

Coaching Staff Transitions

Through my fourteen years of service as a sport chaplain with college football, basketball, volleyball, baseball and other teams, I've endured several staff transitions. Some were due to resignations to take new opportunities and some due to firings. Either way, they're not easy to deal with for the staff or the chaplain. Below are some simple thoughts on how to make the transition and to maintain your relationship with the new coaching staff, the support staff and the players.

Related to the outgoing staff:

- If the staff was fired, understand that this feels like failure and a lot like death to them.
- Help the coaches to see this situation within the sovereignty of God. The Lord is not surprised by this.
- Understand that the transition is probably harder on the coach's family than on the coach.
- Be available to them. They may not want much company, but if they welcome your presence, be there.
- Be prepared for the termination of some relationships. Some relationships will live beyond their tenure with your team, but others will cut off all ties to this place and you could be cut off as well.
- Communicate respect and thankfulness for their time with your team as well as hope for their future.
- Assure them of your prayers and availability to serve.
- Written communication is very good and can be an enduring encouragement to them. Send a card, an email and/or periodic text messages to stay in touch with them.

Related to the incoming staff:

- Pray for favor with the athletic administration and the new head coach.
- When a new head coach is announced, send a letter of congratulations immediately (keep it to one page).
- When the coach is settled into the office, get an appointment to welcome him/her and to offer your assistance.
- Bring a gift (a book) that is reflective of your desired relationship with the

coaching staff and team.

- A wise attitude is reflected in offering to do, “as much or as little as the head coach believes appropriate.”
- When discussing a role with the team one can reference his/her role with past coaching staffs, but don’t lock into those methods or activities exclusively.
- Let the coach paint the parameters for your role and work to build trust and credibility from there.
- It is always wise to offer to serve with no strings attached. Guard your attitude from presumption.
- Come prepared to discern the coach’s perception of his/her, the staff and the team’s needs.

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