



**“I HAD TO TALK  
TO MY FATHER  
AND GO THROUGH  
THAT WHOLE  
PROCESS OF  
FORGIVENESS.”**

**— MIKE SINGLETARY**

AP photos

# MIKE SINGLETARY MISSING MY DAD

By Chad Bonham

When NFL fans think about Mike Singletary, chances are it's not his role on the 1985 Super Bowl championship Bears that first comes to mind. Sure he won a pair of Defensive Player of the Year awards and was named to 10 Pro Bowl teams, but that's not it either. And forget the fact that Singletary is a member of the hallowed Professional Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

No matter how accomplished a career Singletary put together, most of us just can't get away from those eyes. You know. Those crazy bugged-out eyes that sent chills up the spine of his opponents for a 12-year span (1981-92). Even Joe Montana and John Elway must have felt a little intimidated as Singletary stared intently across the line of scrimmage.

But as often as the producers at NFL Films have used Singletary for that all-important "money shot," the legendary linebacker finds himself farther removed with every passing day from the person he used to be on the field.

"I'm very calm," Singletary says in his resounding bass voice.

In fact, Singletary's life on the field never mirrored his life away from the game. He says it was his mother's influence, ironically, that

had the biggest impact on his ability to be aggressive as a player but more balanced as a person.

"I think I got the intensity from my mother," Singletary says. "She always talked to me about whatever I did that she wanted to make sure I did my best. I really didn't know any other way to do it. Another thing my mom talked to me about was that when you're in Rome, you act like you're in Rome. If I'm in the classroom I want to learn. When I'm on the football field, I want to play. I want to win. There's a time and a place for everything."

When Singletary was 12, his parents divorced. His father was a pastor but spent most of his time up and down, both spiritually and emotionally. So during his most formative years, Singletary leaned heavily on his mother for every kind of advice imaginable.

"My mother and I were very close," Singletary says. "We always talked. She talked to me about life and what it was going to take to be successful in life. She talked to me about being the kind of man who would make a difference. She began talking to me about being a husband and a father when I was 12 and 13 years old. She told me how to treat my wife, how to look for a wife, how

to be a gentleman, how to weather the storms of life when they come, how to close my mouth, how to listen, how to act, how to respect my elders. All of those things went into who I was."

After a successful high school career in Waco, Texas, Singletary stayed close to home by playing college ball at Baylor. There, he was a two-time All-America selection and was picked in the second round of the 1981 draft by the Chicago Bears. By his seventh game as a rookie, Singletary had already cracked the starting lineup.

By 1985, Chicago had amassed one of the most talented, if not eclectic, collections of football players in NFL history. To this day, Singletary loves to reminisce about the team that became known simply as "Da Bears."

"First of all, you start with Coach Ditka," Singletary says. "He was a unique individual to begin with. Then you look at Buddy Ryan, the defensive coordinator. That's a personality all on its own. He's got a million one-liners. Then of course, you've got Jim McMahon, the Fridge and Steve McMichael. The list goes on and on. There were some guys on that team a lot of people didn't even know about who were really inter-



Mike Singletary joined San Francisco's coaching staff in 2005.

esting characters. ... I didn't even mention Walter Payton."

That season, no one was a match for Chicago, including the New England Patriots who fell 46-10 in Super Bowl XX to the Bears.

On the surface, life couldn't have been better for Singletary. But nothing could be further from the truth. Singletary was a miserable wreck and he didn't know why. His confusion led to a deep depression.

"I was Defensive Player of the Year that season," Singletary recalls. "I'd gone to the Super Bowl. We were 15-1. And I wasn't happy. Everybody was coming up to me saying, 'Wow. You guys are the Chicago Bears. You're great. The defense was outstanding.' And I was thinking, *What's wrong with me?*"

As the off-season crept by, Singletary slowly began to get a revelation of what was happening. Even though he had been raised in church, he was beginning to understand that his life had a greater purpose and it went way beyond the gridiron. Singletary also began to realize that he needed to make a definitive decision about his relationship with God.

Singletary says he came to a realization that God was demanding total commitment. "And I took that challenge," he says. "I began to look at myself and recognize I was hypocritical and I was judgmental. I was very shallow. I had to deal with those things. I had to

talk to my wife. I had to talk to my father and go through that whole process of forgiveness and really come to grips with the ugliness of my life. And as I began to do that, the Lord and I began to trade. I gave Him my ugliness in exchange for His wholeness and beauty and all of the things He created me to be."

Part of Singletary's process was a life-changing reconciliation with his estranged father. He also began taking steps to strengthen his one-year-old marriage. On the field, not much changed. Singletary remained one of the league's most dominant defensive players. The only difference was he finally understood that football was not what defined him, but rather it was who he was in Christ.

After his final season in 1992, Singletary left football for a decade working as an inspirational speaker and team-building expert. He returned to the game in 2003 as an assistant coach for Baltimore. The 2005 season marked his first year with San Francisco. Singletary — who recently released his first book, *One on One With Mike Singletary* (co-authored by Jay Carty) — sees his job as an opportunity to reach into the lives of his players.

"For me, it's just a matter of looking at the guys I coach and really feeling where they are and having the opportunity to build into their lives as they allow me to," Singletary says. "I don't sit down and go, 'Let me tell you how I did this.' I give them my very best every day. When they come to me, I always tell them, 'If you want me to be honest, ask me the question.'"

"I will not come to them giving them all of this advice if they don't ask for it. But if they want to know something and if they ask me, I will be honest with them if they're ready for it. That's kind of the relationship that we have." **tpe**

CHAD BONHAM is a freelance writer living in Tulsa, Okla.

E-mail your comments to [tpe@ag.org](mailto:tpe@ag.org).

# ABCs

## OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

**A. Admit you are a sinner.**

"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

**Ask God's forgiveness.**

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

**B. Believe in Jesus** (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

**Become a child of God by receiving Christ.**

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

**C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.**

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.

If you would like someone to pray with you concerning your decision to follow Jesus Christ, please contact the church indicated on the back cover or call:



**1-800-4PRAYER**

Assemblies of God National Prayer Center



DR. GARY A. DENBOW, PRESIDENT

# Let's Improve CBC's Campus

CENTRAL BIBLE COLLEGE is proposing to do a \$2.4 million campus improvement called Extreme Makeover: CBC Edition! Why do I want to do all of this? Because I want to educate and train the next generation of soul winners... world changers! The time is now! **Join me and make a difference.**

## EXTREME MAKEOVER CBC EDITION

For More Information On How You Can Help Improve CBC's Campus Call **1.800.831.4CBC.**

3000 North Grant Avenue • Springfield, Missouri 65803  
417/833.2551 • 800/831.4CBC (4222) • [www.cbcag.edu](http://www.cbcag.edu)

