic activity, find peace in themselves, remember a common cause, and turn their attention to activities that are bigger than themselves. You may choose to recite them to your team or, as appropriate, have team members join in the prayer.
Athlete’s Prayer

Loving God, help me to wisely use the gifts and talents that You have so graciously bestowed upon me.

Create in me Lord the right attitude with which to achieve my goals and our team goals.

A firm trust in You, that through You I can be a good athlete and team player.

A strong desire to never quit, no matter what the odds, to trust my coaches, my teammates and my instincts.

A willingness to give 100% of myself both on and off the field.

Help me to be grateful for my God-given abilities, all those over the years who have developed and supported my growth as an athlete, especially my family, coaches and teammates.

Help me learn from my mistakes and be open to criticism that will bring out the best in me.

Help me, Lord, to be the person and athlete that You would have me be.

Amen

Adapted from the prayer ‘Always With You’
The Athlete’s Prayer

God, let me play well, but fairly.
Let competition make me strong, but never hostile,
In this and in all things, guide me to the virtuous path.

If I know victory, grant me happiness;
If I am denied, keep me from envy.

See me not when I am cheered, but when I bend to help my opponent up.

Seal it in my heart that everyone who takes the field with me becomes my brother.

Remind me that sports are just games. Teach me something that will matter once the games are over. And, if through athletics I set an example, let it be a good one.

From St. Lawrence Catholic Elementary School, online at:
http://stla.hwcdsb.ca/athleticsandgroups/prayers/
Coach’s Prayer

Dear Lord, guide me as
I try to coach this team;
to build each player’s character
and boost their self-esteem.

May I keep an even temper
and remember it’s just a game.
Let me not have favorite players,
but treat them all the same.

Grant me patience with them
as I praise them or correct,
remembering that I must work
to earn each one’s respect.

Lord, whether we may win or lose
may all who are watching see
the kind of coach at every match
that you would have me be.

Amen

*From ‘Final Shot: A Team’s Destiny’ by David J. Yarbough and Dan Garth Haskell*
Prayer of gratitude through play

Loving God, we thank you for this special moment to gather together in gratitude for one another and of what we accomplished this season, together.

We thank you for the moments in which we were humbled and for those of pure joy and happiness, shared together.

We thank you for our teammates, our coaches, our trainers, our parents and loved ones who generously offered their love and support to help us to develop and work towards our individual and collective potential.

May we believe in the beauty and uniqueness of the gifts with which you have blessed each of us, and we pray that you continue to guide our efforts to develop our gifts for others.

Amen

- The Institute for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development
Prayer for a new season

Loving God, you give each of us special gifts and You call us to serve one another. Help us to do the very best we can in sharing our talents and skills this season as we have this opportunity to serve as stewards of your love with the blessings you have given each of us - encourage us in stewardship of Truth in mind, body and soul.

When challenges and obstacles come our way, remind us to fulfill our responsibilities and commitment to one another. Help us, loving God, to always do our best at whatever we do.

Amen

- The Institute for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development
Prayer for a season’s end

Loving God, we thank you for this special moment to gather together in gratitude for one another and of what we accomplished this season, together.

We thank you for the moments in which we were humbled and for those of pure joy and happiness, shared together.

We thank you for our teammates, our coaches, our trainers, our parents and loved ones who generously offered their love and support to help us to develop and work towards our individual and collective potential.

May we believe in the beauty and uniqueness of the gifts with which you have blessed each of us, and we pray that you continue to guide our efforts to develop our gifts for others.

Amen

- The Institute for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development
Patient Trust

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability— and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you; your ideas mature gradually—let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don’t try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ
Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.
St. Theresa’s Prayer

May today there be peace within.
May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.
May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.
May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.
May you be content knowing you are a child of God.
Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing,
Dance, praise and love.
It is there for each and every one of us.

Amen
God’s Creation

Use me, oh God, as your creation.
When a kind word needs to be spoken, use my voice.
When a load needs to be lifted, use my back.
When an embrace needs to be given, use my arms.
When a journey needs to be taken, use my feet.
When a message needs to be delivered, use my mind.
When another needs to be loved, use my heart.
In all things, in all ways, use me God,
As your instrument of love, peace and beauty.

Amen.

- Adapted from the Prayer for Blessed Service

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

“Do you not know that runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadow boxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”
Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace.  
Our Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death.

Amen.
These readings and prompts offer the opportunity to extend prayer through meaningful and purposeful conversations. As your team processes wins, losses, joys, hardships, and the unexpected turns inevitable during any season, offering the chance for discussion can help bring athletes and coaching staff closer together in a supportive, caring environment.
Reading

One Body, Many Parts – 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Reflection

• What is your personal goal and mission for this season? How is that going to contribute to the team as one body?

• What is your long term goal for the season? What will you do to move the team towards that goal?

• What do you anticipate might stand in the way of achieving any of these goals? What can you do as an individual, and what can you do as a team, to overcome obstacles?
Reading


Reflection

• How have you seen or benefited from others who have helped you and your teammates strive towards your collective best? What does the connection of this team look like?

• What experiences along the journey with this team have helped you to grow as an individual and as a team?
Reading

The Parable of the Talents – Mark 25:14-30

Reflection

• What are you afraid of? What is holding you back from being the best version of yourself, on the field, in the classroom, in your relationships, etc?

• What key ingredient is present when you have overcome a challenge or when you’ve seen someone else overcome a challenge? How are you going to use the lesson of that experience both on the field and in life?
Additional Reflective Prompts

• Have you ever needed to focus on “putting one foot in front of the other”? What saw you through? How can you apply that experience now to challenges of today and tomorrow?

• How is your membership on your team a vehicle for something bigger in your life? How does it connect to something bigger in your awareness of self, others, and God?

• What does sacrifice mean to you? What are you willing to sacrifice for the greater good of your team and your community?

• What experiences on this team have helped you to grow in friendship with your teammates? How will you use these moments on the playing field and in life?

• Have you and your teammates played with eagerness so far this season? What does team spirit (respect, consideration, dignity, eagerness, etc.) look like in action for your team?

• When you look back on this season, what is the story you want it to tell? Look at all of the realities and the potential of yourself and your teammates – forgetting the numbers and scores, what is at the core that you want to remember and share with others in 5, 10, 20 years from now?
In athletics and life in general, we use quotes to inspire and remind us that those before us offer great wisdom from their own achievements and failures. This wisdom often translates into motivation. Use the following quotes, as appropriate, to connect your athletes with the bigger picture of their individual and team goals.

While prayers and reflections are most often implemented in person, quotes such as those presented in this section can be used in a variety of contexts. Perhaps an email to your team the night before a big game, with a quote salient to the task at hand, would be meaningful. Or, maybe a poster, a t-shirt, or some other item that team members could readily look at would offer inspiration. Even just spoken, these quotes can help your team find the encouragement and confidence they need during their journey through the season.
“The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don’t play together, the club won’t be worth a dime.”

- **Babe Ruth**
  New York Yankees great

“I am a member of the team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion.”

- **Mia Hamm**
  U.S. women’s national soccer team great

“The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.”

- **Phil Jackson**
  President, New York Knicks and former NBA coach

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.”

- **Helen Keller**
  Deafblind author, political activist, and lecturer

“Success is peace of mind, which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming.”

- **John Wooden**
  10-time NCAA men’s basketball champion as head coach at UCLA
“Nothing is hard to one whose will is set on it, especially if it be a thing to be done out of love.”

- St. Ignatius Loyola
  Mid-16th century priest and theologian

“I’ve always made a total effort, even when the odds seemed entirely against me. I never quit trying; I never felt that I didn’t have a chance to win.”

- Arnold Palmer
  American pro-golfing great

“It’s not necessarily the amount of time you spend at practice that counts; it’s what you put into the practice.”

- Eric Lindros
  Former NHL player

“We must make the choices that enable us to fulfill the deepest capacities of our real selves.”

- Thomas Merton
  Catholic poet, social activist, and priest

“Every moment is a new gift. If we avail ourselves of this opportunity, it is the key to happiness – behold the master key to our happiness in our own hands. Moment by moment we can be grateful for this gift. Be grateful in every moment for the opportunity.”

- David Steindl-Rast
  Catholic Benedictine monk
“Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.”

- **Pele**
  Former Brazilian soccer player, widely regarded as one of the best to ever play

“The vision of a champion is someone who is bent over, drenched in sweat, at the point of exhaustion, when nobody else is watching.”

- **Anson Dorance**
  Head coach, women’s soccer at the University of North Carolina

“Material possessions, winning scores, and great reputations are meaningless in the eyes of the Lord, because He knows what we really are and that is all that matters.”

- **John Wooden**
  10-time NCAA men’s basketball champion as head coach at UCLA

“A champion is someone who does not settle for that day’s practice, that day’s competition, that day’s performance. They are always striving to be better. They don’t live in the past.”

- **Brianna Scurry**
  Goalkeeper for U.S. women’s national soccer team and Olympic gold medalist

“Seek to find compassion, to stand in awe of what others carry, rather than in judgment of how they carry it.”

- **Fr. Greg Boyle**
  Founder of Homeboy Industries, which assists at-risk youth and former gang members
“If you can’t fly, then run. If you can’t run, then walk. If you can’t walk, then crawl. But whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.
Baptist minister and leader in the African-American Civil Rights Movement

“I am going to find work and do work – not for myself or for the [championship], but for my team. Because if there is one thing I am certain of, it is that we are in this thing together. And we have to work and fight for each other.”

- Rachel Dawson
U.S. women’s field hockey team at the 2008 Olympics

"Love yourself, for who and what you are; protect your dream and develop your talent to the fullest extent."

- Joan Benoit Samuelson
First ever women’s Olympic marathon gold medalist

"Most people never run far enough on their first wind to find out they've got a second. Give your dreams all you've got and you'll be amazed at the energy that comes out of you."

- William James
American philosopher and psychologist

"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go."

- T. S. Eliot
Poet, dramatist, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature
Poetry can be prayerful. Often, poetry calls us to look again at the world or inward at ourselves, reflecting on elements of life otherwise taken for granted. Specifically, the poems in this section remind athletes that their actions carry meaning, that they are unique and talented individuals, and that their membership on the team matters.
Our Deepest Fear
by Marianne Williamson

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness
That most frightens us.
We ask ourselves
Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?
Actually, who are you not to be?
You are a child of God.
Your playing small
Does not serve the world.
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking
So that other people won't feel insecure around you.
We are all meant to shine,
As children do.
We were born to make manifest
The glory of God that is within us.
It's not just in some of us;
It's in everyone.
And as we let our own light shine,
We unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
As we're liberated from our own fear,
Our presence automatically liberates others.
If
by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you.
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:
If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat these two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son
Little Eyes
by Edgar Guest

There are little eyes upon you and they're watching night and day. There are little ears that quickly take in every word you say. There are little hands all eager to do anything you do; And a little boy who's dreaming of the day he'll be like you. You're the little fellow's idol, you're the wisest of the wise. In his little mind about you no suspicions ever rise. He believes in you devoutly, holds all you say and do; He will say and do, in your way when he's grown up just like you. There's a wide-eyed little fellow who believes you're always right; and his eyes are always opened, and he watches day and night. You are setting an example every day in all you do; For the little boy who's waiting to grow up to be like you.
Letting Go and Letting God  
(author unknown)

To let go does not mean to stop caring; it means I can’t do it for someone else. To let go is not to cut myself off; it’s the realization I can’t control another. To let go is not to enable, but to allow learning from natural consequences. To let go is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands. To let go is not to try to change or blame another; it’s to make the most of myself. To let go is not to care for, but to care about. To let go is not to be in the middle arranging all of the outcomes, but to allow other to affect their destinies. To let go is not to fix, but to be supportive. To let go is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being. To let go is not to deny, but to accept. To let go is not to nag, scold, or argue; but instead to search out my own shortcomings and correct them. To let go is not to adjust everything to my desires, but to take each day as it comes and cherish myself in it. To let go is not to criticize and regulate anybody, but to try to become what I dream I can be. To let go is not to regret the past, but to grow and live for the future. To let go is to fear less and to love more.
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