AMARANT'S MODEL FOR HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

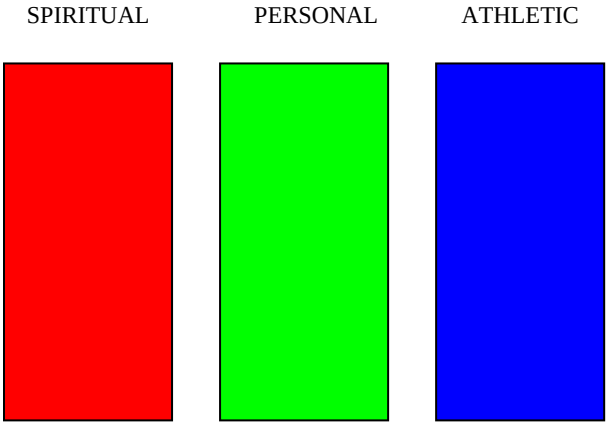

Image 1. The three life domains.

The spiritual, personal and athletic life domains

The colored areas represent three life domains into which we as sports chaplains or as sports people can divide our everyday life:

1. A *spiritual domain* which includes our devotional life and our relationship with God.
2. A *personal domain* which includes our private life and our roles in the family and among friends.
3. An *athletic domain* which includes our sporting career and our roles in the sports world.

Often we tend to view these life domains as separate islands which compete for our time and energy. As a result:

1. Our everyday life becomes a constant battle to achieve the right balance between the different domains.
2. Our minds and our identity become shattered and confused, since we play different roles in the different domains.

The solution is to turn the perspective around. We need to realize that the three life domains are different parts of one and the same whole, and that they are based on one another. The most fundamental domain is the spiritual, which is supposed to influence and permeate the personal and the athletic domains as shown in Image 2.

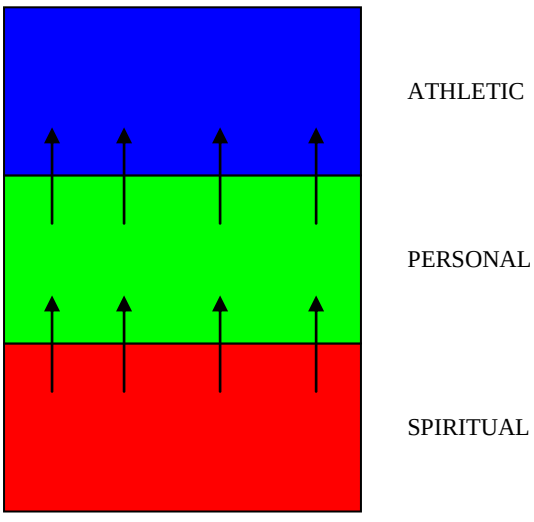

Image 2. Our life domains as parts of a dynamic and functioning whole.

As we start to view the different life domains as parts of a dynamic and functioning whole, rather than as separate, competing islands, we discover that (a) we are the same persons and (b) we have the same mission, regardless of the roles and the contexts. As a result:

1. We become more whole and harmonious individuals.
2. We give God the opportunity to use our whole life, instead of just one domain, as a platform for His Kingdom.

Being or doing?

Today's sports world is performance- and result-oriented. In the Bible, however, we see a different order: the identity precedes the mission.

We can draw a line that divides the life domains into two categories: *being* and *doing*. "Being" has to do with *identity* and "doing" has to do with *calling*. According to the Bible, our deepest identity is that we are created in *God's image* and redeemed by Christ to be *God's children*. Our deepest calling as Christians is the Great Commission in Mt 28:19: *"Go and make disciples of all people"* (see Image 3).

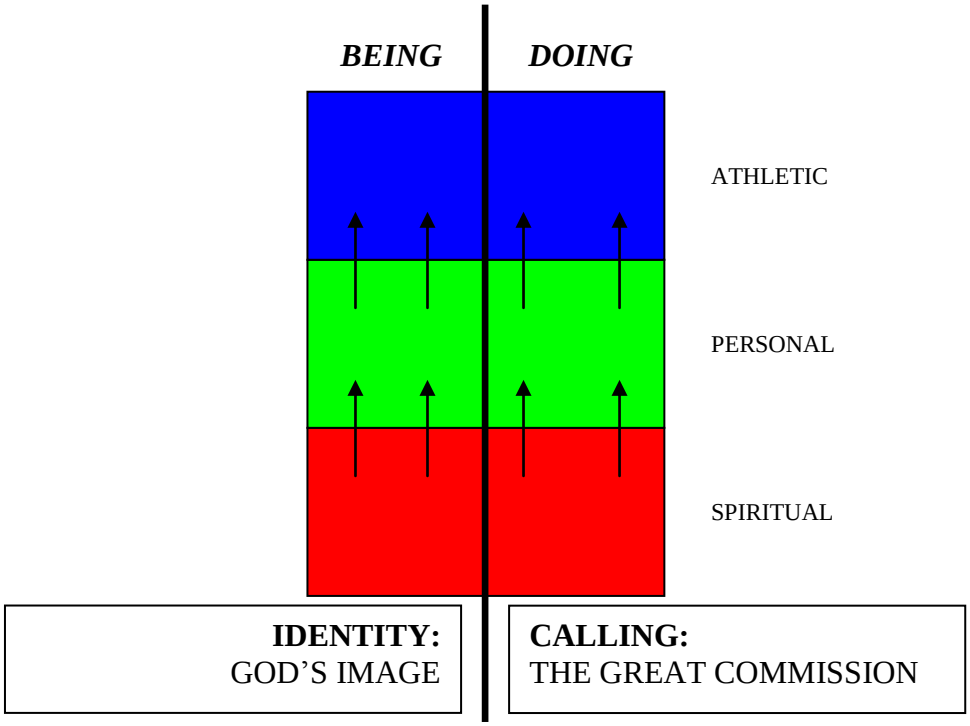

Image 3. Our life domains divided into the categories "being" and "doing", and our life as a whole founded on God's creational purpose for our "being" and our "doing".

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:
If you make a brief life analysis, where is your main focus – on "being" or on "doing"? Do you devote more time and energy to *becoming the person God has created you to be* or to *doing what God has created you to do?*

The Bible unites "being" and "doing" in a whole. Both seem to be equally important, and they seem to presuppose one another. If we study people in the Bible who were given a mission by God, we find that the mission was always preceded by a time of preparation. Moses was 80 years old when God called him to lead the children of Israel out the slavery in Egypt. Jesus underwent 30 years of preparation for a mission that would last three and a half years.

It is by *becoming the people we are created to be* that we are able to *fulfil the mission God has called us to do*. Thus, "being" precedes "doing" without one of them being more important than the other. By finding a sound balance between being and doing, we are able to grow dynamically while at the same time contributing to the expansion of God's Kingdom in people's lives.

Where are you rooted?

A tree stands more firmly, the deeper and the stronger its roots are. Imagine that you are a tree planted in a garden, where the three life domains represent three layers of soil that exist at different depth beneath the surface, as shown in Image 4.

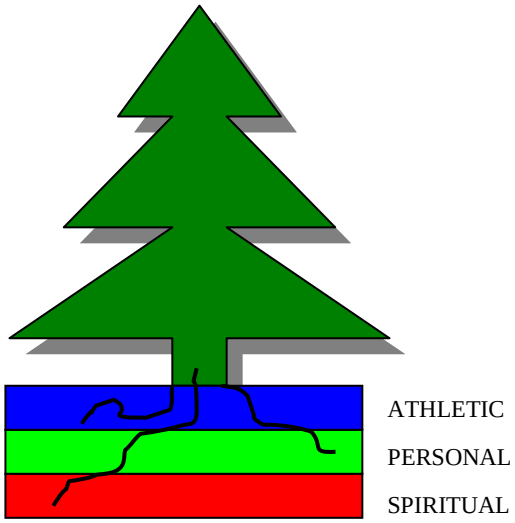

Image 4. The tree of life with roots at different depths.

The question is: *Where do you have your roots?* Here are four control questions you can ask yourself in order to find out where you are rooted. In which of the three layers of soil…

…do you get your nutrition?
…do you find strength and motivation?
…do you seek to fill your needs for approval and praise?
…are your self-image and your self-worth shaped?

Many sports people – especially many professional players, coaches, and referees – have their roots in the most superficial, athletic domain. Their identity and their approval are based on their role and their status within the sports world. They are what they perform; it is their degree of success that determine their value. But what happens the day when they are severely injured and are forced to quit their career? Free fall. Some people remain a "former professional soccer player" or a "former highest-division referee" for the rest of their lives, because it is better to be a "former something" than to be nothing at all.

Other sports people have their roots in their family and friends, the middle layer of soil. It is a little safer; the roots are a little deeper and stronger. But the people we love can be taken from us: sometimes couples split up, friends move, loved ones die. Then what happens? Who are we, if we are left alone? Free fall.

There is only *one thing* that can never be taken away from us. Colossians 2:7 tells us to be "rooted and built up in [Christ] and established in the faith." As Christian sports chaplains and sports people we have the tremendous opportunity of being anchored in the deepest, truest, and most fundamental life domain. With our roots in Christ, we stand firm and are able to resist any storm in life. Sport becomes an act of worship. We are able to serve our fellow-creatures unselfishly, without having to show off, because we are doing it for God and to His glory. We are also able to face challenges, setbacks, and role changes with peace and calm, knowing who is our identity, our worth, and our strength – Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. Where are you rooted?
2. What can you do to grow your roots deeper?