

World Series Game-7 Winner Has a Bigger Dream: To Love Others as God Loves Us

Giants fans flocked to downtown San Francisco Friday. They converged to celebrate their team's third Major League Baseball World Series title in five years, an unlikely championship run that was capped by a storybook 3-2 game-seven win over the Kansas City Royals on Wednesday. Adorned in orange and black (not for Halloween but because those are the Giants' colors), the crowd cheered series MVP Madison Bumgarner, slugger Pablo Sandoval, Wednesday's winning pitcher, Jeremy Affeldt, and the entire team.

For Affeldt, the 2014 World Series was his fourth (three with San Francisco and one with Colorado). That's the stuff of which childhood dreams are made. The affable Affeldt welcomed the celebration and joined his teammates as they rode down Market Street to thank the fans for their support. That's the glitter and glitz that comes with success. But there is more to Affeldt's story.

A tattoo on Affeldt's left forearm gives a clue. It reads, "No man shall live for himself." A follower of Christ, Affeldt relishes the opportunities to appear in and win so many World Series games. He understands that as a major league baseball player he has a big platform. His childhood dreams are being fulfilled. But he has bigger dreams. And those are coming true too.

"I do feel grateful to have been part of so many championships. But success wasn't given to me so I could have a big head or say, 'Look at me. I am a world champ,'" Affeldt told CharismaNews in an interview following the 2012 World Series win. "The more I succeed on the field, the more I want

to stand even closer to the throne of God. I can do more. I can increase and ask God, 'How can I help people through my successes.'"

It hasn't always been that way. When Affeldt arrived in the Major Leagues 12 years ago, like so many others, he thought he had "arrived." He was a starting pitcher for the Kansas City Royals—yes, the same Royals he defeated this week. But injuries and poor outings took a toll.

"I actually hated baseball in Kansas City for a time," Affeldt told CharismaNews. "I wanted to quit. But God showed me how to enjoy the game."

Affeldt had grown up in church, gone to a Christian high school and married into a family associated with Spokane's Healing Rooms ministry. So he knew where to turn.

"God showed me that I had to give up control and look beyond myself," Affeldt said. "When I started loving my neighbor as myself, I started understanding why I was a major league athlete. I am not here to say, 'Oh, look! I wear a major league uniform and have a baseball card and have a big contract.' I am here to help others."

For Affeldt, it became a matter of living out Luke 10:27: Loving God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and loving your neighbor as yourself.

While still pitching in Kansas City, Affeldt began reaching out to youth, helping them help others. That small effort has mushroomed into a nonprofit he founded that is called Generation Alive (). Through Generation Alive, Affeldt rallies youth in churches and schools in his hometown of Spokane, Washington, and around the nation to help feed others in need. He also speaks at churches and schools.

The Generation Alive approach is hands-on, with youth not only raising funds for food, but actually packaging it and shipping

it.

"Compassion is different than justice," Affeldt said. "We all have compassion. Justice is doing something about it."

As Affeldt sees it, living out Luke 10:27 takes both.

Since joining the San Francisco Giants in 2010 (after brief stops in Cincinnati and Colorado), Affeldt has expanded his compassion and justice efforts to include feeding the hungry in Haiti and Africa (through Youthfront), partnering with the C3Missions International orphan project and providing youth in impoverished locales with sports and recreation events. He has also teamed with David Batstone and the Not For Sale Campaign (), to which he donates \$100 to combat human trafficking for every batter he strikes out.

Affeldt tells how this all unfolded in his book *To Stir a Movement*, released by Beacon Hill. In the book, among other insights and highlights, he reveals why he returned \$500,000 to the San Francisco Giants. In 2010, he signed a two-year, \$10 million deal. As with all sports contracts, he used an agent and the negotiations were intense. After getting his check, Affeldt realized that he had been overpaid. There had been an error to his advantage in the final, signed contract, so legally he was not obligated to return the \$500,000, but Affeldt determined that before God, it was the right thing to do.

In 2012, at the end of the two-year deal, Affeldt was offered and accepted a three-year, \$18 million contract with the Giants. As thankful as Affeldt is for God's provision, there remains a bigger deal.

"You will find freedom when you learn to love your neighbor as yourself and to love God with all your heart, soul and might. There's your freedom," Affeldt said. "Any time anyone asks me why I do what I do, I say, 'Jesus.' His love is something I want people to see."