**3 Lessons from the Coach’s Playbook**

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**The Legacy of Jeff “Coach K” Kisiah**  
**November 10, 1957 – May 3, 2019**

The year was 2004. We had set up a booth at a large pastors’ conference in Orlando. Our booth had a black and white checkered floor, actual NASCAR racing tires for props, and signage that looked like we were at the race track. “We didn’t know it,” recalls Brett Clemmer, “but we had just chosen the perfect bait for one of the attendees.”

A pastor from Charlotte, Jeff “Coach K” Kisiah, walked into our booth expressing his glee. Two of his favorite things were men’s discipleship and auto racing. (We would learn later that Clemson football was the third pillar  of Coach K’s passion.) As Brett put it fondly, “It really was brotherly love at first sight.”

Over the years, Coach K moved from a Man in the Mirror fan to a trusted friend to a committed advocate to an invaluable team member. His passion for seeing churches reach and disciple men dovetailed perfectly with our men’s discipleship model, [No Man Left Behind](https://maninthemirror.org/a-new-perspective-on-mens-ministry/), and over the years, Jeff would go on to make many contributions to improve our training as he applied it in his own ministry and others.

From 2013-2017, he served on our staff as our first National Field Director to build and shepherd our team of Area Directors, having an incredible impact on their lives that continued up until the day the Lord took him home one year ago this week.

**Our ministry is forever indebted to Coach K for his tireless passion, vision, and sacrifice for the cause of men’s discipleship. As we like to say, discipleship changes *everything*, and he centered his life on that truth.**

But it’s his lessons that we most want to share with leaders like you, for we know his legacy lives on in the lives these lessons change. Here, straight from Coach K’s playbook—

**How to Transform Your Ministry**

**1) Know Your Roster**

Coach K preached *and* practiced the importance of knowing every man in your ministry. There is no substitute for quality time for accomplishing this so he often participated in what he called “the ministry of hanging out.”

Whether he was leading a small group, organizing a road trip for men to help victims of Hurricane Katrina rebuild, organizing a day at a Clemson game, or consistently inviting guys to meet one-on-one for a meal (he called these “Barnabas Lunch Appointments” and they became foundational to his discipleship model), he never wasted an opportunity to turn hanging out into ministry.

**The key that differentiates hanging out from *the ministry of* hanging out is intentionality.** Braden Randall (CO) saw that as one of Coach K’s key strengths. “Most men are not intentional in a relational way and that was the very nature of Coach K.” Although it may not come naturally, being disciplined about spending a few moments before meeting with a man to prepare for conversation can be a game changer for your time together.

Jim Boetjer (ID) shared, “He taught me the art of looking for ways to ask focused questions to draw men out and into relationship with God and each other.”

As Michael Grimm (AZ) remembers, “I learned from him to ask questions when the opportunity arose—to help ‘lift the window shade on a man’s life.’ He’d created a handout of drive-time questions as a resource to start conversations with men that I still use. He had an affinity for men on the fringe of the life of the church and looked for opportunities to practice the ministry of hanging out with them in particular.”

What opportunities are coming up with men that you can shift into the ministry of hanging out through a few intentional conversations? Who on your roster could you invite to a one-on-one lunch or perhaps an online “coffee break” over Zoom with three or four others? Is there someone you haven’t personally had the chance to meet?

Few things bond guys together faster than shared experiences, whether the experience is one of struggle, service, or fun. While you get to know the men on your roster, how can you help them get to know each other? For example, when social gatherings resume in your community, what are some activities you could plan? Is there a ropes course nearby? An air-boat tour? A Frisbee golf (aka disc golf) course? A widow’s house in the church that needs some work?

Once you start to know your roster, create a spreadsheet or other place to keep notes. Coach K called these his “discipleship stats” and he kept notes on men’s interests, involvement, vocation, family, etc. If you have a larger ministry especially, this practice will be a great help to you! A semi-annual survey can also be a good practice to help you get started on your roster. [Click here to download a sample survey](https://maninthemirror.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/05/Mens-Survey-MVP-SAMPLE.doc) Coach K used for his ministry in Charlotte.

He used the stats to help him prepare for the next lesson—

**2) It’s Always Training Camp**

Coach K was always developing his players. They never “arrived” and were done with training, himself included! Discipleship, like we teach in our No Man Left Behind Model, is an [ongoing continuum](https://maninthemirror.org/2019/08/05/the-key-to-sustaining-momentum-in-the-long-term/), powered by always providing men with the [next right step](https://maninthemirror.org/2019/07/08/the-next-step-mindset/).

John Williams (FL) recalls: “I read once that coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them learn rather than teaching them. Coach K not only did that with me, but with every man he met. He had such a heart for coaching men and had a unique gift to see inside a man, determine his God-given potential, and inspire him to live his life giving his very best for God and others. Jeff preferred to be called ‘Coach’ because that was his passion, that was his life, that was who he was, that is his legacy.”

Who has God entrusted you to coach? When you look at your men, do you see their potential? Do you respond to men entangled in sin in truth and love, without damaging their dignity? Are you helping them become learners through the Word of God? As Wayne Burroughs (NY) described: “Coach K skillfully found where a man was on his spiritual journey and faithfully guided him closer toward Jesus and humbly pointed any discipleship success toward God.” **We should often remind ourselves that the end result is not up to us, but we are called to be faithful to the game and to the training process as men’s leaders and pastors.**

The training we want to provide in our ministries—and multiply among our men—is gracious, sincere, honest, and based in relationship. As Chris Rondeau (SC) remembered, “Coach K was not a drill sergeant, but a motivator of faith and action. As a student of His God, he was truly concerned for the eternal state of every person he met.”

Braden shared, “He was always thinking of the other guy and what the other guy might be going through and how he could help.” Be a coach who cares enough to want every man in your ministry to play his best game.

**3) Wear the Uniform**

You’re going to have men in your ministry, whether they are on the fringes or come to every activity, who fade away or just disappear. How you respond is critical and it could change a man’s life. Jeff Dionne (ME) recalls a time from his own life when he was encouraged to stay in the game:

“During my initial week of ministry training with Man in the Mirror, Coach K was our National Field Director. As the week began, Coach cautioned our group about the truckload of information we would receive. He predicted that by Wednesday, ‘the dump truck would be fully engaged’ and we might feel overwhelmed. He was right!

“Wednesday seemed to hit me hardest among our group. I questioned what I was doing there—whether I was truly called to this ministry. As Coach predicted, I was overwhelmed. I shared my doubts and concerns with a teammate, who advised me to speak with Coach. That wisdom was echoed during a phone call with my wife, Claire, who was scheduled to join me at training the next day. I texted Coach that evening to ask if we could meet.

“When I nervously showed up at his door, Coach put me at ease as I explained what I was going through. He noted that of the 10 men in our class, I was the last one he expected to show up at his doorstep. (I’ve since wondered if he would have offered that same encouragement to any of us, but I trust his sincerity in that moment.) Then he said something that made all the difference to me. **He said he wasn’t ready for me to turn in my uniform just yet.**

“He coached me to take a step back—maybe hang up the uniform for a day—and finish out the week after Claire’s arrival Thursday. He recommended continuing to pray and listen in the days and weeks ahead. As he often suggested, that approach would help me discern about my calling, ‘Is it a good idea, or a God idea?’

“From that day forth, Coach continued to build and strengthen our relationship. The conversation we shared on November 6, 2013, ultimately helped me find clarity and confidence in my calling with Man in the Mirror. He continued to be my greatest mentor until his untimely passing. It remains my honor to call him my Coach.”

Oftentimes, we meet men who left the church or the faith altogether who say, “No one noticed or cared when I wasn’t there anymore. So what’s the point?”

The truth is most of your men are going through *something*. Maybe it’s a struggling marriage, an open father wound, job loss, loneliness, or a crisis of faith. When a hurting man disappears from the field, it’s your job to pursue and encourage him to not turn in his uniform just yet.

Coach K always taught that every man, hurting or not, needs a “foxhole friend” or two. There are some men in your ministry who will need you to be their foxhole friend until they get connected with others in meaningful ways. But by helping men connect and providing opportunities for genuine friendships to grow, your guys will begin to share this responsibility naturally!

**Finally, one of the most critical components to your ministry is that you and your fellow leaders wear the uniform as well. Not just on Sundays, or on Friday mornings at Bible study, but at all times until it becomes the very fabric of their lives.**

As our team shared their stories about Coach K, living out biblical manhood came up again and again. Michael said it well: “Coach K taught me that the best leaders are humble and teachable. He had a heart for ministry to men and set an example for us all. He deeply loved his wife and children, as well as being ‘paw-paw’ and the “Mayor of Madisonville’ to his granddaughter Madison. He never missed an opportunity to pray with a pastor or leader, and by watching him I gained a deeper appreciation for the Psalms and being still with God. He taught me about friendship and brotherhood.”

Chris recalled story after story of Coach investing in him personally. “He was there for me when my mom and dad passed and he was my ‘stage coach driver’ at 2 a.m. on several occasions. He genuinely cared for my family as if it was his own. He guided me to trust God and how to seek Him to show me my steps of faith I needed to take to succeed in ministry. He taught in words and scripture, but also lived it out and led by example.”

“Through the years,” shared Wayne, “I saw Coach K doing what he taught in every area of his life. He truly walked with God and I am confident when he stepped into the presence of Jesus, he heard, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.'”

**As we honor Jeff Kisiah today, a good and faithful servant, our passion for this mission is refreshed and our commitment to wear the uniform is renewed.** We know that discipleship changes everything, and the ripple effect begins with one man caring enough about another man to invest in his life.

John recalled, “He once shared a quote around a campfire of men about what someone said about Winston Churchill: ‘He may have passed but he lives on in the lives of others.’ That can certainly be said of Coach K. He was every man’s foxhole friend.”

We pray that his sense of mission will live on in *your* life as well as you apply these powerful principles to your own discipleship journey. As you go forward to reach men, we leave you with the blessing he often prayed over our team members…

May God give you “a rock to stand on, a brook to drink from, and a tree to be shaded by.”

**Ever onward in the battle for men’s souls.**

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