

Quiet Strength: The Principles, Practices, & Priorities of a Winning Life **by Tony Dungy with Nathan Whitaker**

Tyndale House, 2007. 317 pp.

Reviewed by David W. Gill www.davidwgill.org

Tony Dungy is the currently-retired Super Bowl 2007 winning coach of the Indianapolis Colts. *Quiet Strength: The Principles, Practices, & Priorities of a Winning Life* is a memoir and much more. *Quiet Strength* has sold well over one million copies and was on the New York Times best seller list for 32 weeks. For whatever reason (maybe my 49er west coast inclinations?) I only got around to reading Dungy's book now, two or three years after it came out.

I loved *Blind Side*, both the book and the movie; I really valued Bill Walsh's posthumously published book on leadership, *The Score Takes Care of Itself*; but Tony Dungy's *Quiet Strength* really stands up there with the best sports-related books I have read. And that is because it is about life, not just about sports.

Make no mistake, Tony Dungy was a great football coach. At age 40, he took over a terrible Tampa Bay team in 1996 and turned them into a winning team in year two. He was fired by impatient team owners, after his sixth year at Tampa, for failing to advance far enough into the playoffs. But the team he had carefully built went on the very next year to win the Super Bowl! This is where you begin to see Dungy's "quiet strength" as he copes with this injustice and even cruelty built into his profession.

Dungy was fairly quickly hired then by the Indianapolis Colts and coached them for seven seasons. After their fifth season under his coaching the Colts won the Super Bowl. His first year the Colts won 10 games. His second through seventh years they won from 12 to 14 games every season, an amazing record of consistent excellence. In fact, Dungy's teams at Tampa and Indianapolis made the play-offs in eleven of his thirteen years as a coach (missing only in years one and three).

But Dungy is not just a great football mind, he is a truly great human being and a deep, authentic Christian disciple. He and his wife Lauren have two daughters and five sons. One of their sons Jamie committed suicide in December of 2005. In *Quiet Strength* we read about how the Dungys coped with the tragedy of their son's death, as well as with all the stresses of being parents and having a job in the pressure-cooker of pro football coaching. Dungy has been an active and outspoken leader, especially in the lives of big-time athletes, trying to guide and mentor them toward being responsible fathers and husbands and citizens. He has been working closely with Michael Vick the past couple years.

Quiet Strength certainly makes clear the powerful and positive impact of a great, faithful, wise father such as Dungy had. "How did your venting improve the situation?" Tony's dad asked quietly after young Tony had exploded. "You can't always control circumstances. However, you can always control your attitude, approach and response. Your options are to complain or to look ahead and figure out how to make the situation better" (p. 16). In *Quiet Strength* you get several of Dungy's great insights on leadership from Nehemiah and David and other biblical texts. A lot of Dungy's leadership emphasis is on character and culture: get those right and the rest will follow.

For Dungy, "success" is not as important as "faithfulness." How often do you hear that? Dungy loves the question "What does it profit if you gain the whole world but lose your soul?" Dungy concludes: "That's what this is all about. Touching lives. Building a legacy --- not necessarily on the field but in those places that most people never see. Trying to be faithful in the position God has given me. I love coaching football and winning a Super Bowl was a goal I've had for a long time. But it has never been my purpose in life. My purpose in life is simply to glorify God. We have to be careful that we don't let the pursuit of our life's goals, no matter how important they seem, cause us to lose sight of our *purpose*." (p.301).

Buy this book for every athlete and sports fan you know. And share it with anybody else interested!