



Play Ball!

If nothing else, hold onto your Integrity!

By Dr. Fred Johnson

During a flight from Phoenix to Detroit, an Umpiring Crew Chief of Major League Baseball asked me, “Fred, how do my guys feel good about themselves when they can’t win?” He went on to explain the most significant challenge in leading a professional umpire team is keeping the morale and the passion of his men up.

If we do our jobs well, we are invisible, receiving no acclaim or appreciation for our expertise. If we do our jobs poorly, we are scrutinized the next day by the media, only after we have been given new names by the crowd during the game. After a while it grates your sense of worth and contribution.

His question is one I find myself answering frequently in similar conversations with executives throughout the country. “How can I win in an unwinnable situation that is outside of my sphere of control?” Today, many people in the U.S. including homeowners, real estate professionals, nurses and doctors, business leaders, workers, charity heads and corporate executives are all struggling with “keeping faith in themselves” in such a daunting time.

My answer was the only one that came to mind. Winning in what appears to be an unwinnable situation begins with changing the audience for which you are playing in front of.

It’s really about stepping back and asking yourself, what are the non-negotiable values in your life that you want to pass on to your children? They are the qualities that you know God, your family and yourself would honor.

If your crew can be true to themselves, no matter how loud the crowd is screaming, complaining, or even applauding, then they have won a great victory of not losing themselves while trying to be all things to everyone else.

When society’s outside measurements tell us we are not winning when we lost our jobs, our homes, our positions, our retirement dreams or even the cheers from the crowd, if you have kept your integrity, your humility and your character, you have won no matter what!

My umpire friend replied, “You know I made a bad call in the game last night. That crowd was tough on me. I wish I had those words when I was beating myself up. They are so simple but yet it is something to hold onto in the moment…We all lose sight of that. Being true to my inner umpire,” he said laughing.

That’s right, Play ball!