

JESUS ZONE: THE COACH AS A SHEPHERD

**"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."
Psalm 23:1**

Coaching competitive lifters is a labor of love. It takes a great deal of time and dedication to work with strength athletes and, in the end it is a love for the sport and the lifters we train that drives us.

The admiration and respect that Bill Beekley and the senior ladies he trains share is

readily apparent any time you speak with them. Likewise, Ken Morris' team at Limitless Strength & Conditioning and the lifters at Erich & Kelsea Koenreich's Sarasota Barbell have a strong respect and friendship for each other that any outsider can observe.



*Keith Sunday (left) and his son, Jacob
Pat Currey (right) and his newest protégé, Christian Ferenic*

Scripture teaches a great deal about coaching through its lessons on leadership. In the 23rd Psalm, we learn not only about God's nature but also about His leadership. Both the Old and New Testaments utilize the term "shepherd" to illustrate leadership. The word communicates the love, nurture, intimacy, and spiritual care a godly leader provides. Psalm 23 describes the Ultimate Shepherd (God) performing several functions:

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.
(God provides)

**He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside still waters.**
(God gives rest)

**He restores my soul; He leads me in the
paths of righteousness for His name's sake.**
*(God confidently leads; He renews and
restores, He guides and directs)*

**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You
are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they
comfort me.**
(God protects, corrects, and comforts)

**You prepare a table before me in the
presence of my enemies; You anoint my
head with oil; My cup runs over.**
(God feeds and anoints)
**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the
house of the Lord forever.**
(God loves and furnishes permanent shelter)



*Trudy Daxon, Carmen Gutwirth, and Edith Traina of the Florida RAW Dogs
Jennifer Cox, Kelsea Koenreich, Erich Koenreich, Ashley Koenreich, Sara Flanagan, and Crystal Dumdei of Sarasota Barbell*

Coaches, whether knowingly or unknowingly, perform many of the same functions. And while none of us will ever model God's example perfectly, we will do well to follow the leadership guidelines He has provided for us.

As powerlifters, many of us tend to stay clear of utilizing the word "love" when we talk

about our great sport. But in the end, the most successful coaches – with success being defined as the establishment of a mutual respect and admiration between the coach and the lifter that lasts a lifetime – are those that genuinely love the athletes they train. NOTHING in the gym and NOTHING on the platform is as strong or as powerful as love.



Some of our lifters from the STRONG LIFE Training Facility in Melbourne, Florida

It wasn't a World Record bench press that raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the grave, and building the perfect body or nailing a PR in the squat will not afford anyone citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven. Our

strength on the platform is meaningless when it comes to eternity – what truly matters is our faith in God and our love for each other.