

Mr. Vickers and Baseball

As youngsters growing up in Cookeville, Tennessee, we loved sports, primarily football and baseball. At that time, organized sports for very young kids – like Little League, for example – were not available.

The city's large elementary school across town had football for its boys, but there was nothing on the west side of Cookeville. So we played anyway – on a vacant field about three blocks from my home – and the neighborhood boys were always eager to start a game.

The minute we got home from school, we'd drop the books and hit the street for that empty lot.

In the house directly across the street from ours lived one of my favorite neighbors and his family. His name was Claude Vickers, and he was a high-school athlete in his younger days.

He had a great arm, as well as a love for baseball. As soon as he would pull in the driveway from work, we'd start yelling for him to come and play ball with us. He couldn't resist.

Out of fairness, he would always ask, "Which team is losing?" Then he would join that team, which often seemed to be mine.

His appearance in the huddle changed the whole ball game. He was confident, strong, and most of all, he had a plan.

We'd circle around him, and he would look at us and say, "OK, boys, here is what we are going to do."

The other side was groaning before we left the huddle. You see, we not only had a new plan; we had a new leader.

Mr. Vickers brought new life to our team.

God does precisely the same. We didn't need a new play; we needed a new plan. We didn't need to trade positions; we needed a new player.

That player is Jesus Christ, God's firstborn Son. He came to earth to carry out God's plan for us – the opportunity to go to heaven and experience eternal life with Him.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16 NKJV).

That's the game that really matters.

– Beecher Hunter