

A Super Bowl Faith-Hero

Ten years after winning Super Bowl MVP, quarterback Kurt Warner let his faith help him through a valley. Now, he's back on top and leading a second NFL team into this Sunday's Super Bowl XLIII.

✖ **Jan. 30, 2009** – Arizona Cardinals star quarterback Kurt Warner is not only a magnet for Super Bowl rings. His life's journey seems to draw in grace and favor over and over again.

Ten years after winning both the NFL's Super Bowl MVP and league MVP awards with the St. Louis Rams, Warner is back on top and leading the Arizona Cardinals, a franchise that has never appeared in a single Super Bowl, to face the Pittsburgh Steelers in this Sunday's Super Bowl XLIII.

If he wins, he becomes the first starting quarterback in NFL history to win Super Bowls with two different teams. If the Steelers win, history is also made, since they would become the only NFL team to ever win six Super Bowl titles. Whose side God is on would make for an interesting theological debate, since Pittsburgh's wild longhaired safety Troy Polamalu is also a devout Christian.

But many eyes this Sunday will be fixed on Warner. The NFL's 1999 megastar, dogged by injuries and interceptions several years since then, has shrugged off naysayers and criticisms to mount an amazing comeback.

His Super Bowl appearance in Tampa, Fla., this weekend as the 37-year-old father of seven, and his remarkable story of perseverance, have inspired media headlines nationwide.

The real story of Warner, however, is his strong Christian faith, which was singled out by International Bible Society (IBS) Publishing to be featured in a new sports-style New

Testament titled "Path to Victory."

"It doesn't matter if it's in front of millions of people at the Super Bowl or one person in private—I try to stand true to who I am in the Lord," Warner said in an IBS release. "It takes courage to do what you know is right when you're being torn in different directions."

Off the field, Warner is heavily involved in his First Things First Foundation, a ministry to families that does everything from providing aid to parents who are victims of flooded homes to taking sick children on trips to Disney World.

"His faith drives everything he does," said Steve Riach, director and producer of this Saturday's NFL Super Bowl Breakfast in Tampa. "He has a special-needs child, which I think has magnified a spot in his heart for children."

On Saturday morning, roughly 7,000 people will be gathering in the Sun Dome at the University of South Florida in Tampa for this year's 22nd annual Super Bowl Breakfast. The NFL-sanctioned event broadcast online is hosted by Athletes in Action, the sports ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ.

During the breakfast event Tony Dungy, former head coach of the Indianapolis Colts, will present an NFL player with the prestigious Bart Starr Award—which is given each year by Athletes in Action to honor exemplary character and leadership in the home, on the field and in the community. Warner is named as one of the three finalists to receive the award.

Riach said Warner spoke this past Tuesday at a news conference and was asked about the kind of legacy he wants to leave behind. "In a nutshell, Warner said he wanted his legacy to be that he didn't just say it, he lived it," Riach recalled. "He wanted people to see his faith was real."

"His story is a story of perseverance. It's a very unlikely story [but] a testament to his commitment and his desire and

his unwillingness to give up.” **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**