

Beginner's Guide to FCA

The Fellowship of Christian Athletes is the largest Christian campus ministry in the world. It is on more campuses than the next three largest campus ministries combined. In the past year, FCA reached more than 350,000 people on over 7,100 campuses and worked with more than 46,000 coaches and athletes at camps across the globe.

The numbers for this ministry are staggering. Still, even though it's been around since 1954, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes is a mystery to many. Even the late Tom Landry, legendary Dallas Cowboys' coach and lifetime trustee of FCA, used to call FCA "America's best-kept secret."

Most people have at least heard of it, but some of them can't really say for sure what FCA is all about.

That was me two weeks ago, in my first days as an intern for Sharing the Victory magazine. Assigned to write a "Beginner's Guide to FCA," the task seemed fairly overwhelming. How do you sum up such a huge and influential organization in just one story?

Well, as it turns out, the answer is quite simple.

FCA's purpose, at its absolute core, is to combine people's passion for sports with their passion for Christ, and teach them that those two worlds don't have to be separate. FCA wants to give meaning to the athletic nature that all of us are born with and use it for something that stretches beyond sports.

"We, as a ministry, get to reach people in a competitive mindset – coaches and athletes – and minister to their hearts," said Dan Britton, FCA's senior vice president of Ministry Programs. "We can speak your language. And we're going to share something even greater than sports. We're actually going to give sports their proper perspective. We're going to give a foundation to the sports, so now, when you play, it makes sense."

We live in a sports-crazed nation. It doesn't take much research or analysis to figure that out. Sports, in some capacity, are a part of almost everyone's life, whether it's playing, watching, coaching or cheering. Even those who aren't directly involved in athletics probably have a close friend or family member who is.

Sports are a part of our culture, neatly woven into our lives almost as much as home cooking or afternoon naps. They can dominate conversations at home or work. They cause us to get up early and stay up late.

But what if there's something more to it all? Competing for yourself and your own glory shouldn't be what it's about.

That's where the Fellowship of Christian Athletes comes in. FCA is the heart and soul in sports. It's working in the sporting community to impact the world for Jesus Christ, and it's doing this by ministering to those on the inside, the coaches and athletes. FCA's "The Four C's" represent the four branches of the ministry – Coaches, Camp, Campus and Community – all of which you can read about in more detail on this Web site.

So, how is FCA ministering to coaches and athletes all over the world? Again, it starts on the inside, with FCA's four Core Values: Integrity, Serving, Teamwork and Excellence. FCA is focused on meeting coaches and athletes where they're at and working to serve them, whether it's through camps, campus meetings called "Huddles," conferences or Bible studies. And by serving them, FCA can teach them to do the same by ministering to their peers or teammates.

Britton agrees: "I believe this whole concept of combining sports and Christ provides a platform for the athletes and coaches now to have an opportunity to do ministry. Great ministry happens not when the FCA paid staff shows up, but it's when coaches reach coaches and athletes reach athletes. And they have an opportunity to now take what they understand about competing for Christ, competing for God's glory, and take it to the next level."

Britton wanted to make one point clear, however. Just because FCA encourages athletes to compete for Christ's glory doesn't mean Christian athletes should be labeled as "soft." In fact, it's quite the opposite.

The last of the FCA's four core values could be the most telling: Excellence. Throughout Scripture, God requires not what is good, but what is excellent.

"There's a level of excellence, there's a level of intensity, there's a level of enthusiasm, there's a level of commitment that goes beyond what any man has seen," Britton said. "That's what we expect in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Why? Because that's what God expects, so we want to provide a standard."

This level of excellence applies the same to athletes and coaches. Donna Noonan, FCA's coaches' ministry director and a former NCAA coach, said the difference is evident almost immediately when coaches get involved with FCA.

"All of the sudden they look at their players as kids they want to develop rather than just looking at the scoreboard," Noonan said. "That's not to say you quit looking at the scoreboard because we understand you need to win as a coach, but you also know that if it doesn't work, you've got your hope in another place. That's really what we're trying to help our coaches understand."

At FCA, there's a place for everyone to get involved. It is a goal to provide opportunities for every athlete and every coach in every sport. FCA even has national sports ministries, known as FCA Sports, for those who want to have fellowship and community within a particular sport. Right now, there are ministries established for Golf, Lacrosse, Baseball, Health and Fitness, Motocross, Endurance, Skateboarding, Cheer and Surf, with plans to add more sports in the near future. These specialized ministry opportunities fit right in with the core purpose of FCA – to meet coaches and athletes where they're at and minister to their hearts – helping to see the

world impacted for Jesus Christ.

Whether Landry was right or not in calling FCA “America’s best-kept secret,” what’s more important is FCA is ministering and making an impact in the hearts of coaches and athletes across the globe. Lives are being changed.

And those who may not know much about FCA are seeing a clear difference in the way coaches and athletes are competing.

So, what is FCA all about?

In some ways, you have to see for yourself.



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