

Football Season

At our house football season lasts from August to February. My husband is especially fond of the University of Florida team. Here, 55 miles SW of Gainesville Florida he considers himself to be part of the Gator Nation. Every week we have been privileged to watch Tim Tebow perform exceptionally (even against Alabama last week).

As I watch these men move this ball back and forth between the goal posts I am struck by how this is such a metaphor for how men do life. I believe that God designed men to do three things, that is they have 3 drives;

- 1.) To pursue and have dominion over
- 2.) To tend and to keep
- 3.) To bear fruit and multiply

I cannot take credit for this notion, I found it in a women's Bible study years ago and it seems to make sense. Men's brains are changed when they are being formed in the womb as little baby boys – epinephrine flows over half of the developing brain and changes the corpus callosum so that the hemispheres are not so easily accessible to men as they are to women. Female brain cells connect like starbursts or fireworks. Men's neurons connect more like a pattern of circuit boards: one at a time. Yet moving a football is done the same way, with carefully thought out plays using skills from each teammate. Downs, yards, feet and sometimes inches at a time the football is moved in one direction. These men think about little else while they are moving this football. There is no idle chatter in any part of their brain like so many of us women have. Once the yards are made, the team wants to keep them. Once there is a touchdown, then the fruit of all this is a win.

In our house having dominion over means having control of the television clicker. Pursuing means knowing what time, which games are on, and how to find them on the TV. Tending and keeping means the Gators do not give up any yards they have made and bearing fruit and multiplying means stacking up SEC conference championships. As I have been paying more attention to the Gators play this year (Tim Tebow and his face black are interesting to me) I am learning more about the game. For instance, I recently realized that the receiver has a pretty good idea about where the quarterback intends to throw the ball. The secret

hope is that the opponent does not know this.

This is what I wrote about football before I started paying attention:

It is difficult for me to get into football. I know it is a game that many people enjoy watching. They make and spend a lot of money doing this activity as an organized sport. Some of the guys are pretty sexy. My sister in-law once said she liked the way their butts looked. I'm not sure she understood that they wore padding. If they are not padded our little boys and big men would get hurt. The point of the game is to move a funny, oval looking "ball" –pigskin is an acceptable term, I think, down a long field to the goal. You have to carry it over. The 11 other men are going to try to stop you in anyway they think they can within the rules. Many of the men (or little boys) who do this "bulk up". That is they eat and play so that they can get bigger and stronger and get hurt less and win more often. Winning means more accolades, more opportunity to play, more chances to keep playing in high school or college or professional ball. If you go that far you probably had a really good coach or you listened to the ones that you had. Or maybe you wanted it so bad you did whatever it took.

Some men (and women) like to watch football, even if they don't play it. They know the rules and they know the teams and the coaches and the group they play for. Sometimes the teams represent schools or leagues. Teams from these schools or in these leagues represent a geographical area like a state or a region. Being a fan means you belong to a group of other people who also are fans. Sometimes you want other people to know that you are a fan of a particular team by the clothes that you wear. Or the way you decorate your office or your home. When I was at the college of Nursing at the University of Florida, my office came with blue walls and orange chairs and carpet. Hard to tie together. I mentioned the alligator I saw on a professor's computer. Said to her, "So you are a gator fan – " She looked back at me with a look of rebuke, "No I am a gator." Football has its political moments as well.

I was a cheerleader in high school for political reasons. When I went to a new school my freshman year, 2 of my friends were the most popular girls in our small class. Little did I know (until our 35th class reunion) that they had been new girls too. They were my friends

and one was in the concert choir and one was a cheerleader. Singing was not hard for me, I came from a musical family, however, and cartwheels and jumps were going to be tough on a 15 year old who was 35 pounds overweight. Then there was the problem of uniform. In those days it was a pleated skirt that came to our knees and a pull over varsity sweater for football. I made the team my sophomore year because I had practiced with my friends in the neighborhood who were always trying out. In the year I tried out, only 9 people did so. One was a boy geek and I got picked over him. I didn't care that the reason was appearance and gender (I couldn't jump any higher than he could jump), but I did know that I had less acne. The point was that I was a cheerleader and this would go in the yearbook and that was my semi-goal toward the end of my school years.) The football season cheerleading uniform was a problem. I had to pin the skirt because the button wouldn't button and the zipper wouldn't zip. Then I pulled the sweater down over that. Pretty miserable but the football team was not very good so I didn't have to jump very high or do any cartwheels. I could cheer loud and sing the school song.

I never paid much attention to the rules. I know that sometimes when the guys in the striped shirts went out to measure, we were taught to kneel at the sidelines and then we might turn around and shout "First in ten! Do it again!" The rest of the time it was usually "Keep em back, keep em back waaaay BACK! I don't think we even scored in football that season.

It was fun to yell and be part of the group that went on the bus to away games. It was fun to wear the cheerleading uniform on Fridays and to the school dances if I went. That is all I know about football.