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GWU Football Coach Shares Mentor Lessons at Men's Event

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Communications

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Written by Linda Cabiness

Carroll McCray Offers Biblical Answers for Empowering Youth

Gardner-Webb University Head Football Coach Carroll McCray raised a black book before an audience of 150 people gathered for the annual men's night at Double Springs Baptist Church and declared, "I brought my playbook."

Instead of holding up a diagram of X's and O's showing linemen and running backs, McCray held up a Bible at the Shelby (N.C.) church. "From the youngest to the oldest, this has all the answers," the coach said.

McCray is in his second year at Gardner-Webb University, where he previously played on the offensive line in the early 1980s. "I like talking about football, but more than that I like talking about the good Lord," he admitted.

McCray referenced Tony Dungy, the now retired coach who led the Indianapolis Colts to a Super Bowl win, and wrote a book called "The Mentor Leader." The book talks about building people and creating an environment for a winning team. McCray outlined the seven key characteristics of a mentor, as discussed in the book. One must engage, educate, equip, empower, encourage, energize and evaluate, he said.

The challenge of the coach or mentor is to move athletes along and prepare them to play. "I'll be judged by that scoreboard," he stated, "but the good Lord will judge me on how I move those young men."

After preparing youth for life, the coach believes, the mentor must be willing to let them go and trust them. "All Gardner-Webb football players carry a wallet card with 1 Corinthians 15:33 printed on it," McCray shared. "Do not be misled. Bad company corrupts good character."

Coach McCray said he encourages his players to do as Jesus did and get away to pray and meditate. "If I don't get up early in the morning and have that quiet time, I have a messed-up day."

He acknowledged that sometimes life is hard. "A football player who gets a bloody nose

after a tackle stays in because he has learned the foundation that helps him respond in the right way,” McCray explained. “Likewise, when life’s tackles cause pain, don’t give up on your family, your church, or your children.”

The coach concluded by challenging the men to allow the blood of Jesus to determine their course. “There is one thing that makes a difference,” he reflected. “When a child falls down and scrapes his knee, if there is no blood, he gets up and goes on playing. But if he sees blood on that knee, he starts crying. The blood changes everything. That reminds us that Jesus came and His blood changed everything.”

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them for professional success and for productive citizenship.