

FLAG FOOTBALL

PLAY WITH  
PURPOSE

# COACH PLAYBOOK

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO PROVIDING  
THE BEST LEAGUE EXPERIENCE!



DEVELOP SKILLS | STRENGTHEN CHARACTER | HAVE FUN!



# FLAG FOOTBALL COACH PLAYBOOK

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## SECTION 1

# COACHING ESSENTIALS

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## → What You Do Matters

Thank you for coaching this season! You are about to make a difference in the lives of families for the next several weeks but don't worry. This league and Upward Sports provide the tools you will need for the journey, even if you are new to a sport.

*Mark 10:45 - For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

## → Your Role in Sports Ministry

As a coach, you play a vital role in the sports ministry to players and families. You are on the front lines of what takes place this season.

Sports ministry requires that the sport and ministry are both done with excellence as you give your best effort in teaching the sport and caring for people through ministry opportunities. Your league is not “just an Upward league” or “just a church league.” Sports ministry is your chance to provide the best youth sports experience in your community and demonstrate the gospel to the families you serve.



*When you do the sport and ministry well, there is an area of overlap where sports ministry occurs.*

There are ***Five Keys to Coaching*** in an Upward Sports league.

Whether you are a first-time coach, veteran coach, or somewhere in between on the coaching journey, there are five crucial things to do as an Upward Sports coach.

## ➔ **Key #1: Be Organized**

Parents want to see you value their time and are investing in their participant. This is demonstrated by how you conduct practice. Schedule at least 45 minutes on your calendar to prepare for practice each week.

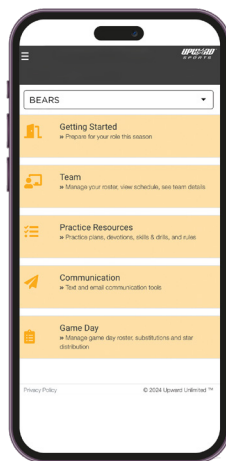
The tools noted below can help you be organized to provide a great experience this season.

**MYUPWARD.ORG** – This is the primary tool for you as a coach. The league director will send you an invitation to access resources on MyUpward.org. After you accept the invitation and create a username and password, you should create an icon on the home screen of your mobile device for quick and easy access.

Some of the features you will find at your fingertips are outlined below.

- ◆ **Getting Started** includes how-to videos and other resources to help you this season.
  - ◆ Video tutorial on MyUpward
  - ◆ Referee handbook
  - ◆ PDF practice plans\*
  - ◆ PDF devotion content\*
  - ◆ PDF Substitution and Star tracking forms\*

\*Helpful if you prefer paper copies or have limited internet access.



*\*Note: The coaches' tool can only be found through an invitation from your league director and is not listed in an app store.*

- ◆ **Team** area helps you manage your roster, see participant information, and the schedule for practices and games with the designated jersey color. There is also a link to your team page.
- ◆ **Practice Resources** provide a step-by-step outline for each practice including weekly devotion content, skills and drills, and sports rules.
- ◆ **Communication** is where you will find email and text capabilities, as well as the ability to attach a link to the team page.
- ◆ **Gameday** Gameday helps you to manage substitutions with the Upward Sports gameday rotation that is easy to follow so you don't have to worry about tracking playing time. Players can be removed from the lineup (click the minus) or reactivated (click the three stacked circles). Assign stars and take notes by clicking the star next to each participant's name.

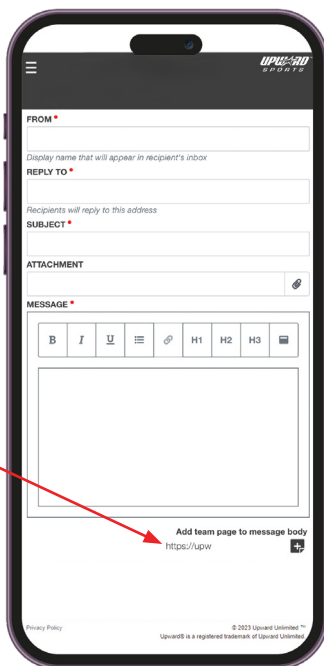
## OTHER TOOLS

- ♦ **Practice Devotions** – As you prepare for practice, take about ten minutes each week to review the Scouting Report at the beginning of the devotion so that you can present the devotion which ends with prayer.
- ♦ **GameDay Stars** – Use gameday stars to highlight each player's contributions made during the game each week. Stars can be tracked over the course of the season online or using the printed form in the Appendix.
- ♦ **Gospel Video** – Sent out from the league director to families to share a video version of the gospel message with them during the season.
- ♦ **Green Practice Stars** – Use these stars at practice to encourage participation in the practice devotion, scripture learning, or the goals your league has outlined for the devotion content.
- ♦ **Practice Cards** – The practice cards show the Bible verse associated with the weekly devotion. Depending on the devotion track, you will hand out cards every week or only at designated weeks noted in the devotion.
- ♦ **Practice Plans** – Use the practice plans found on MyUpward.org under the "Practice Resources." Practice plans include skills and drills along with the practice devotion. If you are an experienced coach creating your own practice plan, be sure to include the devotion content each week.



- ◆ **Season Celebration** – Celebrate the season with your team. Your league may have individual team parties or a league-wide celebration so that you can connect with families.
- ◆ **Team Page** – Share the team page with your team to give them access to the practice and game schedule. The team page also includes your contact information and a team roster. The team page link is available to send from the communication area of the mobile view of MyUpward.org.

Share your team page from the communication area.



## ➔ Key #2: Lead the Practice Devotion

During practices, coaches use the devotion materials to lead a devotion, encourage discussion, and pray.

Before each devotion is a Scouting Report that gives coaches an inside look at the devotion for the week with detailed information about that week's topic.

After reviewing the scouting report review the devotion and make any notes before going to practice. Be patient with participants as learning more about Jesus is a lifelong pursuit and not accomplished in a single devotion.

Green practice stars and practice cards are items used to support the devotion. If you need help with presenting the devotion content, please let your league director or coach commissioner know.

### *The Scouting Report features:*

- ❖ **BACKGROUND** - Detailed information about that week's topic
- ❖ **BIG PICTURE** - Points to scripture for more insight on the topic
- ❖ **ENCOURAGEMENT** - Provides coaches with an inspirational quote, Scripture, or thought
- ❖ **COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION** - Allows coaches to think about the content's relevance to their own life before presenting to their team



### **SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION**

<b>BACKGROUND</b> In our devotions this season, we'll be answering some big questions as we explore what it means to be made in the image of God. This means introducing some deep theological concepts in a kid-friendly way. As we explore what the Bible teaches about the image of God, we'll learn about who we are, how we ought to live, our relationship with God, and our relationships with other people.  In this first devotion, we'll talk about why God can help us understand who we really are. He created us, He loves us, He knows everything about us, and He has a special purpose for us. Psalm 139 is a beautiful poem that captures the nature of God's intimate knowledge of us and all-encompassing presence with us. The athletes on your team will be challenged to think about who they are and learn that they can trust God to help them understand who they are. This will help set the scene for the idea of being made in the image of God that we'll look at throughout the rest of the season.	<b>BIG PICTURE</b> For more insight, read Psalm 139:1-18; Luke 12:6-7. If you don't own a Bible, you can download the YouVersion Bible App for free.  
<b>ENCOURAGEMENT</b> On bibleproject.com, search for "Image of God Biblical Theme" and watch the video. This video provides an excellent overview of what our devotions will cover this season.  	<b>COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION</b> How would I answer the question, "Who am I?"  <small><b>Bible Translation Note:</b> All Scripture quotations in this devotion track are taken from the New Living Translation (NLT) of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.</small>

## → **Key #3: Communicate with Parents, Players, Coaches, and Referees**

Parents on the team want you to communicate with them. Send a weekly email, text, or both to let parents know how the team is doing and remind them of upcoming events.

Parents and players watch how you respond at practices and games and how you lead the team. Your interactions influence the atmosphere of the league, if a family will return next season, and the league's and your ability to conduct ministry.

### **INTERACTING WITH PLAYERS**

This coaching opportunity may place you as someone's first-time coach. In sports ministry, you have the chance to impact someone for eternity.

#### **Here are ten tips on interacting with your players:**

- ◆ Greet each player by name as they arrive.
- ◆ Always be mindful of speaking on a level they can understand.
- ◆ Explain the details of what you are teaching, demonstrate what you are teaching, have participants do it, and then apply it in a game scenario.
- ◆ Focus on one skill at a time as you teach so participants can learn each one thoroughly.
- ◆ Recognize differences in skill levels so that you can help each player improve.

- ◆ Be familiar with the devotion and allow time for discussion.
- ◆ Hold a ten to fifteen-minute meeting with parents at the end of the first practice to set expectations and answer questions.
- ◆ Allow players to be creative during the game. Teach at practice and observe and encourage during the game. You don't need to control all the player actions.
- ◆ Understand that there is a lot of information a player is processing during a game from many different areas.. When a player is not in the game, one simple question to gain understanding is, "What did you see?" This question requires listening and patience to discover what they saw from their perspective.
- ◆ When distributing stars on gamedays, give specific reasons each athlete earned a particular game-day star. Don't underestimate the value of recognizing players!

## WHAT ABOUT DISTRACTED AND DISRUPTIVE PLAYERS?

A challenge for coaches is what to do with distracted or disruptive participants. Here are four things to understand in these situations that will help.

1. Understand that players have short attention spans. Be patient.
2. Players come into practice and, like coaches, are influenced by things that have already occurred during the day. Greet



them by name to welcome them into a new environment so they know you see them.

3. Maintain engagement by cutting down on lines and lectures. To do this, ask parents to help run a drill so there are multiple stations.
4. Praise desired behavior right away, use the player's name, and let them know how it helps the team. Other players will recognize this and follow.

*If undesirable behavior continues, address it with the player and parent so that the player doesn't disrupt a learning environment. Let the parent know that you need their help, as they may be able to offer insight into working with their player.*

## INTERACTING WITH PARENTS

Start the season by getting to know your players' parents and families. Include parents in your first postpractice huddle.

### **Here are a few tips for interacting with parents:**

- ♦ Introduce yourself to parents, share expectations, and explain why you are coaching.
- ♦ Share your contact information.
- ♦ Each week take time to have a conversation with one family.

- ◆ Encourage parents to have fun working on skills at home with their players.
- ◆ Be ready to step into any spiritual conversation with parents and talk about what you teach during devotion time.
- ◆ Demonstrate care and concern for players, so parents know you are looking out for their players.
- ◆ Be organized and prepared for practice. Parents want to know you value their time.
- ◆ Communicate one time per week through email, text, or both. Keep it short and simple.

After you receive your roster, contact the parents right away. Families are eager to hear from you, and it cuts down on the number of calls and emails a league director has to spend time answering.

## **INTERACTING WITH COACHES AND REFEREES**

An Upward Sports league can set the standard in your community by how coaches and referees interact on game days. Parents, players, and families notice how coaches and referees work together to provide a fantastic player experience. Remember, youth sports are about the youth.

**Here are some tips on how to interact with coaches and referees:**

- ◆ Introduce yourself to the other coaches and referees on gameday, and remember their names.

- ♦ Realize that you would not have a gameday without the other team and referees. It's essential to work together.
- ♦ Review Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:7 and understand that we are all God's creation, which should be reflected in how we interact.
- ♦ Be the referee's biggest fan. If you want to have referees for your league, critical behavior does not help.
- ♦ Coaches must work together for the experience of all participants.
- ♦ Love one another, John 13:34.
- ♦ Assume positive intent first rather than jumping to negative conclusions.
- ♦ Thank the coaches and referees after the game.
- ♦ Review the Circle of Affirmation and follow it.

## ➔ **Key #4: Teach the Sport**

Teaching the fundamentals of the sport allows players to put in place the building blocks for lifelong learning and enjoyment of the game. As players gain an understanding and work toward mastering the fundamentals you can then begin to add strategy and roles within a team.

As players learn and grow through the fundamentals any sport experience should also include learning sportsmanship, an understanding of healthy competition, and a growth mindset where players are learning with each opportunity to compound small improvements over time that lead to noticeable changes.



## → Key #5: Lead By Example

Being an Upward Sports Coach is a unique opportunity to not only teach the fundamentals of a sport but also share the gospel and create a positive environment for participants. This begins with your understanding of how to lead by example during practices and games.

### Three Layers of Coaching

The three coaching layers are essential to understand the dynamics of coaching a team. They include a player, the team, and the coach.

- ♦ THE PLAYER - A coach will need to observe each player's skill level and teach accordingly. You may have a wide range of skill levels, with players who have experience and skill and some who have never played the sport. Work one-on-one with players and give them direction on individual skills to try at home. Celebrate success as they develop and be patient with their mistakes.
- ♦ THE TEAM - As you coach each individual, you must also bring the team together. In a team sport, players must learn how to work well with each other. The team concept changes as players become more mature, advance in age, and can focus on others and not just themselves. Small-sided scrimmages and in-game scenarios at practices can aid in developing the team concept. Helping them communicate with each other by using participants' names and showing them how to encourage each other will help them come together as a team.

- ◆ THE COACH - You must prepare for practice and games to coach a team. Coaches should be willing to invest the time it takes to be ready to lead. Review practice plans and think about backup plans so that you can move forward if something isn't working. Take time to check the Scouting Report section of the practice devotion and spend time praying for your team.

## Create a Positive Culture

A positive culture is one of safety, learning, and fun. A team's attitude and mindset often mirror that of its coach. Use the beginning of the season to set a tone of positivity through the weeks ahead.

- ◆ Set expectations of behavior and communicate them with players and parents.
- ◆ Start and end each practice on time.
- ◆ Encourage players to support each other by cheering for teammates.
- ◆ View mistakes as teaching opportunities, not a chance to be critical at the moment.

### ***Team Huddle***

*One practical way to create a positive team culture and teach communication is to establish a team huddle at the end of practice. Have players circle up and include the coach. The coach can talk about things done well in practice.*

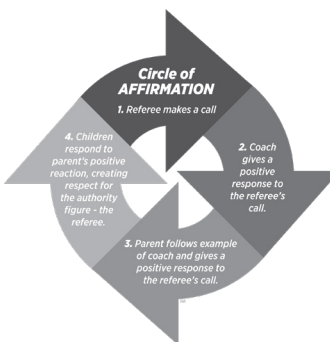
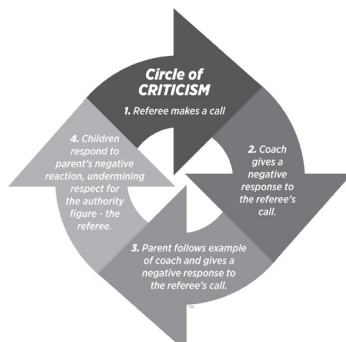
*Next, have players look to the person on their right, use*

*their name, and offer something they saw their teammate do well in practice. Continue around the circle until everyone has had a chance to speak. The topic could be different at each practice, such as something the player would like to improve on their own, something they appreciate about the other player, or something they would like to see the team accomplish in the next game.*

## Circle of Affirmation

Choosing the right gameday attitude is key to being an effective Upward Coach. Actions and reactions during games can either open or close the door to ministry. The Circle of Criticism and the Circle of Affirmation are simple diagrams that illustrate the results of a coach giving a referee either negative or positive feedback.

Coaches and referees work together as a unified team for everyone to have a great experience. Coaches stop the Circle of Criticism by starting the Circle of Affirmation.



The example set between coaches and referees using the Circle of Affirmation demonstrates to everyone how to value others, enjoy healthy competition, and create a positive environment for spectators and players to follow.

Practicing the Circle of Affirmation makes the gameday experience better for everyone.



## Play with Purpose

The influence a coach has not only helps participants to develop as players but as people who will engage as members of a community, family, and eternity.

The resources provided are created with a player development model in mind that helps us to understand we are here to Play with Purpose.

### **PLAYER DEVELOPMENT MODEL = M.A.S.S.**

**As an Upward Sports Coach, you play a major role in encouraging your players mentally, athletically, spiritually and socially as they participate on your team.**

**This approach is based on Luke 2:52: “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and all the people.”**



## MENTALLY

Mental development for young athletes is a byproduct of the weekly practices and games where players participate. Players grow in confidence, courage, decision-making, and cognitive self-regulation.

- ◇ **Confidence and Courage** - As players learn and improve, their skills and confidence will increase. Players then gain the courage to attempt new skills and recognize that mistakes are a part of the game that they can overcome.
- ◇ **Decision-Making** - The intricacies and complexities of sports help train young athletes to make correct decisions quickly. When to pass a ball, when to attempt a move, or when to make a defensive play are all part of building decision-making. Through observation and repetition, players improve their muscle memory and learn when and how to make individual and team decisions.
- ◇ **Cognitive self-regulation** - Through intense games and drills, players learn to self-regulate emotions and gain focus. Through sports, they will enter various experiences (practices, scrimmages, games, etc.) where they will learn to narrow their focus from a broad range to a specific individual focus and team responsibilities in the pursuit of attaining particular goals.



## ATHLETICALLY

Athletic development compounds through small improvements over time. Players learn and grow in their sport to achieve long term growth

- ◇ **Exercise** - In a recent State of Play report, the Aspen Sports Institute reported only 24% of youth ages 6 to 17 engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day, down from 30% a decade earlier. With many kids spending over 6 hours in front of screens each day (TVs, computers, phones/tablets), the desire to get out and be active is waning.

How can you tell if a child is getting proper exercise? Sweat. Sweat requires constant activity with little “downtime.” Practices should have drills that allow for continuous movement using various muscle groups. Avoid players standing in lines when possible. Keep practice fast-paced and fun, allowing for water breaks and short periods of rest.

- ◇ **Physical Development** - Physical development has enormous benefits for children, including stronger bones and muscles, improved heart and brain health, and lowered risk of diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Participants may learn fundamental movements that allow them to run, jump, throw, catch, balance, and change direction. Basic moves will help participants enjoy a variety of sports and begin a path to physical literacy.
- ◇ **Fun** - The key to getting kids interested in physical activity is by making it fun. Sports do just that, provided the coaches in charge are focused on the development of the athlete. Practices should teach the game using fun and safe methods.



## SPIRITUALLY

Spiritual growth is an essential part of sports ministry. You play a vital role in the spiritual development of players on your team and help them discover a sense of self and a sense of purpose. This development happens in various ways.

- ◇ **Practice devotions** - By guiding discussion around the practice devotions each week, you plant seeds of discovery within the minds and hearts of young athletes. Remember to guide every practice devotion conversation back to the gospel and what Jesus has done for us.
- ◇ **Your relationship with players** - You are a safe, trusted adult in the lives of young athletes. You hold a remarkable amount of influence. Listen intently, guide carefully, and be someone who continually points young athletes to Christ in your interactions.
- ◇ **Your relationship with parents** - The top spiritual influence in a child's life is their parents. What they learn from their home life will speak more into their spiritual development than anything else. Your relationship with a child's parents must be strong. Share with them what their child is learning each week in practice. Discuss the devotions. Talk about how their child is developing in their skills. When parents know you care and are investing in their child's well-being, they'll trust you and your spiritual influence on their child.
- ◇ **Your example** - Be ready to step into opportunities God provides during practices, games, and your communications to demonstrate and share the gospel message.



## SOCIAL

Participants develop socially by learning how to work as a team, communicate, and serve others through a sport.

- ◇ **Teamwork** - Through team sports, children learn how to interact with peers and adults in positive ways. These include numerous opportunities for “selfless” behavior, focusing all mental and physical efforts towards the goals of the team. Participants learn how to navigate relationships, encourage others, and recover from mistakes.
- ◇ **Communication** - Players learn how to communicate in complex social situations with teammates and competitors. This learning carries over to other areas of life, helping them communicate in school, at home, and in other environments.
- ◇ **Serving** - Serving others becomes a critical component for social development in team sports. Children learn to share the ball, encourage teammates, and give their best effort to help the team and not just themselves.

## ➔ Goals For The Season

**The goal of our sports ministry is:**

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**Success looks like:**

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**Success in our sports ministry is measured by:**

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**How were you coached as a child, and how has that influenced how you plan to coach?**

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**How do you plan to grow spiritually and as a coach this season?**

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**HEBREWS 12:1-2 READS:**

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.*







## SECTION 2

# PRACTICE

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## ➔ Invest in the team by preparing for practice

Your investment shows in the results each week. There are entire practice plans for each week of the season found on MyUpward.org. These plans have been designed for each age group and include age-appropriate skill development and devotion material that progress through the season.

As the season continues, you may need to modify the plans based on what takes place in practices and the game. Be sure to always focus on the fundamentals of the sport. As you become more experienced, you may begin to include other resources for practice. Be sure to use the weekly devotion material as you design a practice.

*Coaches are named as the top reason parents and players return or not each season. Parents want to see organized and detailed practices.*

## ➔ Practice Breakdown

### **OPENING PRACTICE HUDDLE** (3-5 minutes)

Start on time the signal to the team parents that you are ready to begin. Point out a couple of things that you will cover in practice. Once games occur, use the first few minutes of practice to talk about the previous game and something you will work on from the game and highlights from the game.

### **WARM-UP ACTIVITY** (3-5 minutes)

Provide players with the opportunity to warm up their bodies slowly.

### **PRACTICE SKILLS THROUGH DRILLS** (20 minutes)

Focus on specific skills that matter to the sport. Use drills and game scenarios that reinforce skill development.

### **PRACTICE DEVOTION** (5-7 minutes)

Share the practice devotion for each week. Be mindful of the opportunities to demonstrate the gospel throughout practice, so players see you living it out.

### **SCRIMMAGE / SKILL CHALLENGES THAT TEACH** (20 minutes)

Use a controlled scrimmage or skills challenges to test their skills.

### **END OF PRACTICE HUDDLE** (3-5 minutes)

Review the skills learned at practice and praise efforts. Hand out practice cards and green practice stars and do things to create a positive team culture.

### **POST-PRACTICE TIME**

After practice, take time to get to connect with one family each week.

**Here is a chart that outlines the weekly practice plans you can find on MyUpward.org** - Write out a plan so you can maximize your time and are organized. This should include a Practice Focus, practice meeting, skills review, devotion (provided for you in the next section), rules review, new skills and wrap-up.

Practice	Practice Focus	Team Meeting	Rules to Cover	Skills & Drills
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Evaluate skills</li> <li>· Learn basic offensive skills and formations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Get to know team members</li> <li>· Discuss practice ground rules</li> <li>· Introduce the offensive philosophy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Field dimensions and layout</li> <li>· Offensive rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Passing (see page 39)</li> <li>· Receiving (see page 44)</li> <li>· Snapping (see page 36)</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Continue working the offense</li> <li>· Introduce basic defensive skills and formations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Re-introduce players and coaches</li> <li>· Introduce the defensive philosophy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Offensive rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Defensive coverage (see page 49)</li> <li>· Flag pulling (see page 48)</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Continue implementing the offensive playbook, spend time covering the play calling scheme</li> <li>· Continue working the defense</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Talk through the practice focus, highlight the things that they are doing really well and explain what needs to be the day's focus on both sides of the ball</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Game format</li> <li>· Substitutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Work one-on-one</li> <li>· Coach through proper route running (see page 43)</li> </ul>
4 <i>week of first game</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Cover the game plan for the upcoming game</li> <li>· Scrimmage if possible to simulate game-type situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Review the play calling scheme and the plays you will be calling on Saturday</li> <li>· Give the players a play and have them discuss the assignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Review the game format</li> <li>· Review substitutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Flag pulling (see page 48)</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Continue skill development</li> <li>· Work on areas that need improvement from the game</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Discuss practice focus</li> <li>· Review the last game</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Review all rules as a fun quiz</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Areas that need improvement from the game</li> </ul>
6-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Continue skill development</li> <li>· Analyze game performances, coach through improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Review the last game</li> <li>· Make adjustments to plays and assignments</li> <li>· Introduce new plays as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Continue to review rules for clear understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Areas that need improvement</li> </ul>

## → Warm-Ups & Stretching

*Use the first five minutes of practice to get the players moving. This can be done by incorporating athletic development exercises like the examples below. Warm-up first and then follow with stretching.*

**Here are warm-up activities that you can use.** Add music, move to the beat and create a warm-up activity you will use at the start of each practice.

- ♦ **Arm Circles:** Hold arms out standing in a T and circle them.
- ♦ **Back pedal:** Run backwards while stepping back as far as possible.
- ♦ **Donkey Kicks:** In a standing position or moving forward, kick heels toward up toward your back side.
- ♦ **Feet on fire:** Running in place.
- ♦ **Heels to Hands:** Have players line up on one of the sidelines. On the coach's signal, players jog slowly with knees pointing toward the ground and their heels kicking upward toward their backsides where their hands are. Once all players have made it to the other side of the field, have them return to the starting point by sprinting back across the field.
- ♦ **High Knees:** With hands in front and waist high, lift knees up and alternate between knees. Vary speed as desired.
- ♦ **Hops:** This can be done in one spot or moving forward. It can be done on one foot of both feet.

- ◆ ***Jumping Jacks:*** Players jump in place, extending arms out to the side and kicking legs out to the side.
- ◆ ***Log Step:*** With both feet on one side of an imaginary log, high step sideways with one foot and then the other to cross over the “log.” Vary speed.
- ◆ ***Lunges:*** From a standing position, large step forward while keeping the back foot in place without the knee touching the ground.
- ◆ ***Push-ups:*** May use a modified version for very young players.
- ◆ ***Running:*** One minute around the room. If you have limited space, run in place and change the pace.
- ◆ ***Shoulder circles:*** With arms by your side, lift your shoulders and take them back down, creating a circular motion.
- ◆ ***Side lunge:*** Feet wider than shoulder width apart, keep one leg straight while the other bends into a squat position. Keep your back flat, chest up and rear out behind you.
- ◆ ***Sprint to Backpedal:*** Have players line up on one of the sidelines. On the coach’s signal, players sprint across the field then backpedal to the starting point. As players backpedal, instruct them to lean slightly forward and land on the balls of their feet so they don’t trip and fall backward.
- ◆ ***Trunk twists:*** From a standing position, twist back and forth slowly.

## Here are stretch activities you may use after warm-ups.

- ♦ **Neck:** Sit or stand with arms by your side. Tilt head to the right and hold for eight seconds, then tilt head to the left and hold for eight seconds.
- ♦ **Triceps Stretch:** Bring one arm up beside your head, bending it at the elbow while reaching across with the other arm and hold. Repeat, using the other arm.
- ♦ **Biceps Stretch:** Reach one arm out straight in front of you with palm facing up. With the other hand gently push down until you feel a slight stretch in your bicep.
- ♦ **Shoulder Stretch:** Reach one arm across your chest, holding it at the elbow with the opposite hand.
- ♦ **Hug:** Reach as far as you can and wrap your arms around your chest giving yourself a hug.
- ♦ **X Stretch:** With feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart, stretch your arms and hands up and out, forming an X with your body. Reach high and stand on your tip-toes.
- ♦ **Quadriceps Stretch:** Support yourself against a wall or stationary object. Pull one heel up behind your body and hold. Repeat with opposite side.
- ♦ **Hamstring Stretch:** Sit on the floor with right leg straight out in front. Bend left leg and cross it over the right one. Pull the knee across your body toward opposite shoulder. Change legs and repeat.

- ♦ ***Pike Stretch:*** Sitting with feet straight in front of you and together, put both hands straight up and above your head and then slowly bend forward to reach your toes.
- ♦ ***Calf-Muscle Stretch:*** Lean toward and support yourself against a wall while keeping your leg straight. Press you heel to the floor. Reverse and stretch other calf-muscle.



## ➔ Skills and Drills

This section reviews the fundamental skills of flag football, explains why each is important, and emphasizes the skill's key teaching points. Each skill is followed by a basic drill that reinforces it. These drills are acceptable for any age group as an introduction to the concept behind each skill. For more advanced age-appropriate drills for each skill, as well as complete practice plans, go to [MyUpward.org](http://MyUpward.org).

Many of the drills described in this playbook require one ball per pair of players. If you are limited in the number of balls you have for practice, you will need to modify the drill by creating lines based on the number of balls available.

### Snapping

Because each play begins with the snap of the ball from the center to the quarterback, it is extremely important to have a successful snap on each play. Two types of snaps should be worked on: the under-center snap and the shotgun snap. Use the following directions to instruct players.

#### Under-Center Snap

- ♦ Center begins in a two-point stance with their feet shoulder-width apart, knees bent, elbows resting on knees, head up.
- ♦ Players should reach their throwing hand out to the football, which is on the ground. Grip the football with the first knuckle of the thumb placed in-between the white line and the first lace furthest from the player. The

palm of the hand should then rest on the outside of the ball, with the four fingers spread across the back closest to the ground. Be sure to have players lift their head before snapping the ball.

- ◆ As the ball is snapped, their hand should turn inward so the ball is delivered sideways to the quarterback who is standing right behind the center.
- ◆ Release the ball and run the play.

***At the direction of the league director any age division may use the side snap. The traditional snap can be difficult for players with small hands even when using two hands.***

### **Shotgun Snap**

- ◆ Center begins in a two-point stance (feet shoulder-width apart, knees bent, elbows resting on knees, head up).
- ◆ Players should reach their throwing hand out to the football, which is on the ground. Grip the football with the first knuckle of the thumb placed in-between the white line and the first lace furthest from the player. The palm of the hand should then rest on the outside of the ball, with the four fingers spread across the back closest to the ground. Be sure to have players lift their head before snapping the ball.
- ◆ On the snap, flick wrist as the ball leaves the hand to deliver it several feet back to the quarterback.

***Depending on the player's ability to grip the football with one hand, a center may shotgun-snap the football with either one or two hands. If two hands are needed, a player should use his non-dominant hand to guide the football as it is snapped by placing that hand on the open side of the football.***

## Passing

### Passing Techniques

The steps below will provide the foundation to becoming a good passer.

- ◆ Gripping the football correctly improves the throwing mechanics and balance of the ball. A correct grip varies from one person to another, as the size of their hands and length of fingers always influence the placement of the hand. There is no one “right” way to grip the football. To provide enough control and pressure on the surface of the ball, hold the top half with one to three fingers spread across the laces. Practice different grips to find which one works best.
- ◆ Turn sideways, with your non-throwing shoulder pointing toward the target.
- ◆ Pull your throwing arm back to an L position, with the football up by your ear and your elbow at or above shoulder level.
- ◆ Step toward the target with your front foot as you release the ball. The back foot and hips should rotate simultaneously as the passer drives forward, shifting weight from back to front to generate power on the throw. During the release, the back foot should come off the ground.
- ◆ Follow through toward the target, with your thumb pointing to the ground and palm facing out. Throw to a specific target (nose, chin, chest, hands).
- ◆ To get the most control, speed, and distance on the ball throw a spiral. A spiral is also easier for the receiver to

catch. Proper release of the football will result in a spiral. Your index finger should be the last finger to leave the football.

## **Passing Drills**

### **Drop-Backs (no ball required)**

- ◆ Have players work on dropping back and getting their feet set and ready to throw.
- ◆ Begin with a three-step drop, and work up to a five-step drop.

Have players work on keeping their eyes downfield and keeping the imaginary football up in a secure position in front of their chest and between the armpits.

### **Drop Backs Pass**

For quarterbacks, learning how to drop back properly is important. Being back from the line-of-scrimmage creates additional distance between the quarterback and the defense.

- ◆ As you receive the snap, turn sideways in the direction of your throwing arm.
- ◆ The first step is a reach step. It is a powerful, quick, deep step with the back foot.
- ◆ The next steps (middle steps) are crossover steps.
- ◆ The last step is the plant step. It is a small reach step. As the plant step takes place, your front shoulder should dip down slightly to help maintain balance.

It is important to drop back quickly and keep looking downfield for an open receiver.

## **Distance Passing**

- ◆ Players will pair off and begin 5 yards from each other.
- ◆ Have players throw the ball back and forth. Make sure players use the appropriate touch on the pass, based on the distance they are from one another.
- ◆ After a few throws, have each player take a step back.

## **Moving Target**

- ◆ Players will pair off and begin 5 yards from each other.
- ◆ Have players throw the ball back and forth. Make sure players use the appropriate touch on the pass, based on the distance they are from one another.
- ◆ After a few throws, have each player take a step back.

## **Scrambling QB**

A QB needs to know that they can move behind the line of scrimmage to avoid the defensive pressure.

- ◆ Players will form lines with receivers and quarterbacks in several groups.
- ◆ One at a time the receivers will run a designated route with the quarterback rolling out to their left or right and then making a throw.
- ◆ After 15-20 throws have a new QB practice throwing.
- ◆ Remind the QB they should lead the receiver versus throwing to where they have been or where they are currently.

## Screen Pass

A QB should practice a screen pass to gain an understanding of the distance of the throw versus throwing down field.

- ◆ Place three cones at distances of 3, 5, and 10 yards to the left and the same to the right of the QB
- ◆ Players should form two lines with a line for the quarterbacks and another line for running backs lined up about three yards behind the quarterback.
- ◆ The running back should run a route toward the cone designated by the coach and catch a pass from the QB.

An advanced version of this drill would be to add a center to work on the center-quarterback exchange, and a defender with two cones behind them so that after making the catch a receiver can practice getting by a defender and moving toward a designated point.

## Receiving

### Catching Techniques

Proper technique for catching the football is a critical football skill. This should be incorporated into every practice and something you can encourage them to do at home.

- ♦ Always catch the ball with your hands away from your body so that the ball doesn't bounce off of your shoulders, arms or chest in an unpredictable direction. Arms should be extended out about three-fourths of the way to allow room to cushion the catch.
- ♦ To catch balls above waist-height, put your index finger and thumbs together to form a triangle. For a low ball, keep your pinkie fingers close together to cradle the catch. For deep passes that are over the shoulder, you want to have your pinkies and elbows close together to cradle the catch in front of your chest. This pass should be caught over the outside shoulder.
- ♦ Keep your eye on the ball. The most important part in catching the ball is to watch the ball all the way until it's in your hands.
- ♦ Once the ball is in your hands, secure it by quickly tucking it away, high under your armpit, clamping it tightly to your body. Cover the front tip of the football with your fingers. Use your free arm to maintain balance.

## Routes

Running accurate pass routes will go a long way toward helping your team move the ball. An accurate route has four main parts: start, stem, break, and burst.

- ◆ Start – A good route begins with a good stance and start. It's important to gain as much ground as you can as quickly as possible.
- ◆ Stem – The receiver forces the defensive back up the field. Run toward the outside shoulder of the defender in an attempt to get him to turn his hips away from the line of scrimmage.
- ◆ Break – The receiver transitions from the stem to the burst by making a direction-changing cut. In order to get in and out of a break quickly, stay low and maintain proper balance by keeping your shoulders directly over your feet.
- ◆ Burst – The receiver comes out of the break and attempts to create additional separation from the defender. Different routes require different bursts. A curl requires the receiver to come off the break with two steps back to the quarterback and then stop. A post requires a full-speed, continued burst after the break.

***Teaching the importance of everyone running his/her assigned route will be a challenge. This is a good time to explain and teach the importance of teamwork. Remember to be patient with your players, especially the younger ones.***



## Receiving Drills

### Moving Catch

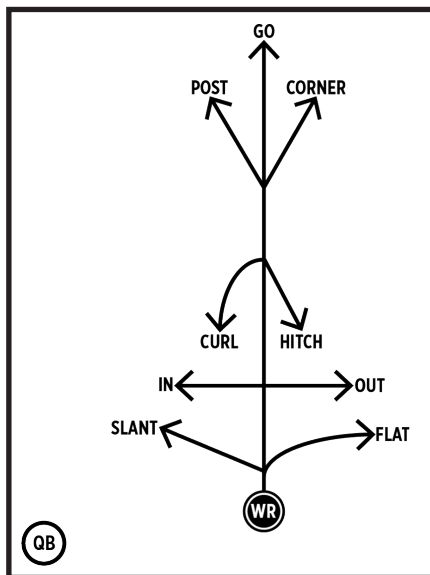
- ◆ Players will line up, single file, on one side of the field.
- ◆ One at a time, players will begin to jog across the field, looking toward the coach.
- ◆ The coach will pass the ball to each player.
- ◆ Players should work on catching the ball away from their bodies, using their hands with proper technique.
- ◆ Next, use the up, slant, curl, and out routes. This is a half-speed drill to work on catching the ball while in motion.

### Cone Weave

- ◆ Line up four cones in a straight line, with about a yard and a half between each one.
- ◆ A fifth cone should be set up off the last cone to determine the route.
- ◆ Begin working on the curl route by setting up the fifth cone in the proper comeback angle to catch a curl.
- ◆ Move the fifth cone to different parts of the field based on the route (in, out, or post).
- ◆ After running through the drill a few times, add the catching part of the drill, in which a coach throws the ball on the break.

## Route Tree

- ♦ Slant - The slant route is a quick pass where the receiver runs up field 1-2 yards, plants their outside foot and takes a 45-degree angle across the middle of the field. The receiver should cut in front of the defender and make themselves a big target.



- ♦ Flat - The flat route is a quick pass where the receiver takes one step and arcs toward the sideline. This can be a risky pass against an aggressive defender who can jump in front of the receiver and intercept the pass.
- ♦ In Route and Out Route - These routes count on the wide receiver making a sharp 90-degree cut about 5 yards up the field to lose their defender. An In Route goes toward the middle of the field while an Out Route goes toward the sideline. The receiver should cut hard and sharp to gain separation from their defender.
- ♦ Curl - The curl can be run 8-10 yards down the field and then curl back toward the line of scrimmage. The receiver can run hard up the field to get the defender moving backwards before turning back.

- ♦ Hitch - The hitch route has a receiver run up field before coming to a stop and turning around quickly to catch the ball.
- ♦ Post - The post route is a deep route aiming toward the back middle of the endzone. Receivers will run 7 yards before angling toward the middle of the endzone. Receivers should work to get the defender behind them at 7-10 yards.
- ♦ Go - The go route requires a sprint up the field to create separation from the defender and counts on a quarterback who can throw it long.
- ♦ Corner - The corner route is thrown to the outside edge of the field and often requires the receiver to catch over their shoulder. Receivers are working to keep the defender toward the inside of the field before angling toward the sideline 8 yards down the field.

The routes can be combined to help keep the defender guessing. For example, a receiver could run a sluggo route which is where they start the route as a slant and then go up field running a go route. A hitch and go route causes the defender to stop and go toward the receiver when they turn for a hitch but then runs a go route to separate from the defender.

***As players progress they will concentrate on catching the ball and tucking it away. Players will develop their footwork and the ability to come out of a break to catch the football.***

## Flag Pulling

### Breaking Down

The best way to make a flag pull is to be in a good position. Breaking down is a way of moving that brings the defender under control and gives him the best chance of having a successful flag pull.

- ◆ Shorten your steps. Use fast, choppy steps as you approach the ball carrier.
- ◆ Be balanced and in control of your body. Be ready for the ball carrier to make a move.
- ◆ Stay low, with your arms out slightly for balance and your shoulders above your feet.
- ◆ Watch the player's belly, and move toward your target (the flags).

### Flag Pull

Pulling flags is a skill that is developed only after ample practice, so go through these motions several times.

- ◆ Sprint to the ball carrier.
- ◆ As you approach the ball carrier, come to a good low, balanced defensive position and shorten your strides into short, choppy steps (break down), getting ready for the ball carrier to move in any direction.
- ◆ Reach for the top of the flag (near the plug). Firmly grab the flag and pull hard.

## Flag Pulling Drills

### Break-Downs (whole team drill)

- ♦ Have players run half-speed toward you.
- ♦ On the command “break down,” players should come to a good breakdown position using the proper technique.

### Pull Tag (drill to help player get used to pulling flags and avoiding defenders)

- ♦ Have players spread out in a designated area (15 by 20 yards).
- ♦ On the coach’s command, players will begin to pull other players’ flags. The object is to see how many flags a player can pull.
- ♦ At the end of one minute, the player holding the most flags is the winner of that round.
- ♦ **Flag-guarding is illegal** and players may not knock away another players arm or hand attempting a flag pull. Be sure to let players know about this penalty.

## Coverage

### Backpedaling

In order to play effective defense, all players must learn how to backpedal. Backpedaling is necessary to keep a defender in a position where he can make a play on the receiver while maintaining a cushion so he is not beaten on a deep pass.

- ◆ Begin in a good defensive stance (knees bent, back straight, head and shoulders over feet).
- ◆ Push backward off the front foot and step with the back foot.
- ◆ Shoulders should be parallel to the line of scrimmage.
- ◆ When the receiver gets within three yards, the defensive back should turn to run with the receiver.

## Coverage Drill

### Backpedaling Drill

All players will need to work on this move, and repetition is the best way to become comfortable with backpedaling.

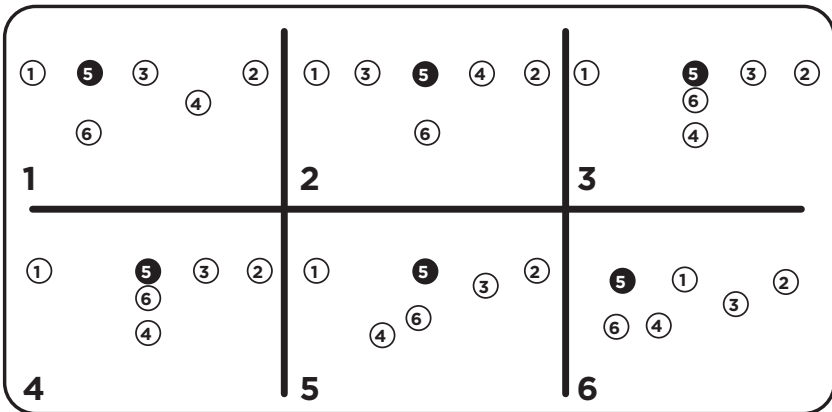
- ◆ Have players line up across a line.
- ◆ On the coach's command, players will backpedal 10 yards, focusing on proper form.
- ◆ Start slow, then encourage players to speed up as they become comfortable with backpedaling. The goal is to backpedal as quickly as the receiver runs forward.

## → Plays and Formations

To assist you in play-calling Upward Sports offers wrist coaches for your players. A wrist coach allows for you to diagram or list plays for your players.

Keeping the system simple and advancing with age is important. To find sample play-calling cards visit [MyUpward.org](http://MyUpward.org) and see the sample below.

Each player may be appointed a number at the beginning of the quarter. This number will represent his position for the quarter. That way each player knows where to line up on each play.

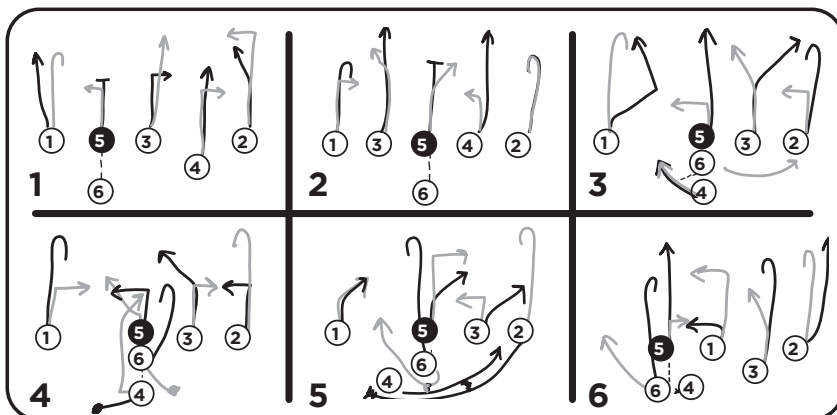


For younger players, we recommend you stay with a single formation and focus on running plays and simple pass routes.

To call the play, the coach will announce the play window number and then the color of the play to run.

### Example: 1—Black

In the example, players will run the routes in solid black in play window 1.









## SECTION 3

# PRACTICE DEVOTIONS

## BIBLICAL THEME

### IMAGE OF GOD

WEEK 1:	Who Am I? .....	57
WEEK 2:	Who Made Me? .....	60
WEEK 3:	What Was I Made for? .....	63
WEEK 4:	What Do I Stand For? .....	66
WEEK 5:	What Went Wrong? .....	69
WEEK 6:	Why Is My Way So Bad? .....	72
WEEK 7:	What Is God Really Like? .....	75
WEEK 8:	Good News .....	78
WEEK 9:	What Happens Now? .....	81
WEEK 10:	How Should I Treat Others?.....	84
WEEK 11:	What's Next? .....	87

## ➔ Devotions

As an Upward Coach, you are not only teaching skills for the sport but also values for life. The devotion time allows you to teach the character of Christ through a biblical theme. This season will focus on a theme which is taught in your practices and are highlighted by Bible verses. The chart below is designed to assist you as you organize and prepare for your devotions. It shows the biblical theme and verses for each group of practices.

PRACTICE NUMBER	BIBLICAL THEME	VERSE
Week 1	<b><i>Who Am I?</i></b>	O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. Psalm 139:1 (NLT)
Week 2	<b><i>Who Made Me?</i></b>	So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27 (NLT)
Week 3	<b><i>What Was I Made For?</i></b>	Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground. Genesis 1:28b (NLT)
Week 4	<b><i>What Do I Stand For?</i></b>	Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Ephesians 5:1 (NLT)
Week 5	<b><i>What Went Wrong?</i></b>	For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Romans 3:23 (NLT)

PRACTICE NUMBER	BIBLICAL THEME	VERSE
Week 6	<b><i>Why Is My Way So Bad?</i></b>	All the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes. Judges 21:25b (NLT)
Week 7	<b><i>What Is God Really Like?</i></b>	Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. Colossians 1:15a (NLT)
Week 8	<b><i>Good News</i></b>	Now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:21 (NLT)
Week 9	<b><i>What Happens Now?</i></b>	The Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you. John 14:26b (NLT)
Week 10	<b><i>How Should I treat Others?</i></b>	We love each other because he loved us first. 1 John 4:19
Week 11	<b><i>What's Next?</i></b>	But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. 1 John 3:2b (NLT)



## SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION

### BACKGROUND

In our devotions this season, we'll be answering some big questions as we explore what it means to be made in the image of God. This means introducing some deep theological concepts in a kid-friendly way. As we explore what the Bible teaches about the image of God, we'll learn about who we are, how we ought to live, our relationship with God, and our relationships with other people.

In this first devotion, we'll talk about why God can help us understand who we really are. He created us, He loves us, He knows everything about us, and He has a special purpose for us. Psalm 139 is a beautiful poem that captures the nature of God's intimate knowledge of us and all-encompassing presence with us. The athletes on your team will be challenged to think about who they are and learn that they can trust God to help them understand who they are. This will help set the scene for the idea of being made in the image of God that we'll look at throughout the rest of the season.

### BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Psalm 139:1-18; Luke 12:6-7. *If you don't own a Bible, you can download the YouVersion Bible App for free.*



### ENCOURAGEMENT

On [bibleproject.com](https://bibleproject.com), search for "Image of God Biblical Theme" and watch the video. This video provides an excellent overview of what our devotions will cover this season.



### COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

How would I answer the question, "Who am I"?

**Bible Translation Note:** All Scripture quotations in this devotion track are taken from the New Living Translation (NLT) of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.

## PRACTICE DEVOTION | SHARE THIS WITH YOUR TEAM

## KEY VERSE

O Lord, you have examined my heart  
and know everything about me.

Psalm 139:1 (NLT)

## BOTTOM LINE

God can help me  
understand who I am.

**ASK (All Ages): Who are you? If someone asked you that question, what would you say?**

If someone asks who you are, you would probably tell them your name first. If you're at school and someone asks you who you are, you might add, "I'm in Mrs. Smith's class." If you're here for practice, you might say, "I'm on Coach Kyle's team." (*Use your own name.*)

But your name, what team you're on, what class you're in, or even who your family is—these things don't actually tell the full story of who you are, do they? There's so much more to you as a person than all these things. You've got memories and experiences, talents and abilities, your unique personality, the things you're passionate about—and so much more. It's not easy for any of us to really answer the question, "Who are you?"

To be honest, some people spend their whole lives trying to figure out who they are. It's a big question. But guess what? The Bible can help us answer it. The Bible is an ancient book that was written over the course of thousands of years by many different people. They were all inspired by God to write about His work throughout history and His plan for the world. The Bible is God's message to us to help us make sense of life. God wants to help us understand who we really are.

**ASK (3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and up): How do you think the Bible is able to help answer questions that matter to us today when it was written so long ago?**

You see, God created each of us. And the way He created us is special. He made us in His image. We'll be talking a lot more about that this season. But God also knows us better than anyone. He is always with us and knows everything about us.

There's a chapter of the Bible that talks about how well God knows each of us. It says: "O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord." (Psalm 139:1-4)

This chapter even goes on to say, "You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb." (Psalm 139:13) And there's another verse in the Bible that says that God even knows how many hairs are on your head!

**ASK (All Ages):** How does it feel to think about how well God knows you? Do you think God knows you better than you know yourself?

If anyone knows who we are, it's God! And the Bible tells us that He has made us humans to be special and set apart. He has given us a special purpose. And His purpose can help us understand who we are. That's what we're going to be talking about this season.

## LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for bringing us together as a team. Please help us to have a great season. Thank You for giving us the Bible to help us learn more about You and about who we are. Open our minds and hearts so we can understand what it means to be made in the image of God. Amen.

### GREEN PRACTICE STAR REMINDER

If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

### PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled "Practice 1" at the end of practice.

*Note for Next Week: Bring a recent photo of yourself  
(it's okay if you show it from your phone).*





## SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION

### BACKGROUND

What does the Bible mean when it says we are made in the image of God? We can look to the historical context in which the Old Testament was written to help answer this question. Kings in the Ancient Near East were often considered the “images” of their gods. They were representatives of the deities, which sometimes led to them claiming to be gods themselves. The other primary meaning for “image” in this context is in reference to the handmade idols that were deemed to be physical representations of the gods.

The Bible offers a completely different perspective. Rather than being represented by a single king who would lord his status over his subjects, or by powerless, inanimate objects, the one true God imbued one of His living creations with His image: human beings. And this image wasn't limited to one human—it was and is inherent in every human who has ever lived and who will ever live. To be made in God's image means that we are connected to our Creator in a special way and that He has given us certain attributes of His nature, as well as certain responsibilities of His position. To put it simply, being made in God's image means that all of us as humankind and each of us as individuals represent Him.

### BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Genesis 1-2; Psalm 100:3.

### ENCOURAGEMENT

Consider how vast, multifaceted, and beautiful the image of God is in comparison to the ancient gods who were supposed to be represented by kings or idols. The true God can't be represented by a wooden figurine or a single royal guy. He required a whole species to demonstrate His wonder and glory—yet even billions of people cannot fully portray the greatness of God.

### COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What comes to mind when I think about being made in the image of God?

## PRACTICE DEVOTION | SHARE THIS WITH YOUR TEAM

## KEY VERSE

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27 (NLT)

## BOTTOM LINE

God created me  
in His image.

**Note:** Bring a recent photo of yourself (it's okay if you show it from your phone).

Most stories start at the beginning. The Bible starts at the *very* beginning. It says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) It goes on to tell about how God created light and darkness, day and night, sky and land and sea, the sun and moon, all the plants that grow on the earth, and fish and birds and all the animals. God created everything!

**ASK (K-6<sup>th</sup> Grade):** What is your favorite animal that God created?

Then, God created human beings. The Bible says, “Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.’ So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:26-27)

**ASK (3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and up):** What stands out to you about what God says about humans?

God says we will rule over everything else. We’ll talk more about that later this season. But right now, let’s talk about something else God says here: that He made humans in His image.

**ASK (All Ages):** What is an image?

An image is a representation of something else. (*Show the photo of yourself.*) This is a photo of me. It’s not me, but it looks like me, and it shows some things about what I look like. A video is also a type of image—just one that moves and has sound, too! A video of a person might show you more about them—but it’s still just a representation. It’s not the actual person.

**ASK (All Ages):** What do you think the Bible means when it says we are made in the image of God?

God made us to be like Him in ways that the rest of creation isn’t. The second chapter of Genesis talks about how God breathed the breath of life into the first humans. They weren’t like the other animals. God gave humans the ability to think and reason, to imagine and create, and to make decisions for themselves. This is what He made all of us humans to be like.

**ASK (All Ages):** How are we like God? How are we different from God?

God made us to be like Him in several ways, but we aren't exactly like Him. God is perfect and limitless. He has all knowledge and all power. He can be everywhere at once. He is eternal, which means He has always been and always will be. Even though God created us in His image, we still have to respect Him as the one who created us, and who is still much, much, much greater than we could ever be.

It's a great privilege to be made in God's image. That means we represent Him in the world. We represent Him in how we relate to the rest of creation and how we relate to each other. That's a big responsibility. And we'll talk more about what that all means throughout the rest of the season.

For now, I want you to remember two things. First, God created you in His image, and second, you matter to God and He made you for a purpose.

## LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for all of creation—for this amazing, wonderful universe You made. Thank You for making each and every one of us in Your image. Help us to remember that we matter and that You made us for a purpose. We love You, Lord. Amen.

### GREEN PRACTICE STAR REMINDER

If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

### PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled "Practice 2" at the end of practice.



## SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION

### BACKGROUND

In this devotion, we'll use the metaphor of a garden to help explain what it means for us to "reign over" the rest of creation as representatives of God. As a good ruler or leader helps their people flourish, and a good gardener helps their garden flourish, God has given all of us the task of bringing the best out of His creation and promoting the best for His creation.

This idea is seen most clearly in Genesis 1:28, when God blesses the first humans, a man and a woman, and gives them the famous directive to "be fruitful and multiply," as well as to rule over the creatures of the earth. "With the blessing comes the ability to be fruitful and to rule. In procreation they will share in the divine work of creating human life and passing on the divine image . . . in ruling they will serve as God's vice-regents on earth. They together, the human race collectively, have the responsibility of seeing to the welfare of that which is put under them and the privilege of using it for their benefit." (NET Bible Notes on Genesis 1:28)

### BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Genesis 1-2.

### ENCOURAGEMENT

"God is not usually visible, so he appoints humans to remind creation and each other of his presence. Because God rules the world, our representative role includes ruling on God's behalf."

**Carmen Joy Imes, *Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters***

### COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Have I ever considered that God has given me a responsibility to reign over His creation? What does that look like for me?

**PRACTICE DEVOTION | SHARE THIS WITH YOUR TEAM****KEY VERSE**

Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.

Genesis 1:28b (NLT)

**BOTTOM LINE**

God gave me a purpose.

Raise your hand if you've ever planted anything. Maybe it was some flowers or vegetables or a whole garden. The way things grow is so amazing. You can plant the seed and then tend to the plant over time. You can make sure it has the right amount of water and sunlight and do your best to protect it from weeds, bugs, or bunnies. And, if you're patient, you'll see it grow—probably into something beautiful or delicious. How awesome is that?

The Bible tells us that when God made the first humans, Adam and Eve, He gave them a wonderful garden to live in called the Garden of Eden. It was filled with plants and trees that grew fruits and vegetables, and all kinds of animals. And since God had made Adam and Eve in His image, to be like Him and to represent Him, He gave them an important job.

The Bible says, "Then God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.'" (Genesis 1:28) God gave humans the job of reigning over, or ruling, the earth.

**ASK (All Ages): What do you think it means to rule over the earth?**

Sometimes, we might think of ruling as someone having lots of power and doing whatever they want. But let's think about where Adam and Eve were when God gave them this task. They weren't in a castle; they were in the garden! For them, reigning over their world looked like being awesome gardeners. God had created this beautiful place, and now He had given humans the job of taking care of what He had created.

Now, it's been a long time since Adam and Eve, and humans don't live in the Garden of Eden anymore. But the job that God gave the first humans is the same job He gives to each of us. He is trusting us to take care of His creation.

**ASK (All Ages): What do you think it looks like for us to take care of what God created?**

Let's think about what a gardener does again. They tend to plants, trusting that God will help things grow. They harvest the fruits and vegetables that grow to be used for food. They plant new seeds to see new things grow.

God wants us all to rule the world and take care of His creation a lot like that. And I don't just mean planting flowers, growing vegetables, or caring for the environment. Those are all great

things we can do, but we can also be great gardeners in other ways, too.

We can tend to God's creation by caring for other people, who are also part of God's creation and are made in His image. We can harvest good things by using the gifts God has given us to do more good in the world. We can plant new seeds by creating amazing new things out of what God has already created: things like new inventions, new songs, and new communities. God created all of us to have creativity, and there are countless ways we can help shape the world He is trusting us to rule.

**ASK (K-6<sup>th</sup> Grade):** What is the purpose God has given every human?

**ASK (7<sup>th</sup> Grade and up):** The truth is that humans reign over the world in both good and bad ways. What are some of the bad ways? What are some of the good ways?

## LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for allowing us to be part of Your work in the world. Please help us to be good rulers and gardeners of Your creation. Show us what it looks like to care for the world You created. Amen.

### GREEN PRACTICE STAR REMINDER

If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

### PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled "Practice 3" at the end of practice.



## SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION

### BACKGROUND

If we want to represent God well, we will get to know Him and His priorities. We will do our best to make decisions based on His standards and desires for His creation. We rule best by emulating His character. God is good; He is perfect, He is just, He is loving, He is faithful, and so much more. The blueprint for how we are to fulfill our purpose as those made in God's image is God Himself, specifically as He revealed Himself through Jesus (which we'll discuss in Practice 7).

Most of us are used to living for ourselves, ruling over our own little kingdoms. But if we remember our true purpose, to reign on behalf of God and represent Him well, we will do as the Bible says and "seek the Kingdom of God above all else." (Matthew 6:33) That means looking for the ways in our own lives that we can represent God well through our behavior and character.

### BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 2 Peter 1:3-5; Psalm 1:1-3; Micah 6:8.

### ENCOURAGEMENT

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

**Romans 12:2**

### COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

How can I better reflect God's character in my daily life?

## PRACTICE DEVOTION | SHARE THIS WITH YOUR TEAM

## KEY VERSE

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do,  
because you are his dear children.

Ephesians 5:1 (NLT)

## BOTTOM LINE

I can reflect the  
character of God.

We've been talking about how we are all made in God's image and how God has given us the important job of representing Him and ruling over His creation. We've talked a little about what that looks like, but today, I want to talk more about *how* we should go about ruling creation.

**ASK (All Ages): What does the word *character* mean?**

When I say the word *character*, you might think of some of your favorite characters from movies or video games. But character can also mean who you are and how you behave. If someone has good character, they're probably someone other people look up to because they make good choices. If someone has a bad character, they're probably a bad influence because they don't make great choices. We decide what kind of character we have by the decisions we make every day.

And guess what? Part of being made in God's image means we are supposed to reflect His character. When we are thinking about how we should represent Him, a big part of that is making decisions based on what God says is good and what He says is evil, rather than just making decisions based on what we want to do. Remember, God is perfect, and He created the whole universe. We can trust Him to know what's really right and what's really wrong, and we can get a good idea of God's definition of right and wrong by studying the Bible.

God is good, kind, and holy. He has given us a job to do, and He wants us to take that responsibility seriously. Let's think about some examples of what it might look like to rule over creation in a way that reflects God's character.

You have trash to throw away at the park. The garbage can is a whole football field away. You know that if you leave your trash on the ground, it will either be littering or someone else will have to pick it up.

**ASK (All Ages): How can you reflect God's character in caring for the world He made in this situation?**

Your little sister accidentally slammed her fingers in the car door as she was getting in. You're really excited to get to your game, but she is crying.

**ASK (All Ages): How can you reflect God's character in this situation?**



Someone in your class at school showed you an easy way to cheat on an assignment.

**ASK (All Ages): How can you reflect God's character in this situation?**

God knows we're not perfect. We won't always make the right decisions. Sometimes, we'll choose what we want or what is easiest instead of what's right. But God still wants us to try our best to make good decisions and reflect His character.

There's a famous quote from the *Spider-Man* comics and movies that says this: "With great power comes great responsibility." We're not superheroes, but God has trusted us to reign over and take care of His creation. That's a great power and privilege. But, along with that, we have a great responsibility to make good choices and to represent God as well as we can.

## LET'S PRAY

God, please help us reflect Your character. We want to make decisions that honor You. We want to do what is right according to You, not according to our own ideas. Help us to take our responsibility as Your representatives seriously. Amen.

### GREEN PRACTICE STAR REMINDER

If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

### PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled "Practice 4" at the end of practice.



## SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION

### BACKGROUND

Any observation of the world around us can tell us that the idyllic world of Genesis 1-2 didn't last. Genesis 3 explains why. Humanity chose their own plans, purposes, and preferences over their Creator's. Instead of ruling on His behalf and tending to His creation as His representatives, Adam and Eve chose to live for themselves, according to their ways rather than God's. And the rest of humankind has followed in their footsteps.

Bible scholars hold different viewpoints about how exactly the fall of humanity in Genesis 3 affected the status of humans as made in the image of God. It isn't addressed directly in the text. Some scholars say the image was lost or damaged. However, passages in both the Old and New Testaments (including Genesis 5:1-3 and 9:6) indicate that humans never lost their status as God's image-bearers. At the same time, our ability to represent Him and reflect His character is grievously altered—as is our relationship with Him.

### BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Genesis 3; Romans 3:23; Romans 8:19-22.

### ENCOURAGEMENT

"There is ample discussion and documentation in the Bible regarding the destructive impact of sin on people. Yet at the same time there is every indication that people remain 'in God's image'—that no harm has been done to this status or to the image on which it is based. People retain a special connection with God (though their relationship with God is badly damaged), and God still intends for people to reflect likenesses to God (though in actuality they largely fail to do so). The image of God is the standard of who people are created to be—embodied in the person of Christ—and that standard is not diminished in any way because of sin."

**John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God***

### COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Do I take sin seriously? Why or why not?

**PRACTICE DEVOTION | SHARE THIS WITH YOUR TEAM****KEY VERSE**

For everyone has sinned; we all  
fall short of God's glorious standard.

Romans 3:23 (NLT)

**BOTTOM LINE**

Sin has big  
consequences.

This season, we've been talking about how the Bible tells us we are all made in the image of God. That's pretty awesome. But, sadly, just two chapters later in the Bible, we find out some really bad news. When it comes to following God and living in a way that represents Him well, humans are going to mess up big time.

Remember how I told you that God gave the first humans, Adam and Eve, a beautiful garden to live in? Well, in that garden, there were all these plants and trees that produced plenty of good food for Adam and Eve to enjoy. There was just one tree in the whole garden that God told them not to eat from. Unfortunately, one day, they decided to eat from that tree, even though God had told them not to. They disobeyed God, and sin entered the world.

**ASK (All Ages): What is sin?**

Sin is when we disobey God. It's when we choose to do things our way instead of His way. The tree in the garden that Adam and Eve weren't supposed to eat from was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. When they decided to eat from that tree, it meant they wanted to decide for themselves what was right and what was wrong. Instead of following the ways of the Creator of the universe, they wanted to follow their own way instead.

**ASK (3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and up): Why do the choices we make matter to God?**

Imagine that your birthday party is coming up. On the day your mom was going to take you shopping for all the party supplies, you twist your ankle and can't go. So, you send your brother to go as your representative and help your mom pick out all the things you want. But, instead of the chocolate cake you like, he picks out vanilla. And, instead of the Marvel party favors you wanted, he picks out Super Mario Brothers party favors. Instead of sour cream and onion chips, he gets barbeque chips. You get the picture.

**ASK (All Ages): Would your brother be a very good representative in this scenario? Why or why not?**

Now, this probably wouldn't happen because your mom would probably have you make a list of the things you wanted. But it helps give us an idea of what it's like when we decide to do things our way instead of God's way.

God knows what's best—for us and for all of creation. It doesn't make much sense for us to

ignore what He says is right and good and make up our own rules. But we do—all of us. Not just Adam and Eve. In one way or another, we all choose our way over God's way. The Bible says, "Everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard." (Romans 3:23)

**ASK (All Ages): So, if we all sin, what do you think that means for how we represent God?**

If we decide we don't want to represent God and His character well, we really aren't being very good at the purpose He gave us. And there are big consequences for this. Because Adam and Eve sinned, God banished them from the Garden of Eden. They would have to work a lot harder to survive. They also wouldn't live forever. The biggest consequence of sin is death. All humans die because all humans sin.

There were big consequences for the rest of creation when Adam and Eve sinned, too. Plants and animals die and decay. Droughts and floods and fires and storms and earthquakes wreck the land. Pollution fills the air and the water. The Bible says that creation groans because of sin. It's not good. But, thankfully, that's not the end of the story. Because the Bible also says that "all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are." (Romans 8:19)

There's still hope for us to be a lot better at representing God. We'll talk more about that later this season.

## LET'S PRAY

God, we admit that we all sin. We all choose to do things our way instead of your way. Please help us look to You to help us make decisions instead of making up what's right and wrong for ourselves. We want to honor You, Lord. Amen.

### GREEN PRACTICE STAR REMINDER

If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

### PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled "Practice 5" at the end of practice.



## SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION

### BACKGROUND

The song “My Way” might have been a big hit for Frank Sinatra, but the truth is that looking back and saying you did things your way is not the triumph we think it is. God created us in His image, but He did not make us gods. We don’t have the wisdom, or the power, or the goodness, or the perfection that He has. Yes, He created us with much capacity for these things, but we don’t come close to Him. In Isaiah 55:9, God says, “For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways.”

It doesn’t take long after Genesis 3 to see the consequences of Adam and Eve’s decision to choose their way over God’s way. In Genesis 4, one of their sons murders his own brother. By Genesis 6-9, human wickedness had reached such a height that God floods the earth and spares only one family. The rest of the book tells story after story of people’s failure next to God’s faithfulness. Of course, Genesis is somewhat tame compared to the depravity found in Judges, the book we get our key verse from for this devotion. Ultimately, the Bible makes it clear that humans doing things our way always means we end up going in the wrong direction. Meanwhile, trusting in God and His ways leads us on the right path—a path to life, hope, and flourishing.

### BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Judges 21:25; Isaiah 55:8-9; Mark 7:1-23.

### ENCOURAGEMENT

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.”

Proverbs 3:5-6

### COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Which do I trust more: my way or God’s way?

## PRACTICE DEVOTION | SHARE THIS WITH YOUR TEAM

## KEY VERSE

All the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.  
Judges 21:25b (NLT)

## BOTTOM LINE

Doing things my way  
instead of God's way  
is a bad idea.

This season, we've learned that all humans are made in the image of God. That means God has made us His representatives on earth and given us a purpose—to care for His creation. Unfortunately, we all follow in the footsteps of Adam and Eve, the first humans, and we all choose to decide for ourselves what is good and what is evil. Instead of representing God and ruling over creation the way He wants us to, we choose to represent ourselves and rule over creation the way we want to.

**ASK (All Ages): Why is God's way better than our way?**

Imagine for a moment that in an NFL game, one of the players decides he is sick and tired of playing by the rules of football. So, he goes out onto the field and does things the way he wants to—whatever that looks like. He refuses to give the ball to his quarterback, pushes the opposing team down between plays, and ignores the ref's whistle and won't stop running after the play is over. He leaves the field in the middle of a drive and comes back later—on a motorcycle! He does donuts and wheelies on the field, so no one else can play. Then he declares himself the only winner!

**ASK (All Ages): What would happen if someone actually did that? Would they ever get to play in an NFL game again? Why not?**

This is kind of what it's like when we decide to live by our own rules instead of God's. God created the universe. He knows how everything works. He made everything for a purpose. He knows what is really right and what is really wrong. He makes the rules because He invented the game! Just like it would be crazy for a professional football player to decide the rules of the game don't matter, it's crazy for us to decide that God's rules don't matter. But sadly, this is still something we all do all the time.

In the Bible, there's a book called Judges that tells about a very chaotic time in the history of God's people. The Bible says that during this time, "all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes." (Judges 21:25) The stories in this book show that every time the people trusted in themselves and what they wanted, instead of trusting in God and what He wanted, things did not go well for them. Things only got worse and worse.

**ASK (All Ages): What are some things people might do when they are only looking out for themselves and what they want?**

That's the opposite of what God wants for us. He wants us to make things better. He wants us to be gardeners, remember? He wants us to plant and grow and create and build good things. We do that by trusting in Him, listening to what He says is right and wrong, and obeying Him.

Sometimes, it feels like we're stuck because we can't really get out of this situation on our own. We all sin. We all take after Adam and Eve. We all want to do things our way instead of God's way. But guess what? There's hope for us. For all of us. And we're going to talk about that next time.

## LET'S PRAY

God, we know that Your way is better than our way. We're sorry that we often do what seems right in our eyes rather than paying attention to what You've said is right. Help us look to You for how we should live. Amen.

### GREEN PRACTICE STAR REMINDER

If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

### PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled "Practice 6" at the end of practice.



## SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION

### BACKGROUND

God came to earth. Sometimes, we get desensitized to the significance of this statement. But the truth is, it's huge. Mind-bending. Ground-shaking. Reality-altering. Huge. When we humans decided to trust in ourselves and our ways over God and His ways, God knew that He wasn't going to let us go that easily. When we refused to represent Him well as His image, He knew He would show up Himself and make it clear who He really is. But He didn't show up draped in gold and fire and flanked by armies of angels. Instead, He showed up draped in swaddling clothes and flanked by farm animals. He was born to a humble family and lived in poverty.

Through Jesus, God revealed Himself to be so different from what we would expect someone with ultimate power and authority to be. He revealed Himself to be loving, caring, kind, humble, and sacrificial. He "came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) Through Jesus, we learn that the image of God, which we were created to be, is very different from the image that humans have chosen for ourselves.

Our key verse for this devotion comes from Colossians 1, in a section that might have been taken from an early Christian hymn. It beautifully and clearly describes the nature of Jesus as God's perfect image. "According to Colossians 1:15, Christ fulfills God's image-related intentions by holding together all of creation (v. 17), serving as head of the church (v. 18), and reconciling all things to God (v. 20). As Jesus frequently said, he was about promoting a kingdom (or better, a rulership), one in which God's values and ways were manifest. Jesus' life, culminating most prominently in his death, illustrates the servant-leadership kind of rulership that God intends." (John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*)

### BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Colossians 1:15-20; Mark 10:35-45; John 1:1-18; Hebrews 1:1-3; Philippians 2:5-11.

### ENCOURAGEMENT

"So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son . . . No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us."

John 1:14-18

### COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

How much do I know about Jesus?  
How can I learn more about who He is?



## PRACTICE DEVOTION | SHARE THIS WITH YOUR TEAM

## KEY VERSE

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.  
Colossians 1:15a (NLT)

## BOTTOM LINE

Jesus is the perfect  
image of God.

Even though God created each of us in His image, to be His representatives on earth, we don't do a very good job of representing Him because of sin. When we think about this, it might make us feel hopeless, like we should just give up. But guess what? God doesn't want us to give up because He hasn't given up on us. In fact, God did something amazing to help sort all this out.

God—the Creator of the universe, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords—came to earth Himself. He came to earth to be with us and show us what He is really like. And when He did this, it changed everything.

You see, God is *one being* made up of *three persons*: the Father, the Spirit, and the Son. They are all equal, and they are all fully God. If that's hard to understand, don't worry—it's hard for grown-ups to understand, too! The Father, Spirit, and Son make up what we call the Trinity. When God came to earth, it was the Son, Jesus Christ, who came. So, Jesus was the Son of God, but He was also God Himself. If that blows your mind a little bit, it's okay!

**ASK (All Ages): Why is it a big deal for God to come to earth?**

When Jesus came to earth about 2,000 years ago, He was born as a baby to a human mother—just like all of us. He was fully God, but He was also fully human. He grew up in a small town on the other side of the world. He walked, talked, laughed, cried, ate, slept, and much more. He trained in the family business, which was building things. Then, when He was thirty years old, Jesus knew that it was time to start really showing the world who God is.

Jesus started traveling around to the villages in His country, teaching people about God in a way no one had ever heard before. He spoke about God like He knew what He was talking about—because He did! He even started doing things that were only possible through the power of God. Sick people were brought to Him, and He healed them. His boat was caught in a storm on the lake, and He calmed it. Hungry crowds came to listen to His teaching, and He fed them with just one boy's lunch. He cared for the poor and welcomed the outcasts. He even made time to answer the questions of people who disagreed with Him. Jesus did all these things and much more!

**ASK (All Ages): What do you think it would have been like to know Jesus in person?**

During all this time, His whole life on earth, Jesus never sinned. He always did things God's way because He was God. Jesus was the perfect image of God. If the rest of humanity is the blurry,

cracked mirror that is supposed to reflect who God is, Jesus is the completely smudge-free mirror that actually gives us a crystal-clear view of God. The Bible says that “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.” (Colossians 1:15)

**ASK (7<sup>th</sup> Grade and up): What does it mean for Jesus to be the visible image of the invisible God?**

Let’s think back to the purpose God gave us as people who are made in His image. Remember, we are supposed to be like gardeners. Jesus was the perfect gardener and the perfect caretaker of God’s creation. He tended to the people around Him, caring about them and helping them. When they needed physical healing, He healed their bodies. When they needed compassion, He felt for them. When they needed forgiveness, He forgave them. When they needed to be accepted, He included them. When they needed food, He fed them. Jesus showed what God cares about. And God cares about people.

**ASK (All Ages): What do Jesus’ actions teach us about God?**

**ASK (3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and up): What do Jesus’ actions teach us about how we can be better representatives of who God is?**

Jesus said that He “came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45) It might seem a little crazy that the Creator of the universe came to earth to serve us, rather than to show us who’s boss. But that’s what God did. Next time, we’ll talk about just how far God was willing to go to help us.

## LET’S PRAY

God, thank You so much for sending Jesus to show us who You really are. Thank You for how You love and care for us. May every person here come to know Jesus well and learn how to reflect Jesus to the world around them. We love You, Lord. Amen.

### GREEN PRACTICE STAR REMINDER

If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

### PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 7” at the end of practice.



*This week's devotion includes a gospel presentation.*

## **SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION**

### **BACKGROUND**

This important devotion will pick up where the last one left off. Jesus came to earth to show us who God is, as the perfect image of God. But He didn't just show us who we ought to be as representatives of our Creator. Through His death and resurrection, He made it possible for us to overcome the consequences of sin and death so we could become who we were created to be. He made a way for us to get back on the right trajectory. He rescued us from death and redeemed us for eternal life.

In Romans 5:15-17, the apostle Paul contrasts the sin of Genesis 3 with God's gift of Himself in Jesus. He writes, "There is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift . . . For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ."

### **BIG PICTURE**

For more insight, read Romans 5:12-21; Romans 6:20-23; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; John 19-20.

### **ENCOURAGEMENT**

"Jesus did not just die a natural death. His was the death of self-giving love. In his death, Jesus showed us what it is to be truly human . . . Jesus' death was the culmination of humanity's purpose. He was 'obedient unto death'—refusing to cling to power or autonomy (see Philippians 2:8). Faced with the same choice as the first humans, Jesus conquered sin and death by facing it head-on and receiving the judgment that humanity deserved. He did so willingly, taking on the full penalty of human rebellion as our representative. This act of self-sacrifice finally repairs the brokenness of the garden."

**Carmen Joy Imes, *Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters***

### **COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION**

Have I trusted in Jesus' sacrifice and asked God for forgiveness through Him? Why or why not?

## PRACTICE DEVOTION | SHARE THIS WITH YOUR TEAM

## KEY VERSE

Now God's wonderful grace rules instead,  
giving us right standing with God and resulting  
in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:21b (NLT)

## BOTTOM LINE

Jesus made a way  
for us to have  
eternal life with God.

**ASK (All Ages): Have you ever faced a consequence for disobeying your parents? What happened, and what was the consequence?**

When Adam and Eve, the first humans, disobeyed God and ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, there were a lot of consequences. One consequence was that God banned them from the Garden of Eden. You see, there was another tree in the garden that Adam and Eve could no longer eat from now that they had disobeyed God. It was the Tree of Life. As long as they ate from the Tree of Life, they would never die.

Sadly, Adam and Eve chose to trust in themselves instead of in God. And when God banned them from the Garden, they no longer had access to the Tree of Life. Now, one day, they would die. The same goes for us. Because we all choose our way instead of God's way—because we all sin—we will all die. And the ultimate consequence of sin is death and separation from God.

**ASK (All Ages): God is perfect and holy. Why do you think sin separates us from Him?**

The Bible talks about this when it says that “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

Wait a minute. If we all die because of sin, what does the Bible mean when it talks about a free gift of eternal life? Well, last time I told you about Jesus and how He came to earth to show us who God really is. He did many amazing things, but there's more to the story. Here's what happened.

As Jesus was teaching, traveling, performing miracles, and helping people, He gained some followers—people who traveled with Him to learn closely from Him. But He also gained some enemies. These people did not believe Jesus was really God. They felt threatened by Him, so they had Him arrested, even though He had done nothing wrong. He was sentenced to death and nailed to a wooden cross. He died a painful death and was buried in a tomb.

But three days later, something incredible happened. Some of Jesus' followers went to the tomb and found that it was empty. Suddenly, Jesus appeared to them! He was alive! For forty days after that, He spent time with His followers, continuing to teach them about God. Then, He returned to heaven, where He is still alive today!

**ASK (All Ages): What do you think this tells us about Jesus?**

Because Jesus was the perfect Son of God, when He died, He took the punishment for all our sins on Himself. It would be like if your older brother or sister took the punishment for you when you were the one who disobeyed your parents—except what Jesus did is a way bigger deal! Jesus took the consequence of *everyone's* sins on Himself. The Bible says, “For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

But Jesus didn't just take our punishment. When Jesus rose back to life, He also defeated sin and death forever. He made a way for us to be made right with God. When we trust in what Jesus has done for us and ask God to forgive us for our sins through Him, God will forgive us completely. Though we still die one day, after we die, we will go to live with God forever. That's eternal life. There's another Bible verse that says, “So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 5:21)

**ASK (All Ages): How does it make you feel to think about what Jesus did for you?**

When we trust in Jesus and turn back to God's way instead of our own way, God not only gives us the amazing gift of eternal life, but He also gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to live in us and helps us to grow more like Jesus and become better representatives of who God is. That's what we'll talk about more next time.

**LET'S PRAY**

God, please forgive us for disobeying You. Forgive us for choosing our way over Your way. Thank You for sending Jesus to give us a clear view of who You are and to save us from sin and death. Help everyone here to put their trust and faith in Him. We love You, Lord. Amen.

*If someone has questions about following Jesus, let your League Director know and ask them about the follow-up process for your league. Also let the parents know their child is asking questions. If the family does not attend church, this would be a great opportunity to invite them to come to church with you.*

**GREEN PRACTICE STAR REMINDER**

If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

**PRACTICE CARD REMINDER**

If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 8” at the end of practice.



## SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION

### BACKGROUND

Your journey of faith isn't over once you believe in Jesus. In fact, that's just the beginning. God still wants us to rule over creation as His representatives—according to His image found in Christ, not the image we claimed for ourselves. When we trust in Christ for redemption, we regain the ability to live up to our potential as beings created in the image of God—through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. Still, this doesn't happen at the flip of a switch. It's a process. And in this life, in a creation still marred by sin, we will still fall short. We will still fail to represent God well and live up to His purposes for us. We will still choose our way over His way sometimes.

But, if we are in Christ, the Holy Spirit is working in us to make us more and more like Him—the perfect image of God—so that one day, in God's new creation, we will be who we were truly meant to be. "As has always been the case, God intends for people today to reflect attributes of God. However, in Jesus Christ humanity receives a clearer understanding of what that can look like. People are to follow the example and pattern of Jesus. In Jesus they see modeled not only excellence in the abstract, but also what that looks like in a fallen world. Before attributes excel in the new heaven and earth, they grow in the midst of weakness and suffering." (John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*)

### BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read John 14:15-27; Galatians 5:16-26; John 1:1-14; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18.

### ENCOURAGEMENT

"But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image."

2 Corinthians 3:16-18

### COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Have I seen the Holy Spirit at work in my life? What does that look like?

**PRACTICE DEVOTION | SHARE THIS WITH YOUR TEAM****KEY VERSE**

The Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

John 14:26b (NLT)

**BOTTOM LINE**

When I believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will help me become more like Him.

When Jesus came to earth, He showed us what it really means to be the image of God.

**ASK (All Ages): What can we learn about God by looking at Jesus?**

Jesus is the perfect representation of who God is because Jesus is God. The Bible says, “So the Word” (meaning Jesus) “became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.” (John 1:14)

If that’s true, then that means that the way Jesus lived while He was on earth shows us the way we should have been living all along. Jesus is the blueprint for what it means to be the image of God and to represent Him well. We should follow His example.

**ASK (All Ages): What are some ways we can follow Jesus’ example in our daily lives?**

When we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live in us. The Holy Spirit is just as much God as Jesus is! The Holy Spirit reminds us of what Jesus has said and guides us to do what Jesus would do. Over time, if we listen to and obey the Holy Spirit, He will help us grow to be more and more like Jesus. Which means we will grow to be better and better representatives of God.

But what does that really look like? The Bible says that there are things that we can look out for that show us that the Spirit is working in our lives. If the Spirit is at work, there will be results! In fact, the Bible calls these things fruit—which might remind you of our garden idea from earlier this season.

The Bible says, “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!” (Galatians 5:22-23)

These are the things we can look out for in our lives. For example, you might realize that you have been able to be more patient with your younger brother lately. That might be evidence that you are listening to the Holy Spirit’s guidance. On the other hand, if you realize you’re having a hard time being patient with your little brother, that might be a clue for you to pay more attention to what the Holy Spirit is telling you and to be intentional about learning to be more patient.

**ASK (All Ages):** The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Which of the things on this list sounds easiest for you? Which sounds the most difficult?

Remember, if we want to look for an example of these things, we can look to Jesus! He is perfectly loving, peaceful, patient, and all the rest! If we want to become better representatives of God, we should get to know more about who Jesus is by reading about Him in the Bible and listening to the Spirit as He guides us to become more like Jesus.

**ASK (3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and up):** How do you think following Jesus' example might change your life?

Even after we believe in Jesus and have the Holy Spirit working to make us more like Him, we still won't be perfect at these things. We still live with the consequences of sin all around us. Don't get down if you mess up a lot—we all do! Instead, know that God is so happy to see you growing. He is always working in your life, even when you can't see it. Trust in Him and do your best to follow Him. He already loves you more than you could ever imagine, and you can't do anything to make Him love you any more or any less.

## LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to help us become more like Jesus. Teach us to pay attention and obey His guidance. Help us to learn more and more about who You are, and become more and more like You as we live our lives. We want to represent You well. Amen.

### GREEN PRACTICE STAR REMINDER

If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

### PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled "Practice 9" at the end of practice.





## SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION

### BACKGROUND

One of the most significant practical applications of a study of the image of God is not only recognizing what this means for our own value and purpose but also for how we ought to treat our fellow humans. It is not just *some* humans who meet certain criteria who are representatives of God and rulers on His behalf—it is all of us. It is a status not based on our attributes or even on how well we represent God through our character, but on the inherent connection we have with our Creator and the dignity that gives us as those who reflect His glory. As Psalm 8 says, “What are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.” (Psalm 8:4-5)

So, to embrace the purpose God has given us to be good rulers of His creation in the pattern of His perfect image, Jesus Christ, means we will see people as He saw them and treat people as He treated them. It calls us to love others as He has loved us and to love our neighbors as ourselves—understanding that anyone and everyone can be our neighbor. Self-giving love is how we tend to creation with the care of the Creator who gave Himself for us.

### BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read 1 John 4:7-19; Mark 12:28-34; John 13:1-17, 34-35; Psalm 8.

### ENCOURAGEMENT

“After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, ‘Do you understand what I was doing? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.”

**John 13:12-15**

### COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What is something I can do to follow Jesus’ example of loving and serving others?

**PRACTICE DEVOTION | SHARE THIS WITH YOUR TEAM****KEY VERSE**

We love each other because he loved us first.  
1 John 4:19

**BOTTOM LINE**

I want to follow Jesus' example of loving others.

We can represent God well by following Jesus' example and listening to the Holy Spirit as He guides us to become more like Jesus. One of the best ways to follow Jesus' example is to treat people the way He treated them.

**ASK (All Ages): How did Jesus treat people?**

Jesus spent time teaching people so that they would know the truth about God and life. He cared and showed compassion for people who were hurting. He healed the sick. He loved people so much that He was willing to go to the cross and die so that we could all be rescued from sin and death and no longer be separated from God. And He still loves us today. He loves each of us more than we can imagine.

The truth is that love is the key to living like Jesus and representing God well. One time, Jesus was asked what the most important commandment in the Old Testament was. He answered, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31)

So, Jesus summed it up like this: the most important things we can do in life are to love God and love people. When you think about it, this makes sense. God created us, loves us, and even sent Jesus to die for us. We should love Him with all we are.

**ASK (All Ages): It's easy for us to see why we should love God. But why is it important for us to love people, too?**

Remember, all people are created in God's image. They all have value, worth, and dignity. They all deserve to be treated with respect. We should never treat another person as worthless or less than. They represent God! That's why Jesus says we should love our neighbors—meaning anyone we meet—as we love ourselves. We should treat others the way we want to be treated.

**ASK (All Ages): What are some examples of NOT treating other people like they are created in God's image? What do you think that looks like?**

The truth is, when anyone treats someone else as less valuable than they are, it can lead to really bad things—like violence, poverty, and slavery. When people believe other people are less valuable than they are, they might act like it gives them an excuse to hurt, ignore, or use

other people for their own benefit. We know that Jesus came to serve others, and when we decide it's more important for others to serve us, we are doing the opposite of representing God well.

This is why it's so important for us to remember that every single person—no matter who they are, where they come from, what they look like, how old or young they are, how smart they are, how much money they have, what their strengths or weaknesses are, or what they believe—every single person is created in the image of God. It doesn't matter what someone can or can't do or how much they do or don't achieve. No one is more valuable or less valuable than anyone else. We are all worth so much because we are all valuable to and loved by God.

**ASK (All Ages): What are some examples of treating people like they ARE created in the image of God? What does it look like to love your neighbor as yourself?**

We all have times when it's easier to love the people around us and times when it's more difficult. There's a short but sweet Bible verse you can try to memorize to help you remember to love others. First John 4:19 says, "We love each other because he loved us first." That sums it up pretty well! When we realize how much God loves us, it makes us want to love other people.

## LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for Jesus' example of love, kindness, and service. Help us to love the people around us and treat them with value because they are created in the image of God, just as we are. We love You, Lord. Amen.

### GREEN PRACTICE STAR REMINDER

If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

### PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled "Practice 10" at the end of practice.



## SCOUTING REPORT | COACHES, HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S DEVOTION

### BACKGROUND

What happens after we die is a weighty topic, and there is much mystery to it. The Bible isn't clear on many details, and different Bible scholars and even whole denominations of Christians believe different things about what exactly will happen after we die, what will happen in the last days, and the order of it all. Yet, a study of what the Bible has to say about the image of God would not be complete without addressing this subject.

This season, the athletes on your team have learned what it means to be made in the image of God. Now, they will hear that this status doesn't just apply to their time on earth—it has implications for eternity. The Bible tells us that, one day, God will restore His creation in a new heavens and a new earth. Through Christ, who is the firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20 CSB), we will be resurrected to live out our true purpose in the presence of God.

The Bible ends with a glorious picture of what will one day be our home: the new creation and the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22). "The final chapters of John's vision in Revelation unveil our glorious future. Rather than humans going up to heaven, heaven comes down to us, in the form of a cubic garden city, the new Jerusalem. Heaven and earth intersect again at last. Human civilization will finally be good rather than characterized by exploitative power and greed . . . It is here that we will be our truest human selves, exercising our role as God's image, stewarding creation by ruling it well and serving our Maker." (Carmen Joy Imes, *Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters*)

### BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read 1 John 3:1-3; Romans 8:18-39; Revelation 21:1-7; Revelation 22:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:42-58.

### ENCOURAGEMENT

By coaching this team this season, you have been tending to God's creation. You have invested in the lives of the athletes on your team in a significant way. You've helped them learn new skills, taught them important truths from God's word, and been a positive role model in their lives. Who knows how this season will impact these young people made in the image of God in the years to come! Whether you realized it or not, you have been living out your purpose. Take a moment to thank God for this team and this season, and ask Him to show you what other opportunities you have in your life to follow Jesus' example and represent Him well.

### COACH'S QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What comes to mind when I think about life after death?

**PRACTICE DEVOTION | SHARE THIS WITH YOUR TEAM****KEY VERSE**

But we do know that we will be like him,  
for we will see him as he really is.

1 John 3:2b (NLT)

**BOTTOM LINE**

I can look forward to  
eternal life with God.

**ASK (All Ages): Based on what you've learned this season, what does it mean to be made in the image of God?**

Every person was created by God in His image, including you and me. That means you are super special and incredibly valuable. You are made to reflect God in certain ways and to represent Him. That's a huge deal! We've talked about what that has meant in the past and what it means for our lives today, but now I want to talk a little bit more about what that means for the future.

The Bible tells us that if we trust in Jesus and what He has done for us by dying on the cross and rising again, after we die, we will live with God forever. The Bible says, "No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:39)

**ASK (All Ages): How does it make you feel to know that nothing can separate you from God's love?**

When you die, you will go to heaven to be with God. We don't know exactly what heaven will be like, but I can tell you it won't be sitting on clouds and playing harps like you might see in movies and cartoons. What we do know about heaven is that it will be good and wonderful because we will be with God!

The Bible also says that one day, we will live in a new, restored creation without sin. It's kind of like the new Garden of Eden. Only this time, because of what Jesus has done, we'll get to stay there forever. In this new creation, God still wants us to have a purpose—the purpose He gave us at the very beginning. He wants us to rule and tend to His creation. But this time, we'll really be able to represent Him well, because we will be made like Jesus. First John 3:2 says, "Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is."

We will have glorified, resurrected bodies like Jesus had after He rose from the dead. We will choose God's way instead of our way. We will eat from the Tree of Life and live forever. The Bible says, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." (Revelation 21:4) God will make all things new, and everything that's wrong with the world will be made right.

**ASK (All Ages): What's something that you might look forward to about living in the new**

creation?

**ASK (7<sup>th</sup> Grade and up):** What do you think it will be like to truly be able to fulfill your purpose as someone created in the image of God?

In the meantime, while we're still in this life, God still wants us to live out our purpose as best we can. He wants us to let the Holy Spirit guide us and help us grow to be more like Jesus. He wants us to care for the world He created according to His ways and not our ways. He wants us to love other people and treat them with respect, no matter who they are, because all people are made in His image. Remember, God made you, He loves you, and He gave you the job of representing Him.

## LET'S PRAY

God, we owe everything to You. Thank You for making us in Your image. Thank You for giving us a purpose and choosing us to represent You. We don't know exactly what the future will look like after we die, but we trust You, and we look forward to living in Your presence and experiencing the new creation where we will truly be able to live for You. We love You, Lord. Amen.

### GREEN PRACTICE STAR REMINDER

If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

### PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled "Practice 11" at the end of practice.

## SECTION 4

# GAMES

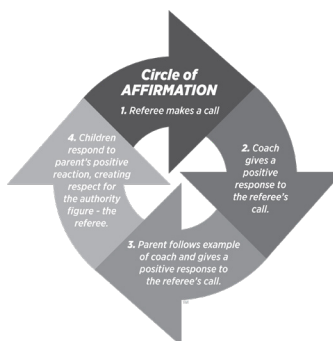
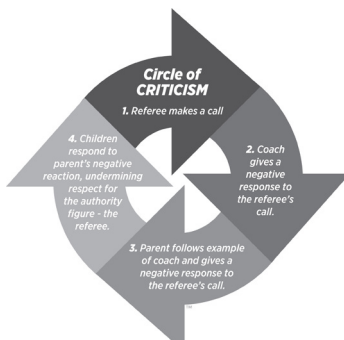
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Game days are fun and exciting and are an opportunity for players to demonstrate what they have learned.

## Circle of Affirmation

Choosing the right game day attitude is key to being an effective Upward Coach. Actions and reactions during games can either open or close the door to ministry. The Circle of Criticism and the Circle of Affirmation are simple diagrams that illustrate the results of a coach giving a referee either negative or positive feedback.

Coaches and referees work together as a unified team for everyone to have a great experience. Coaches stop the Circle of Criticism by starting the Circle of Affirmation.



The example set between coaches and referees using the Circle of Affirmation demonstrates to everyone how to value others, enjoy healthy competition, and create a positive environment for spectators and players to follow.

Practicing the Circle of Affirmation makes the game day experience better for everyone.



## ➔ Rules to Upward Flag Football

To assist you at practices and games, the following are the rules to Upward Flag Football. They include not only the rules of play, but also information on the field, down and clock format and offensive and defensive basics. For a complete list of all the rules please refer to the Upward Flag Football Referee Handbook.

### **Field Diagram and Rules**

The offensive team is awarded a first down when it crosses the midfield line. Based on the field size, one first down is sufficient to advance the football for a score.

The lines 5 yards from each end zone and on both sides of the midfield line are no-run zones. No-run zones do not apply to the K5 division. The no run zones are designed to take away power running plays.

If an offensive team picks up a first down but is then pushed back into the no-run zone, the no-run zone will not apply, and the offensive team cannot pick up another first down.

If an offensive team is in the no run zone which applies to them and loses yardage due to penalty or any play (for example: taking a knee, running out of bounds, negative yardage play) they are still considered as being in the no run zone.

As there are no kickoffs, the offensive team begins the game and second half by taking possession of the ball at its 5-yard line.



## **Down Format**

### **K5 and 1st-2nd Grades**

The offensive team has four downs to gain a first down by crossing midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four downs to score a touchdown.

If the team fails to cross midfield in four downs or score a touchdown, the other team takes possession on its own 5-yard line. There will be no punts for this division. All four downs will be used without the concern of giving up field position.

### **3rd Grade and Up**

The offensive team has four downs to gain a first down by crossing midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four downs to score a touchdown.

#### **On fourth down, a team has two options:**

- ♦ A team may attempt to gain a first down or a touchdown. If a team fails to convert on fourth down, either by scoring or picking up a first down, the ball changes possession at the no-run zone, before midfield going into the first down.
- ♦ A team may “punt” as its fourth-down play by notifying the referee. In this case, the ball will be placed on the opposing team’s 5-yard line, and there will be a change of possession.

## Offensive Starting Points

### K5-2nd Grades

Situation	Starting Field Position After Change of Possession
· After a touchdown and extra point(s) attempt	· Offense's 5-yard line
· After a turnover on downs	· Offense's 5-yard line
· After an interception	· At the spot of the tackle if there is not a score

### 3rd Grade and Up

Situation	Starting Field Position After Change of Possession
· After a touchdown and extra point(s) attempt	· Offense's 5-yard line
· After a punt	· Offense's 5-yard line
· After a turnover on downs	· Offense's 5-yard line
· After an interception	· At the spot of the tackle if there is not a score

## Clock Format

- ◆ Games consist of four 9-minute quarters with an 8-minute halftime.
- ◆ The game clock stops briefly at the end of every quarter for predetermined substitutions.
- ◆ Each team has one 30-second timeout per half. Unused timeouts do not carry over to the second half. The clock will stop during the timeout.
- ◆ A 30-second play clock begins after the referee spots the ball as ready for play.
- ◆ The clock will stop in the final minute of the first half and in the final minute of the game for the following situations:
  - ◇ After an incomplete pass
  - ◇ After the ball carrier goes out of bounds
  - ◇ After a touchdown
  - ◇ During an extra-point attempt
  - ◇ For an official's timeout
  - ◇ After an interception
  - ◇ During a called timeout until the ball is snapped
  - ◇ On a change of possession
  - ◇ For a penalty. Keep in mind the half or game may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines the penalty.

## Game Format

- ◆ Referees lead both teams in prayer at midfield before every game. This is a good time to have players tuck in their jersey, make sure flags are on hips, jewelry has been removed and coaches to have their substitutions ready for the game.
- ◆ The visiting team calls the coin toss. The team that wins the coin toss may choose to play offense or defense first or choose which goal to defend. The other team has the choice (possession or end to defend) not made by the team winning the toss. The team that plays defense first will play offense first to start the second half.
- ◆ Because the end of a quarter does not signal a change of possession, the team with possession at the end of the quarter will retain possession after substitutions take place.
- ◆ Teams will switch ends of the field at the half, not after each quarter.
- ◆ Score may not be kept in 2nd grade and under divisions.
- ◆ Each team will have six players on the field at a time. This equips the offense with an appropriate amount of players without crowding the field.
- ◆ Coaches are allowed to walk the sidelines and encourage their players without stepping in the playing area.

- ♦ In the 3rd grade and up divisions, each team can put one coach in the huddle for the first two games of the season. In Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade divisions, each team can put one coach in the huddle throughout the season.
- ♦ Teams will use the Upward Sports substitution system to allow for equal playing time, every player to play offense and defense and the coach to not have to monitor playing time for each player.

## **Scoring**

**Touchdown: 6 points**

**Extra Point**

- ♦ 1 point (played from the 5-yard line with a pass ONLY)  
The 5-yard attempt is from the no-run zone
- ♦ 2 points (played from the 10-yard line with a run OR pass)

**Safety: 2 points. The scoring team will also receive possession on its own 5-yard line. There are no actual kicks.**

## ➔ **Offensive Basics**

- ◆ A minimum of three players must be on the line of scrimmage at every snap, consisting of a center and then at least two receivers positioned anywhere along the line of scrimmage. This adds some structure to offensive sets.
- ◆ Only one player can be in motion when the ball is snapped. This is intact to keep the integrity of the game.
- ◆ In the 3rd grade and up divisions, the ball is snapped between the center's legs to begin play. In any division, 2nd grade and under players may use the side snap. The traditional snap can be difficult for younger players with smaller hands.
- ◆ Before handing off or passing, the quarterback must have complete, unshared possession of the ball. This also helps clarify the center sneak play. A possession change between the center and quarterback must occur in order to run the play.
- ◆ Low-profile field cones or beanbags are used to mark the line of scrimmage and the 10-yard rush line for the defense.



## Running the Football

- ♦ The quarterback cannot advance the ball across the line of scrimmage. However, they may scramble behind the line of scrimmage. **This rule includes others in each offensive play and prevents a quarterback from dominating each play by advancing the football.**
- ♦ The person who receives the snap from the center (under center or shotgun) is considered the quarterback.
- ♦ Direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Multiple handoffs may be used. After the ball crosses the line of scrimmage, handoffs and underhand or overhand forward or backward passes are not permitted.
- ♦ The five yards leading toward the goal line and the five yards leading to the midfield first-down line are no-run zones. The no-run zones do not apply to the Kindergarten division.
- ♦ The five yards leading toward the goal line and the five yards leading to the midfield first-down line are no-run zones. The no-run zones do not apply to the Kindergarten division.
- ♦ A player receiving a handoff or backward pass can pass the ball (halfback pass) from behind the line of scrimmage.
- ♦ A ball carrier may not dive. A dive will result in a penalty. This is for safety and abides with the no contact rule.

- ♦ The ball carrier's feet determine the spot of the football when a flag is pulled, not the location of the football. This rule discourages a dive for advancement.
- ♦ If a ball carrier who has established possession of the ball, fumbles the ball into an opposing player's hands without the ball touching the ground, the play is considered a fumble. This is a dead ball at the spot where the player lost the ball. If however, a ball carrier attempts a legal or illegal pass and the hand and arm are coming forward it is ruled as a pass and therefore an interception.

### Running the Football

- ♦ All six players are eligible to receive passes. (The quarterback becomes eligible after a handoff or pitch.)  
**With the no contact rule, no blockers can be used thus allowing all offensive players to be eligible.**
- ♦ A completion consists of a receiver gaining control of the football while having at least one foot touch in bounds before going out of bounds. This rule is to keep the integrity of the game.
- ♦ If a player catches a pass and any part of their body other than their feet or hands is touching the ground, the play is blown dead, and the ball is spotted at the point of completion.
- ♦ Simultaneous possession by an offensive and defensive player is awarded to the offensive player.

## Passing the Football

- ♦ All forward passes can be completed behind or beyond the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass can be completed per play. However, while in the no-run zone, only a forward pass caught beyond the line of scrimmage may advance the ball out of the no run zone.
- ♦ A backward pass can only be executed by the quarterback.
  - ◇ A backward pass can only occur while behind the line of scrimmage and only one completed per play.
  - ◇ A backward pass (over or underhand) includes a pass from the quarterback that travels parallel to the line of scrimmage or away from the end zone where the offense is attempting to score.
  - ◇ An incomplete backward pass is a fumble and a dead ball where it first hits the ground or before hitting the ground where it travels out of bounds.
- ♦ Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the defender can make a play on the ball. The defender must avoid contact with the receiver
- ♦ The quarterback has 7 seconds to throw a pass. If a pass is not thrown within 7 seconds, it is treated as an incomplete pass (loss of down). A handoff or pass will end the 7-second pass count. This rule keeps a scrambling quarterback from taking too much time with each possession.

## Dead Balls

- ◆ Play is ruled dead when one of the following occurs:
  - ◇ The ball carrier's flag is pulled or falls out
  - ◇ The ball carrier steps out of bounds
  - ◇ The ball carrier's knee hits the ground
  - ◇ A touchdown or safety is scored
  - ◇ A pass falls incomplete
  - ◇ At the conclusion of an interception return
  - ◇ When the ball is fumbled. The ball will be spotted at the location where the player fumbled the ball.
    - One exception to this rule is for 2nd grade and under division players only. If a center/quarterback exchange is mishandled, the quarterback and only the quarterback may pick up the ball and continue play. If a defender gets to the ball before the quarterback, the play is ruled dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the fumble (treated like a sack).

## ➔ Defensive Basics

- ◆ Teams may run man-to-man, zone defenses or a combination of both. **This rule allows for defensive schemes and helps equal ability match-ups. Players may have an easier time covering a zone vs. a receiver man-to-man in the open field.**
- ◆ Interceptions may be returned and are awarded six points for a touchdown or on extra points are awarded two points. Interceptions not returned for a score are spotted where the play ends. **This rule helps to mimic what a player sees in other levels of football.**
- ◆ Interceptions made and downed in the end zone will result in a touchback and the ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line. **Interceptions cannot be returned. A touchback is used for all end zone picks.**

## **Rushing the Passer and the Rush Line**

- ◆ All players who are rushing the quarterback must begin 10 yards from the line of scrimmage. Before each snap, the referee will designate the 10-yard rush line with a small beanbag or low profile cone. The rush line extends in a straight line from sideline to sideline. With no blocking allowed, this gives the quarterback enough time to make a play or escape a rush.
- ◆ With the 3rd grade and up divisions, any number of players may rush the quarterback. The K5, 1st and 2nd grade division may only rush one defender.
- ◆ Defenders not rushing the quarterback may line up on or off the line of scrimmage. In the Kindergarten division, three defenders must line up 10 yards from the line of scrimmage. Having three players line up 10 yards from the line of scrimmage for the Kindergarten group keeps the congestion from forming along the line of scrimmage. This is key since the majority of Kindergarten plays are running plays.
- ◆ Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the 10-yard rule is no longer in effect, and any defenders may cross the line of scrimmage to pursue the ball carrier. This allows the defense to react quickly to a play behind the line of scrimmage.
- ◆ A league director may adjust the distance of the rush line.

## → Penalties

- ♦ Referees will call all penalties so that players learn the game.
- ♦ If a penalty happens near the end zone, where the penalty yardage would place the ball in the end zone, then the penalty will be half the distance to the goal.
- ♦ The Neutral Zone is defined as the space between the forward and backward tips of the football while it rests on the field prior to the snap.
- ♦ A game or half can not end on a defensive penalty. The offense will be awarded one untimed play unless the penalty is declined.

### **Defensive Penalties**

#### **Defensive Pass Interference**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and an automatic first down.

Pass Interference is contact or interference which hinders or restricts an opportunity for an eligible player to catch a forward pass after the ball has been thrown.

#### **Encroachment**

The whistle is blown, flag thrown, and play is dead immediately. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a replay of the down.

Encroachment occurs when a defensive player enters the neutral zone and makes contact with an offensive player or the football prior to the snap.

## **Illegal Contact**

Flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 10 yards from the spot of the foul and an automatic first down.

Illegal contact occurs by pulling the jersey, holding, blocking, pushing, physically tackling, or knocking a player down while attempting to pull a flag.

## **Illegal Flag Pull**

Flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 10 yards from the spot of the foul and an automatic first down.

This occurs when a defender pulls the flag of a receiver prior to catching the ball.

## **Illegal Formation**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 5 yards and a replay of the down. This penalty only occurs in any K5-2nd grade division when three players are not lined up 10 yards from the line of scrimmage.

## **Illegal Rushing**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a replay of the down.

Illegal rushing is enforced when a player who starts in front of the designated rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass that leaves the quarterbacks hands.

There is no penalty for a player who starts from behind the designated rush line and moves in front of the designated rush line so long as they do not also then cross the line of scrimmage.



## **Neutral Zone Infraction**

The whistle is blown, flag thrown, and play is dead immediately. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a replay of the down.

When a defensive player moves into the neutral zone prior to the snap causing a nearby offensive player to react.

## **Offside**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a replay of the down.

A player on defense is offside if they line up in the neutral zone or move into the neutral zone at the snap.

## **Stripping**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 10 yards from the spot of the foul and an automatic first down.

A defensive player may not attempt to strip the ball from the ball carrier.

## **Offensive Penalties**

### **Delay of Game**

The whistle is blow, flag thrown, and play is dead immediately. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a replay of the down.

### **Diving**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss down.

Ball carriers may not dive toward the end zone or first down.

### **False Start**

The whistle is blown, flag thrown, and play is dead immediately. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a replay of the down.

When prior to the snap an offensive player in a set position then moves their body or the football to simulate the start of a play.

### **Flag Guarding**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 10 yards from the spot of the foul and a loss of the down.

Flag guarding is intentional or unintentional use of the arm or hands to prevent a defender from pulling the flag.

## **Illegal Contact**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 10 yards from the spot of the foul and a loss of down.

Any contact, such as blocking, physically tackling, knocking a player down who is attempting to pull a flag, holding, pushing, or jersey-pulling will result in an illegal contact penalty.

## **Illegal Formation**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a replay of the down.

Illegal Formation occurs when there are not three players lined up on the line of scrimmage.

## **Illegal Motion**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a replay of the down.

It is illegal motion If a player under center goes in motion and fails to come to a complete stop for one second before the snap.

One player in the backfield may be in motion prior to the snap but must be moving parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage.

If a player in the backfield or on the line of scrimmage is moving forward at the time of the snap, it is illegal motion.

If an eligible receiver on the line of scrimmage moves to another spot on the line of scrimmage they must come to a complete stop and may not be in motion prior to the snap.

### **Illegal Pass**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a loss of down.

A pass thrown from beyond the line of scrimmage, more than one forward pass, more than one backward pass or a pass not completed beyond the line of scrimmage to advance out of the no-run zone.

### **Illegal Run**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a replay of the down.

An illegal run is a running play that occurs in the no-run zone or a quarterback crossing the line of scrimmage after taking the snap.

### **Illegal Use of the Hands**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 10 yards from the spot of the foul and loss down.

Illegal use of the hands occurs by stiff-arming or a player using their hands or arms in an attempt to stop or block an opponent.

### **Intentional Grounding**

A flag is thrown, whistle is blown, and the play is dead on the incomplete pass. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a loss of down.

Intentional ground occurs when a passer, who is under pressure, throws a forward pass without a realistic chance

of a pass completion. Intentional grounding also occurs if a quarterback delays a spike and is or is not under pressure and throws the ball to the ground.

Intentional grounding if in their own end zone when the ball is thrown the result is a safety.

### **Offensive Charging**

A flag is throw, and play continues. The penalty is 10 yards from the spot of the foul and a loss of down.

Offensive charging occurs when an offensive player makes no attempt to avoid a defender and instead initiates contact and attempts to run through or knock down the defender.

### **Offensive Pass Interference**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss down.

Pass Interference is contact or interference which hinders or restricts an opportunity for an eligible player to catch a forward pass after the ball has been thrown.

This includes an offensive player shoving or pushing a defender to create separation in order to catch a pass and when the ball is in the air setting a pick on a defender.

### **Offside**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a replay of the down. A player on offense is offside if they line up in the neutral zone or move into the neutral zone at the snap.

## **Shielding**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 5 yards from the spot of the foul and a loss of down.

Shielding is a non-contact block that impedes a defender from making a tackle. This could be other offensive players running immediately side by side, in front of or behind a ball carrier to impede defenders from making a tackle.

## **Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

A flag is thrown, and play continues. The penalty is 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and if against the offense a loss of down or against the defense an automatic first down.

Unsportsmanlike conduct includes any form of rough play or unsportsmanlike behavior such as taunting. If the severity of the conduct warrants it, remove players for the remainder of the game.

## ➔ Substitutions

The substitution system is designed to provide every player equal opportunity for improvement. The substitution system ensures the following:

- ◆ Every player will play at least half of the game. This helps all players have an opportunity to play and have fun.
- ◆ No player will sit out more than one substitution segment at a time. This allows each player to be involved in consistent game action and assists in keeping players focused and engaged in the game.
- ◆ The starting lineup shifts down one player every game allowing every player to be in the starting lineup. This gives all players a time to be on the field first.
- ◆ Coaches are not open to being accused of making unfair substitutions by using a set substitution system. A coach can simply point to the substitution system as setting the playing rotation.
- ◆ Coaches are free from monitoring playing time for each player. The substitution system allows coaches to focus more on instructing and encouraging players than awarding playing time.
- ◆ Playing time for all players is virtually even over the course of the season. This gives all players game experience and to allows them to be a contributing teammate.

### Here are some basics about the substitution system:

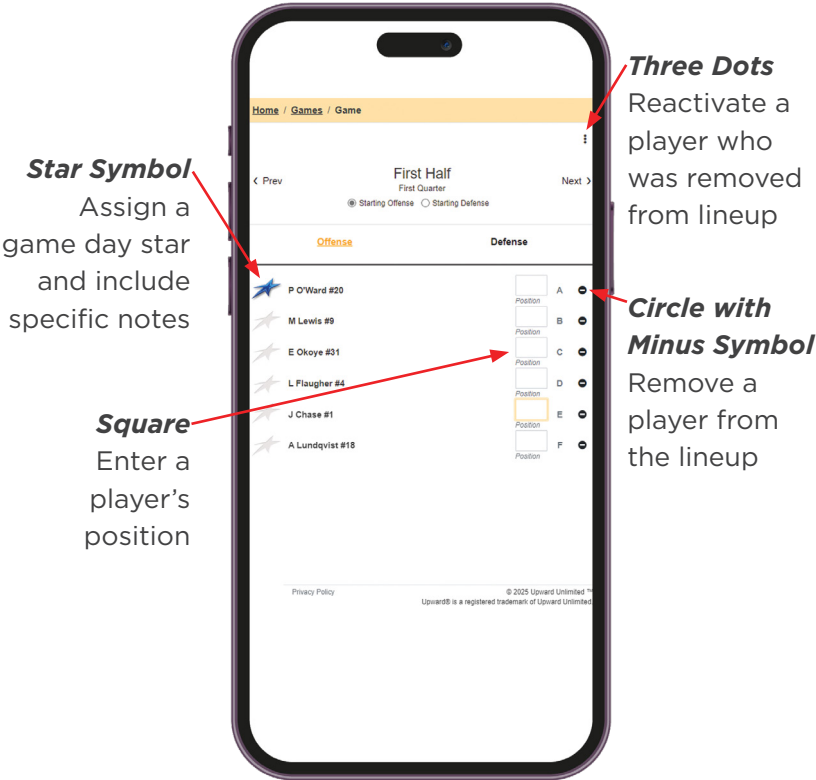
- ◆ Each team fields six players at a time, but this may vary by league or division.
- ◆ In each quarter, each team will have an offensive and defensive group, and these groups will change in each quarter according to the substitution rotation.
- ◆ The coin toss at the start of the game will determine which team elects to play offense or defense first for the game.

***Note: If your team has 11 or 12 players, with 6 on the field and 5 or 6 off the field at all times, you will need to switch the offense and defense responsibilities each quarter so that players don't play one side of the ball for the entire game.***



# Using the App for Substitutions

Select the Game Day tab and your game number.



## ➔ Filling Out the Substitution Form (Paper Version)

If you are not using the app, you may use the paper copy of the substitution forms in the back of this book.

**STEP 1** Place your two best passers in Slots 1 and 7. These slots are designated passer slots and ensure that the team always has a passer in the game.

Game 1

Player:		1st Quarter		2nd Quarter		3rd Quarter		4th Quarter	
		Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def
1	Samuel								
2	Jacob								
3	Luke								
4	Caleb								
5	Ja'Marr								
6	Auggie								
7	Ledger								
8	Quinn								
9	Nick								
10	Felipe								

**STEP 2** Fill in the rest of your form with remaining players according to ability levels starting with Slot 2.

### STEP 3

Beginning with your first player in the first column, place an "X" for the first six players.

**STEP 5** Based on whether your team will start the game on offense or defense decided at the coin toss, circle the appropriate abbreviation in the first column. If "Def" is circled, this means that the players in the first column will start on defense. Continue circling this alternating pattern in the remaining columns.

#### Game 1

Player:	1st Quarter		2nd Quarter		3rd Quarter		4th Quarter	
	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def
1 Samuel	X	X		X		X	X	
2 Jacob	X	X		X		X	X	
3 Luke	X		X	X		X		X
4 Caleb	X		X	X		X		X
5 Ja'Marr	X		X		X	X		X
6 Auggie	X		X		X	X		X
7 Ledger		X	X		X		X	X
8 Quinn		X	X		X		X	X
9 Nick		X		X	X		X	
10 Felipe		X		X	X		X	

**STEP 4** In the second column of the 1st Quarter, place an "X" with the first player not in the previous column (Player 7) and continue down the list to include six players total. Do NOT continue with the second quarter column until later.

**STEP 6** To determine who will begin the 2nd quarter, place an "X" in the third column for the player who follows next in the rotation from the second column (Luke). Then fill in the remaining 5 players. Then, begin with the next person in the rotation for the next column. This process should be done quarter by quarter.

Game 2 - Your Turn

Are you ready to try? It’s your turn to fill out the form. The first column has been done for you - now fill out the rest.

To determine who will be the first starter for Game 2, you will begin your form with Player 2 (Jacob). Then, continue in the lineup with Luke, Caleb, Ja’Marr, Auggie and Ledger. This will be your starting lineup playing either offense or defense.

In this scenario, the coin toss has determined that you will play offense first. Use the procedure you just learned to fill out the rest of the form.

Game 2									
Player:		1st Quarter		2nd Quarter		3rd Quarter		4th Quarter	
		Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def
1	Samuel								
2	Jacob	X							
3	Luke	X							
4	Caleb	X							
5	Ja’Marr	X							
6	Auggie	X							
7	Ledger	X							
8	Quinn								
9	Nick								
10	Felipe								

Week 3 will start with Luke, Week 4 will start with Caleb and so on.

# Substitution Scenario

It’s Week 3 and, as game time approaches, Auggie has not arrived (he is supposed to be in the starting lineup for Week 3). He did not call prior to the game and inform you that he would not be present.

*How to fill out the form:*

Game 3

Player:		1st Quarter		2nd Quarter		3rd Quarter		4th Quarter	
		Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def
1	Samuel		X						
2	Jacob		X						
3	Luke	X	X						
4	Caleb	X	X						
5	Ja'Marr	X	X						
6	Auggie	—	—						
7	Ledger	X							
8	Quinn	X							
9	Nick	X							
10	Felipe		X						

**STEP 1** *Begin with your original starting three (Luke, Caleb, Ja'Marr). For the first segment only, draw a line through the box for Auggie. Fill in the boxes for Ledger, Quinn, and then Felix.*

## Game 3

Player:	1st Quarter		2nd Quarter		3rd Quarter		4th Quarter	
	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def
1 Samuel		X	X		X		X	X
2 Jacob		X		X	X		X	
3 Luke	X	X		X	X		X	
4 Caleb	X	X		X		X	X	
5 Ja'Marr	X	X		X		X	X	
6 Auggie	—	—	X	X		X		X
7 Ledger	X		X	X		X		X
8 Quinn	X		X		X	X		X
9 Nick	X		X		X	X		X
10 Felipe		X	X		X		X	X

If Auggie arrives at the start of the second quarter, continue with the proper rotation including Auggie when his turn arrives. Then continue with the rest of the rotations through the end of the game.

***As you can see in this example, it is important to NOT fill out your form prior to the game. If a player is absent, it is best to fill out your form segment by segment in case the absent player arrives at some point during the game.***

***Note: If a team has 11 or 12 players, with 6 on the field and 5 or 6 off the field at all times, the offense/defense responsibility switches each quarter.***

## ➔ **Game Day Stars** (*\*if included in your Team Box*)

If your league is using Game Day Stars you have an Award Stars booklet. These multi-colored stickers are given to each player at the end of every game. Star presentation should be an exciting time. Encourage parents to cheer as stars are distributed to each player. Make specific points why each participant receives a particular star. Notes you or your assistant coach take during the game should be used during this time as you encourage their efforts.

***TIP: Find a location off of the field and take your time with this activity after the game.***

**Here is an example of how to conduct a star presentation:**

***“Today, this player hustled on each and every play, and played with great intensity and desire the entire game. On the fourth down before halftime, he came up with a huge tackle after hustling to the ball. Today’s blue star for effort goes to DeAndre. Let’s all give a hand for DeAndre. Great effort today DeAndre!”***

Use the star distribution form on MyUpward in the Gameday area or in the back of your coach playbook to track which stars each participant has received. Make an attempt to award each participant all five stars throughout the season.

*Encourage players to display the stars they receive on their posters. Here is a list of the Game Day Stars and what they represent.*



***EFFORT** (blue star) means giving your best at all times, regardless of the circumstances. Look for a player who always gives their maximum effort, no matter what.*



***DEFENSE** (red star) is for a player who can slow down or stop an opponent from making a play on the field. Defense requires an awareness of being in the correct position, hustle, and hard work.*



***SPORTSMANSHIP** (gold star) is a player who treats teammates and opponents the way you want to be treated. They show respect for themselves, teammates, opponents, referees, coaches, and the game by demonstrating sportsmanship.*



***CHRISTLIKENESS** (white star) is someone who is doing their best to imitate Jesus through their words, actions, and attitudes. Examples include sacrificing for the team, unselfish, being a leader, encouraging others, and playing tough.*



***OFFENSE** (gray star) is someone who puts their team in a favorable position that leads to a scoring opportunity. Offense requires being aware of your teammates and their opportunities and using your skills to advance your team's goals. This could include making a catch or throwing a good pass.*



**SECTION 5**

# FORMS

Substitution Form .....125

Star Distribution Form .....134

UPWARD SPORTS  
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
2								
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4								
5								
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7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

Notes for next practice:

Score: \_\_\_\_\_

UPWARD SPORTS  
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
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12								

Notes for next practice: \_\_\_\_\_

Score: \_\_\_\_\_

UPWARD SPORTS  
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
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12								

Notes for next practice:

Score: \_\_\_\_\_

# UPWARD SPORTS Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
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11								
12								

Notes for next practice:

Score: \_\_\_\_\_

UPWARD SPORTS  
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	Off or Def	2ND QUARTER	Off or Def	3RD QUARTER	Off or Def	4TH QUARTER	Off or Def
1								
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8								
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11								
12								

Notes for next practice:

Score: \_\_\_\_\_

UPWARD SPORTS  
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: \_\_\_\_\_

	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
Player Name	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
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Notes for next practice:

Score: \_\_\_\_\_

UPWARD SPORTS  
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
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12								

Notes for next practice:

Score: \_\_\_\_\_



# UPWARD SPORTS Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: \_\_\_\_\_

	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER		2ND QUARTER		3RD QUARTER		4TH QUARTER	
Player Name	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
2								
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12								

Notes for next practice:

Score: \_\_\_\_\_

# UPWARD SPORTS Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: \_\_\_\_\_

	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
Player Name	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
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12								

Notes for next practice:

Score: \_\_\_\_\_

**UPWARD**  
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**SPORTS**

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**Accept the invitation from your League Director to  
MyUpward.org and have access to:**

- *Team roster*
- *Practice and game schedule*
- *Practice plan and devotion material*
- *Videos for practice*
- *Communication Tools*
- *Game day management*
- *Tutorial videos*



*PLAY WITH PURPOSE*