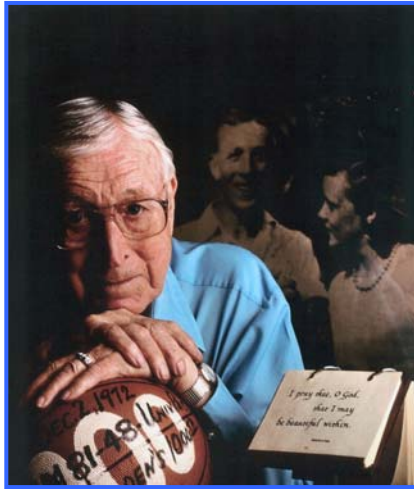


Wooden Words to Live By



A fiercely loyal Christian who used biblical principles in basketball and as life lessons for his players, John Wooden was a wonderful example of what is good about mankind. Wooden, former UCLA basketball coach who won an unprecedented and unmatched 10 national titles during his career, died Friday of natural causes at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center.

His late wife, Nellie, the love of his life, died on March 21, 1985. In an interview with ESPN in October 2009, Wooden was asked the secret to a successful marriage. Wooden replied that there is one thing: "You must truly, truly love."

On the 21st of every month, when he was healthy, Wooden visited Nellie's grave and wrote her a love letter. He kept every letter written under the pillow Nellie used to sleep on when she was alive. Former UCLA star Jamaal Wilkes was among Wooden's players who visited him in the hospital the week he died. He said the coach's mind was "sharp as a tack" until the end, although his body was "very, very frail."

Wilkes related that he recognized "that little glint" in Wooden's pale blue eyes. He was in the room with Wooden's son, Jim, when Wooden asked to be shaved. "His son made the comment that when he got shaved, he was getting ready to see Nellie," Wilkes said.

Wooden never had to worry about his reputation. He didn't drink or swear or carouse with other coaches on the road. But he did have a penchant for getting after the referees. A typical Wooden complaint to an official went like this: "Dadburn it, you saw him double-dribble down there! Goodness gracious, sakes alive!"

Wooden's inspirational quotes remind us to be the best that we can be. Here are 10 examples:

- Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.
- Consider the rights of others before your own feelings, and the feelings of others before your own rights.
- Failure is not fatal, but failure to change might be.

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- Material possessions, winning scores, and great reputations are meaningless in the eyes of the Lord, because He knows what we really are, and that is all that matters.
- Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.
- Success comes from knowing that you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming.
- Be prepared and be honest.
- Talent is God-given. Be humble. Fame is man-given. Be grateful. Conceit is self-given. Be careful.
- There are many things that are essential to arriving at true peace of mind, and one of the most important is faith, which cannot be acquired without prayer.
- You can't live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you.

Even with his remarkable accomplishments, Wooden remained humble and gracious. He said he tried to live by advice from his father: "Be true to yourself, help others, make each day your masterpiece, make friendship a fine art, drink deeply from good books – especially the Bible – build a shelter against a rainy day, give thanks for your blessings and pray for guidance every day."

St. John's coach Steve Lavin, who followed a similar career path as Wooden, coaching seven years at UCLA after serving as an assistant at Purdue, said of his mentor: "Ninety-nine years of goodness, and now he's back with Nell."

– Beecher Hunter