

Christian Culture, Kingdom Values Help Bring Baylor First National Championship

When Scott Drew took over as the Baylor University men's basketball coach in 2003, he knew the team's attitude needed to change. As a lifelong Christian, Drew wanted to implement his faith into his players and make sure they put Jesus first in their lives.

After Drew took over for Dave Bliss, who compiled a 14-14 record in his final season at Baylor in 2002-2003, Drew instilled a culture he called "JOY," which stands for "Jesus, Others, Yourself." Baylor is a Baptist University in Waco, Texas.

On Monday night, Drew and his players reaped the benefit of their faith and their hard work, giving Baylor its first national championship with an 86-70 victory over top-ranked Gonzaga and denying the Zags their first title and the first undefeated season by any men's basketball team since Indiana in 1976.

"A culture of JOY is Jesus, Others, and then Yourself, so it's a hierarchy way of thinking," Jared Butler, who scored 22 points and had seven assists against Gonzaga, said on Baylor's athletic website.

"I'm not trying to preach a prosperity gospel, but our Lord and Savior; I say it all the time. He gets us through everything. Jesus Christ, man, He's the truth, and He was with us tonight. He's with us wherever we go, and He just sustained us. He brought us together. He brought the team together."

Drew's faith has made a huge impact on the team, which finished the season 28-2. Gonzaga, which spent the entire

season at No. 1 in the polls, finished 31-1.

"One thing a lot of people have said when they watch our team play is that you can tell there's genuine love for one another. You can't fake that," Drew says. "The love and joy they have for each other is definitely a key to our success.

"We want to thank God for blessing us with the opportunity tonight. I thought we were on a mission to make the most of it. As a coach, you never know when you're going to be able to get to a Final Four, a national championship, so you want to take advantage of those opportunities. ... Really blessed that we were able to get to a Final Four and win a national championship, because they're hard to do."

Baylor jumped out to a 9-0 lead after the first two and a half minutes and favored Gonzaga never recovered.

The men's championship follows Baylor's women's basketball championship in 2019. The Lady Bears also won titles in 2005 and 2012.

Butler was named the Final Four's Most Valuable Player. {eo}

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