



Season of Life
By Jeffrey Marx

Player Study Guide[©]

Player Name: _____

Season of Life

Introduction

The team is going to work through *Season of Life*, by Jeffrey Marx. Jeffrey Marx is a Pulitzer Prize winner and *Season of Life* was a New York Times Bestseller. *Season of Life* has received tremendous praise including the following:

Season of Life should be required reading for every high school student in America and every parent as well – **Carl Lewis, Olympic champion**

This is a life-changing book. You'd have to be a slug on a rock not to be impacted by the messages in this book. – **Steve Moulton, ESPN Radio**

This is not a book you are just going to read and then forget about. You're probably going to read it again sometime. And you'll definitely want to tell family and friends about it. By sharing *Season of Life* with others, you will be helping to make this a better world. – **Ronnie Lott, NFL Hall of Famer**

This Player Study Guide has been carefully developed to help players fully utilize and go deeper during this study. The answers and responses you place into this Study Guide are *for your eyes only*. You will never be asked to turn this Study Guide over or show any of your responses to any coach or other player on the team. As we discuss *Season of Life* in group sessions, it will be entirely up to you if you choose to share any of your written responses. In order to get the most out of this study, please take the time to carefully read the assigned reading from *Season of Life* **before** each session and thoughtfully answer the questions developed in this Study Guide for the assigned reading **before** each session of discussion.

Before reading the book, answer the following questions:

What does it mean to you when someone says “BE A MAN” ?

How do you define masculinity?

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Schedule

Session 1 – Read Chapters 1 – 3

Session 2 – Read Chapters 4 – 7

Session 3 – Read Chapters 8 – 9

Session 4 – Read Chapter 10

Session 5 – Read Chapter 11 – 12

Session 6 – Read Chapter 13

Session 7 – Read Chapters 14 – 15

Session 8 – Read Chapter 16

Session 9 – Read Chapters 17 – 18

Session 10 – Read Chapters 19 – 21

Season of Life

Chapter 1

Close your eyes and visualize the moment before you run out on the field. What did you see? What did you feel? What did you hear?

What is one of your favorite sayings you've heard a coach or teammate say in a pre-game speech?

What do you know about why Coach Joe Ehrmann coaches high school football – what is his calling or mission?

You PLAY sports. You don't work at sports. You PLAY sports. Can you think of a time you lost sight of that fact, a time when sports weren't fun? When was it and what happened?

What can you do to make sure that you have fun playing this season?

How did you feel when you read the exchange at the end of the chapter between the coaches and players about their respective jobs toward one another?

What does it mean for a coach to love his players?

What does it mean for teammates to love each other?

Other Notes

Season of Life

Chapter 2

What is your favorite sport memory as a young child?

What is your most-prized sport keepsake and why?

What older players did (or do) you look up to within your sport?

Other Notes

Season of Life

Chapter 3

How did the way the Colts players treated Jeffrey Marx impact his experience?

What does the poem “That Guy in the Glass” mean to you?

How can that poem apply to the way you approach this season?

What about the way Joe Ehrmann treated Jeffrey Marx left an impression on him?

Other Notes

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Chapter 4

Have you ever had your plans turned upside down by circumstances that were beyond your control? What happened?

How did you feel when that happened?

What does the poem by Edwin Markham mean to you?

In what way does your sport provide a powerful platform within your school?

If “all that you send into the lives of others comes back into your own life” what are you sending into the lives of others that will be uplifting and positive when it comes back into your life?

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Chapter 5

Name someone with whom you used to be in regular contact that you haven't talked to in a long time:

Since you last had regular contact with them, how have you changed?

What helped Joe Ehrmann develop "into exactly who I was really supposed to be"?

What are ways you can discover what you are supposed to be in your life?

What do you think Joe Ehrmann meant when he talked about "seeing mankind as it's supposed to be"?

Other Notes

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Chapter 6

What does the name of the foundation Building Men for Others mean to you?

How does Joe Ehrmann define “being a man?”

List people with whom you “maintain meaningful relationships?”

Other Notes

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Chapter 7

Do you have a personal pre-game prayer or saying that you recite before games? If so, what is it?

What does the “concept of team” mean to you?

What is your own definition of what it means to be a man at this point in your reading?

What are some key concepts that make up your own personal “code of conduct” for manhood in your life?

Do you have any cause outside yourself right now that motivates you? If so, what is it?

What do you think Joe Ehrmann meant when he said “You start losing perspective. You’ve kind of climbed the ladder of success, and when you get up there, you realize somehow the ladder was leaning on the wrong building”?

What type of building is your ladder leaning on right now?

What are the three components of false masculinity that Joe Ehrmann identifies?

What are the three criteria of true masculinity that Joe Ehrmann identifies?

What is empathy?

As a player, have you ever been “shamed” by a teammate or coach as it related to your performance? How did it make you feel?

Other Notes

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Chapter 8

Close your eyes and visualize the moments before the start of your first practice. What did you see, smell and hear in anticipation of your first practice with your team?

Take a few moments to look around or to picture your teammates. List some of the diverse characteristics that exist among your teammates.

What does it mean to unconditionally love someone?

Have you ever felt loved by a coach that was not your parent? If so, who and how did they show love?

How does Coach Biff Poggi measure the “greatness” of his players?

What can you do to be more inclusive with your teammates? With other students?

What is the difference between feeling for someone vs. feeling with someone?

How do you define integrity?

What can you do to play with integrity?

How can you “seek justice”?

How can you “encourage the oppressed” around you?

How do you change your focus from self-focused to others-focused?

What does the parable of the talents mean to you?

Do you equally value everyone on your team who brings all their talents all the time? _____

Does your team foster an environment that values the player who has two talents and brings two talents equally with the player who has ten talents and brings ten talents every play? If not, what can you do to help change that environment?

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Chapter 9

What message do you send to your teammates, the other team and the fans when you call attention to yourself on the field after you accomplish something good?

Where did junior player Mike Dowling go wrong in dealing with his frustration with the position he was playing and his playing time?

Did the coaching staff and captains do the right thing by kicking player Mike Dowling off the team? Why or why not?

Consider Coach Biff's quote "In the end, it's not the mistakes you make that really matter. It's what you do with what you learn from those mistakes. And it's also how you respond to the mistakes of others." How have you learned from mistakes you have made in the past?

What "boxes" do you put people into?

How would viewing every person you encounter as someone's son or daughter change the way you view them?

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Chapter 10

Go back to the introduction of this Study Guide and look at your definition of masculinity. How has your definition of masculinity changed now?

What are the three FALSE concepts of masculinity that Coach Ehrmann identifies:

Who are your friends with whom you can reveal your true self and share your deepest, most intimate thoughts?

What is your façade? What does your external masculinity look like?

Quickly list three words that describe your dad or your father-figure?

Is it hard for your dad or father-figure to verbalize to you that he loves you? Why do you think that is the case?

What would you guess would be your dad's or father-figure's reaction to this chapter if you asked him to read it?

Are you able to verbalize your love to those you love? To your dad or father-figure? If not, why not?

Other Notes

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Chapter 11

Think back to your last deflating loss in an athletic contest. How did you feel just after the game before you had your post-game talk with the coach?

What did Coach Biff's post-game speech teach the players?

How did the players react to Coach Biff's post-game speech?

What are some of the most important relationships you value in your life?

When Jeffrey Marx observed this post-game scene, he concluded, "relationships always matter more than anything else; that the content of a human being matters infinitely more than the wrapping; and that putting labels on people, making the mistake of treating people based on those labels only extinguishes a plethora of possibilities." Can you identify any relationships in your life where you have overcome "labels"?

If you were trapped in a building and only had 30 minutes to live, how would you spend those 30 minutes?

Who would you call in that time and what would you say?

Can you say that you “bring all your talents” every game? _____

What about every practice? _____

How would your effort or attitude change if you knew it would be the last game or practice you were ever going to have?

Other Notes

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Chapter 12

What important events (good and bad) helped define your journey through life so far?

Place a “+” next to those events that were good and a “-“ next to those events that were hard.

Identify at least one good thing that came out of each item you identified as hard in the above list?

Coach Biff said, “Things that are worth it and important are hard.” How has that proven true for you in your life?

What is your definition of “integrity”?

What does Coach Biff mean when he used the phrase “revolving integrity”?

How did the story about Job and his reaction to his tragedies demonstrate integrity?

On a 1-10 scale with 10 being excellent and 1 being very bad, where does your integrity rate? _____

What can you do to improve your integrity or to strive toward achieving “revolving integrity”?

What events occurred during the first half of the St. Paul game that upset Coach Biff so much?

How did those first half events run contrary to the principles of Building Men for Others?

Do you think the players believed Coach Ehrmann when he told them that the reason Coach Biff blew up at halftime was because Coach Biff really loved them?

What does a coach have to demonstrate for you to believe that the coach’s criticism of you comes from a place of love?

Other Notes

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Chapter 13

Think back to a time when your feelings were deeply hurt. What happened or what was said to make you feel that way?

Have you ever made someone else feel that same way? _____

What caused you to do that to someone else?

How could empathy for others impact prejudices?

What does Coach Ehrmann mean by his use of the phrase “strategic masculinity”?

What is Coach Ehrmann’s definition of what it means to be a man?

What is a façade?

What façade do you wear around your school?

Who have you let see past your façade?

Are those people ones with whom you have an authentic relationship? _____

What people that matter to you do you take for granted?

What can you do to improve on that issue?

Other Notes

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Chapter 14

What is your definition of family?

What is “The Decision” that Coach Biff refers to when addressing his team?

Think back to your activities over the past 24 hours. What did you do over that time period that would indicate you were selfish? What did you do over that time that would indicate you were focused on others?

What happens when players on a team play for themselves vs. playing for each other?

What is the difference between being on a team and being a teammate?

What are the principles of being a man built for others that Coach Ehrmann summarized from Isaiah?

How can those principles be applied in your life?

What do you think the crowd thought when they saw the star running back come out of the game and the head coach go over on the sideline and kneel and pray with him while the game was going on?

Have you ever prayed during a game? What were the circumstances?

Other Notes

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Chapter 15

What was the last “adventure” you experienced?

What did the actions of the coach of Poly Prep at the end of the game against Gilman tell you about that coach?

Have you ever had a coach who behaved like the Poly Prep coach? How did that coach make you feel as a player?

Place a circle in the space below and write the names or initials of two men in your life through whom you felt affirmation:

Place a square in the space below and write the name or initials of one man in your life who shamed you and your masculinity:

If one of your teammates put your name down in response to the two questions above, would your name be in the circle or in the square? _____

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Chapter 16

What do you want to be said about you at your funeral?

Do you have any cause (big or small) beyond yourself where you find meaning, value or purpose? If so, what is it?

What does Coach Ehrmann say is the “fundamental root” for understanding your cause?

What injustices do you see around you that cause you to feel empathy toward others?

What can you do to better understand the cause of the injustice you identified?

What can you do to “do something about it” – to make changes to help alleviate the injustice you identified?

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Chapter 17

What homecoming traditions does your school have?

How does practice look different when you love your teammates?

What were the “absolute rules” for everyone who played for Gilman?

What are the “absolute rules” on your team?

What does Coach Biff say that players who violate the team rules reveal about themselves?

What can you do to better express your gratitude to your mom or mother-figure?

What does it say about a player who refuses to retaliate when an opposing player takes a cheap shot against him?

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Chapter 18

Have you had someone you love die or leave your life? _____

How often do you think about that person?

What are the four strategic masculinity traits that Coach Ehrmann identifies about a man built for others?

For each of these traits, how can you better demonstrate those traits at home?

For each of these traits, how can you better demonstrate those traits on your team?

How does Coach Ehrmann define “the flow” in life?

Where does “the flow” tend to take you in your life?

Why does it take courage to lead in the right direction?

How can you help create leadership on your team?

What is “relational justice”?

What is “economic justice”?

What is “communal justice”?

When you see an injustice, what is your duty according to Coach Ehrmann?

What does Coach Ehrmann mean when he says we should “expect God’s greater rewards”?

Other Notes

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Chapter 19

Do you or your team sometimes play down to the level of your opponent? _____

What does that say about you and how you utilize your talents?

Why was how the Gilman team responded to this loss so important?

What was the equation that Coach Biff wrote on the board for the team?

_____ + _____ = _____ + _____

What does that equation mean to you?

Other Notes

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Chapter 20

What team would you identify as your team's rival? _____

What makes that team your rival?

Have you ever saved a card or letter you received? Who was it from and why did you save it?

How do you think you will feel just before you play your last game?

What will you miss the most from playing your sport?

Are you able to identify the date of your last game? When will it be? _____

Are you sure your last game might not come sooner? _____

How does Coach Biff differentiate "going away" from a team and "being sent"?

Do you feel like you will just "go away" or that you will "be sent" from your current team?

When has someone you admire told you they were proud of you? How did it make you feel?

Why do you think Coach Biff said a season where his team lost several games was the “best season yet” when he had other teams finish first in the state and undefeated?

Other Notes

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Chapter 21

Is there anything missing from your relationship with your dad or father-figure? If so, what?

How well do you think you know your dad or father-figure?

What questions would you love to ask your dad or father-figure?

What can you do to improve your communication with your dad or father-figure?

Are you able to verbalize your love for your dad or father-figure and can they do the same to you? Why or why not?

Other Notes

The following list of questions was taken from among the many questions set out in *Questions for My Father*, by Vincent Staniforth. Over time, consider working through some of these questions with your dad or father-figure:

What was the most important lesson you learned from your dad?

Who was your first love?

What's your biggest regret?

As a boy, who did you want to be when you grew up?

What was your happiest teenage day?

Do you find yourself saying the same things to me that your dad said to you?

Do you ever think about your mom and dad?

Do you ever think about death?

How will I know when I've met my true love?

What's the biggest mistake you've ever made? What can I learn from it?

What is your favorite movie?

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken?

What do you love most about this country?

What makes a real friend?

What is the best part of having a son?

What have you learned from being a dad?

What was your first job?

What does God mean to you?

What is the funniest thing you ever saw your children do?

What makes you proud to be a man?

Who first broke your heart? What happened?

What is your favorite memory so far of spending time with me?

What has been your proudest day as a dad?

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Final Wrap-Up Session

On a separate sheet of paper, write a letter to Jeffrey Marx. In the letter, tell Mr. Marx what you learned from your study of *Season of Life* and how it has impacted your life and/or team. This letter will be provided by your coach to Mr. Marx as a way of thanking him for his input into this study and for writing *Season of Life*. Mr. Marx often shares stories he receives about the book with Joe Ehrmann and with Mr. Marx' dad.

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