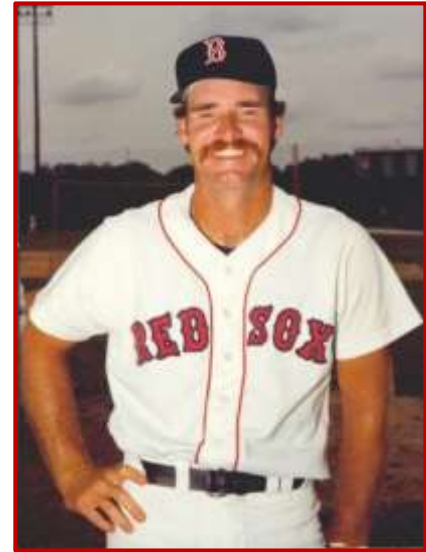


CHANGING A TAUNTING FAN

We are smack-dab (a term used often in the South) in the middle of the baseball season. One of the sport's giants in terms of achievement is Wade Boggs, a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame, who played third base.

He spent his 18-year baseball career primarily with the Boston Red Sox, but also played with the New York Yankees, with whom he won the 1996 World Series against the Atlanta Braves, and the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, with whom he reached 3,000 hits.



An incident while he was with the Red Sox is instructional for us.

Boggs hated Yankee Stadium – not because of the Yankees; they never gave him that much trouble, but because of a fan. That's right: one fan.

The guy had a box seat close to the field, and when the Red Sox were in town, he would torment Boggs by shouting obscenities and insults. It's hard to imagine one fan getting under a player's skin, but this guy had the recipe.

One day, as Boggs was warming up, the fan began his routine, yelling: "Boggs, you stink," and variations on that theme.

Boggs had enough. He walked directly over to the man, who was sitting in the stands, and said, "Hey fella, are you the guy who's always yelling at me?"

The man said, "Yeah, it's me. What are you going to do about it?"

Boggs took a new baseball out of his pocket, autographed it, tossed it to the man, and went back to the field to his pre-game routine.

The man never yelled at Boggs again. In fact, he became one of Boggs' biggest fans at Yankee Stadium.

What Boggs did to this adversary recalls Jesus' teaching about our enemies:

Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets. But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you (Luke 6:26-27 ESV).

Love your enemies. It might change them, and we know it will change you.

– Beecher Hunter