

## Dungy: Son's death was 'a test'

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Tony Dungy has been reluctant to speak publicly about the Dec. 22, 2005, suicide of his 18-year-old son, James, but the Indianapolis Colts coach opened up a little Wednesday when the tragedy came up during a news conference at the team's Westside complex.

"For me, I think it was really a test," Dungy said to a group of about 50 local and national media gathered to discuss the Colts' Feb. 4 Super Bowl meeting with the Chicago Bears.

"I think God gives you tests to see if you're going to stay true to what you believe and stay faithful. For me, that's what it was, having to continue to believe. Sometimes when you have disappointments, it makes that final destination that much sweeter."

In a wide-ranging interview, Dungy revealed that he also drew on his faith and the experience of his son's death when Colts wide receiver Reggie Wayne's brother, Rashad, 32, was killed in a Sept. 24 auto accident in Kenner, La.

"The thing that I told Reggie is you have to enjoy the memories of the time that you had and to know that the thing they would want you to do is continue on with excellence," Dungy said. "That's the only bit of advice I could share with him."

Wayne did that. He had the best season of his six-year NFL career, finishing with 86 catches for 1,310 yards and nine touchdowns.

Wayne carried on. That's all you can do, Dungy said. There doesn't come a point that you know you're going to be OK.

"I still don't know that I'm going to be OK," Dungy said. "It was never anything that all of a sudden things flashed; it was just the time to move forward."

Dungy has clung to his beliefs professionally as well. When his team lost four times in a six-game stretch in November and December, he just kept preaching fundamentals, telling his team, in so many words, to keep the faith.

The Colts did, like their coach, and they will play in Super Bowl XLI in Miami.

Dungy, 51, is a man of deep convictions, and he is not always motivated by the same things as others. He repeatedly has said that he is not a "lifer," that he does not plan to grow old as a coach, but neither has he decided when to get out, or whether the Super Bowl could be his last game.

"It's something I haven't thought a whole lot about," Dungy said. "I'll sit down with (owner) Jim (Irsay) at the end of the year and I'll sit down with my wife and we'll do just what we do at the end of every year.

"First thing, you have to make sure they want you back. I never take that for granted anymore."

Dungy said almost precisely the same thing the day after the Colts' 21-18 divisional playoff loss to Pittsburgh last January.