



REFLECTIONS

June 27, 2021

**Train a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not turn from it.**

Proverbs 22:6

Coaching T-Ball

Circumstances not of my choosing once placed me in the position of head coach of a T-Ball team. My assignment, a dozen or so 5- and 6-year-old pre-grade-schoolers who had never played the game before. It proved to be more like herding cats than coaching a baseball team. I knew as much about coaching the age group as I knew about herding cats. I had a lot to learn.

We may not have known much about coaching the age group, but we did know that we were dealing with an age group with short attention spans. So, we focused on keeping them busy above teaching them the game. Besides many of them couldn't throw the ball very well or catch at all; and none of them knew what to do with it if they did.

We divided practice into 10-minute segments where units of two or three players practiced the skills required for the game. During a practice session, every player engaged in learning to throw better, to field and catch, and to hit the ball off the tee. None of them became bored or distracted, and the players surprisingly improved their skills rather rapidly. So, when the season began, our players performed better than any of the other teams. Every game was a runaway win—that is until the head coach left town for a week of vacation.

The wheels came off. Our team lost. I returned to find a totally different atmosphere. The four or five dads who had assisted me from the beginning seemed compatible and capable of handling the team. It never occurred to me to place one of them in charge. Because I didn't, each of those well-meaning coaches instructed the team as he saw fit. But their instructions weren't always compatible, and the players didn't know who to listen to. The second mistake I made wasn't as obvious.

From the confusion brought by conflicting coaching instructions, the coaches' remarks mostly addressed players' mistakes. We began then to encourage our players with suggestions about what to do like, "Throw the ball to first," instead of, "don't throw the ball there." The idea worked.

Our team won the championship game handily. Most notably though, our team made *no* mental errors. The ball wasn't always thrown straight, or caught soundly. But every play was directed to the right place.

The season was a satisfying experience. The players improved with every game, the parents and other coaches had fun watching their sons excel. For me—I learned nothing about herding cats, but I learned other beneficial lessons to *Train a child in the way he should go*:

Develop their talents. Offer encouragement positively. Lead with clarity. And...
whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

You are the light of the world,

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Your comments are welcomed and encouraged. Richard may be reached at richard@reflectingthesavior.org.