

Life Lessons for a Pitcher

Carl Mays, author and motivational speaker who lives in Gatlinburg, Tennessee (and we have had him at Life Care on several occasions), tells an illuminating story about Carl Erskine, a former Major League Baseball pitcher with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Erskine was a pitching mainstay on Dodger teams that won five National League pennants, peaking with a 1953 season in which he won 20 games and set a World Series record with 14 strikeouts in a single game.



When Erskine first came to the big leagues, he learned three valuable lessons.

In his first interview with Branch Rickey, owner of the Dodgers, Rickey asked Erskine if he went to church. Erskine said he did. Rickey then responded, "I ask that question of every young man that I sign. The reason that I ask it is that I've found if a person will discipline his life to sit in a place of worship and get his spiritual values in place, that person will develop a quiet confidence that he cannot get anywhere else. His faith will stand him in good stead under all the pressures of life."

Erskine's first major league game was in Pittsburgh. He didn't know anyone on the team, but an older pitcher named Hugh Casey came up to him and gave him some advice. He said, "I've never seen you pitch. I don't know if you throw underhand, overhand or sidearm, but there are guys in this league who are going to hit you. You're going to get your lumps in this league.

"I want to tell you something else," Casey added. "There are certain things in this league you can't change. You can't change the weather. You can't change the ballpark you're pitching in. And you can't change the guy calling the balls and strikes behind the plate. So concentrate on the things you can do. Keep your fastball where you want it. Keep your curveball where you want it. And take the initiative. Be in charge."

Carl Erskine became a big winner in the major leagues. And branded in his mind were these three lessons:

1. Spiritual discipline makes you stronger in all aspects of life.
2. A person should concentrate on what he or she can control.
3. A winner takes the initiative.

And those lessons also apply to our mission, the calling in life extended to us in Life Care and Century Park. Let's brand them in our minds.

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter