

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO PROVIDING THE BEST LEAGUE EXPERIENCE!

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE

COACH PLAYBOOK



Develop Skills » Strengthen Character » Have Fun

UPWARD
SPORTS

PLAY WITH PURPOSE



FLAG FOOTBALL COACH PLAYBOOK

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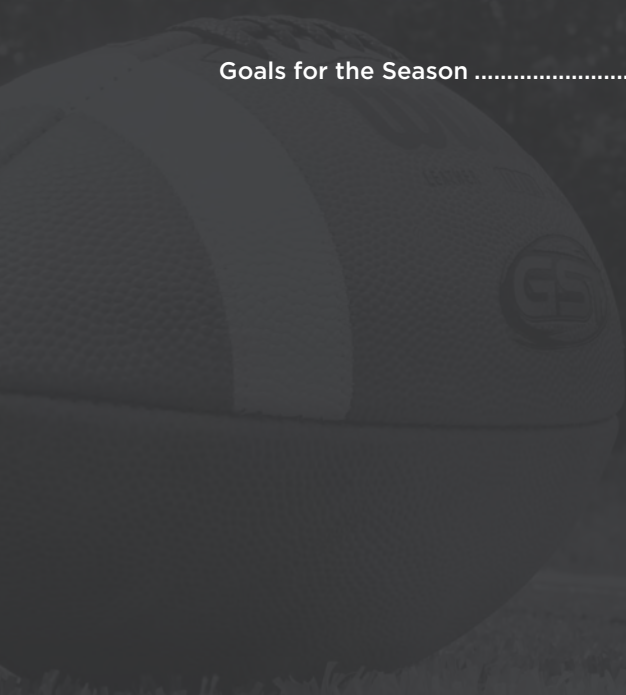
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SECTION 1

GOALS FOR YOUR SPORTS MINISTRY

Goals for the Season 6



➔ Goals For The Season

The goal of our sports ministry is:

Success looks like:

Success in our sports ministry is measured by:

SECTION 2

COACHING ESSENTIALS

What You Do Matters	6
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➔ What You Do Matters

Thank you for coaching this season! You are about to influence 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.

Matthew 5:13-16 – You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

➔ 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.

HEBREWS 12:1-2 READS:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer, and perfecter of our faith.

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO GROW SPIRITUALLY AND AS A COACH THIS SEASON?

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➔ An Upward Sports Coach

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.

FIVE KEYS TO COACHING:

- 1. Be organized to teach the sport** – Take time to teach the fundamentals of the sport and the rules through organized and detailed practices. Refer to the practice plans for drills and look to enhance each player’s skill development.
- 2. Lead the practice devotion** – Coaches lead a devotion, discussion, and prayer during practices using the devotion materials. If you need help, let the league director or coach commissioner know, as they are ready to provide support.
- 3. Communicate with parents** – 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.
- 4. Instill sportsmanship, a competitive spirit, and a growth mindset** – Help your players learn how these work together.
 - ◆ Great sportsmanship involves valuing others and showing appreciation for opponents, teammates, and officials regardless of the scoreboard.
 - ◆ A competitive spirit is about doing your best in all situations during practice and games.

- ◆ A growth mindset focuses on growing and improving at each opportunity so that small improvements lead to more significant change as they compound over time. There is always growth potential.

5. Follow the Circle of Affirmation - Support game day officials by being their biggest fans and following the Circle of Affirmation on game days. Following the Circle of Affirmation will provide families with a positive experience and show we value people as God's creation.

As a coach, invest time in giving your best while considering Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:7. Realize that God created the participants you are coaching and those around you. As image-bearers of God, we should treat everyone with the love that God treats them, as you promote the discovery of Jesus.



GENESIS 1:27

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

GENESIS 2:7

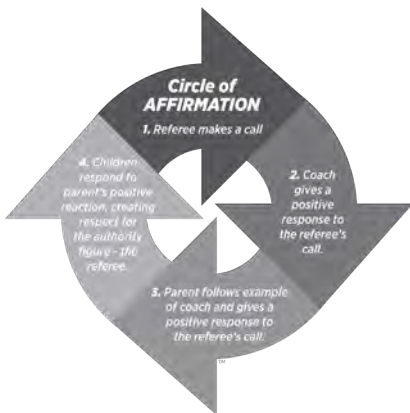
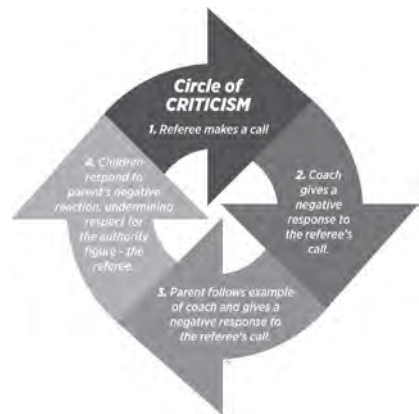
“Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.”

➔ Circle of Affirmation

GAME DAY ATTITUDE

Choosing the right game-day attitude is a key to being an effective Upward Coach. Actions and reactions on the field 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. Coaches have the opportunity and the responsibility to stop the Circle of Criticism by starting the Circle of Affirmation.



The Circle of Affirmation goes beyond the referee. A coach's affirmation of players inspires encouragement and praise from parents, family members and other players. Practicing the Circle of Affirmation makes the game a better experience for everyone.

→ 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. Spend time reviewing practice plans and thinking 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.

➔ **Interacting with Players, Parents, Coaches, and Referees**

As you are in a coaching role, people 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

Interacting with players is pivotal for a coach. 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 that the player can understand.
- ◆ Tell participants the details of what you are teaching, show them what you are teaching, have them do it, and then apply it in a game scenario.
- ◆ Focus on one skill at a time as you teach so that players 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 of the player actions.
- ◆ Understand that there is a lot of information a player is processing during a game. 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 game days, 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 post-practice 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 by coaches being prepared and organized.
- ◆ 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 OTHER 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 both team's 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 game day, and remember their names.
- ◆ Realize that you would not have a game day 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 work together for the experience of all participants.
- ◆ Love one another, John 13:34.
- ◆ Thank the coaches and referees after the game.
- ◆ Review the Circle of Affirmation and follow it.

What sets this league apart from others is that when differences of opinion or mistakes are made during a game, we are all part of one team, providing a great player experience that honors God.

➔ **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.

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.

➔ **Play with Purpose**

A coach can help develop not only a player but a person. That person has a long-term impact on the community, their family, and eternity. You coach, and they play with purpose. This relationship develops someone through a player development model that is remembered by the acronym M.A.S.S.

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 man.”



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 on making correct decisions quickly. When to pass a ball, when to attempt a move or 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.



SOCIALLY

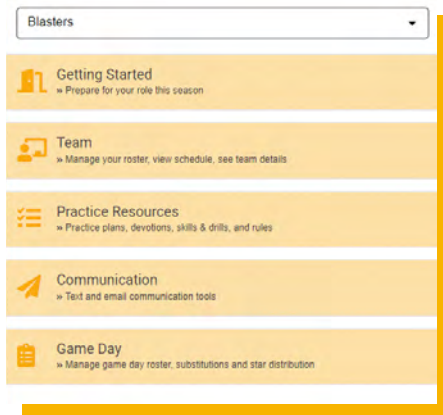
Participants develop socially by learning how to work as a team, communicate, and serve others through a sport.

- ◇ **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.

➔ Coach Resources and Tools

Many resources are available to help you provide a great experience for your team, plan and efficiently use your time 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 can also create an icon on your home screen when accessing from a mobile device.



- ◆ **Getting Started** includes how-to videos and other resources to help you this season.
- ◆ **Team** area helps you manage your roster and see participant information and the schedule for practices and game days.
- ◆ **Practice Resources** provide a step-by-step outline for each practice, devotions, skills and drills, and sports rules.

- ◆ **Communication** is where you will find email and text capabilities, as well as attaching a link to the team page.
- ◆ **Game Day** helps you to manage the substitutions with the Upward Sports game day rotation and the ability to track game day stars.

DEVOTIONS – Weekly devotion content for your practices is located on MyUpward.org or in the Coach Playbook.

GAME DAY STARS – Use these stars on game day to highlight each player’s contributions during the game.

GOSPEL VIDEO – Sent out from the league director to families to share a video version of the gospel message with them during the season.

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 and print them out before practice or use them directly from your mobile device.

SEASON CELEBRATION – Celebrate the season with your team. Your league may have individual team parties or a league-wide celebration.

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.

UPWARD.ORG/COACH – Helps you learn more about sharing the gospel using the 3 Circles.



◆ NOTES

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SECTION 3

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 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"> Evaluate skills Learn basic offensive skills and formations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get to know team members Discuss practice ground rules Introduce the offensive philosophy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field dimensions and layout Offensive rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catching and receiving (see page 37) Snapping (see page 32)
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working the offense Introduce basic defensive skills and formations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-introduce players and coaches Introduce the defensive philosophy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offensive rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defensive coverage (see page 42) Flag-pulling (see page 40)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue implementing the offensive playbook, spend time covering the play calling scheme Continue working the defense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Game format Substitutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work one-on-one Coach through proper route running (see page 38)
4 <i>week of first game</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover the game plan for the upcoming game Scrimmage if possible to simulate game-type situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the play calling scheme and the plays you will be calling on Saturday Give the players a play and have them discuss the assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the game format Review substitutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flag-pulling (see page 40)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue skill development Work on areas that need improvement from the game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss practice focus Review the last game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review all rules as a fun quiz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas that need improvement from the game
6-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue skill development Analyze game performances, coach through improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the last game Make adjustments to plays and assignments Introduce new plays as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to review rules for clear understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas that need improvement

◆ NOTES

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◆ NOTES

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→ 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 sport of moving forward. It can be done on one foot of both feet.

◆ *Jumping jacks*

- ◆ **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.

➔ 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.***

Many of the drills described in this playbook require one ball per player. 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 SKILLS

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 (feet shoulder-width apart, knees bent, elbows resting on knees, head up).
- ◆ Reach 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, turn hand inward so the ball is delivered sideways to the quarterback who is standing right behind the center.
- ◆ Release the ball and run the play called.

At the direction of the league director any age division may use the side snap. The traditional snap can be difficult for the younger 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).
- ◆ Reach 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 SKILLS

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.

Drop Back 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 defensive rusher(s).

- ◆ 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.

PASSING DRILLS

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.

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.

RECEIVING SKILLS

Catching

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. 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.

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

FLAG-PULLING SKILLS

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.

COVERAGE SKILL

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.

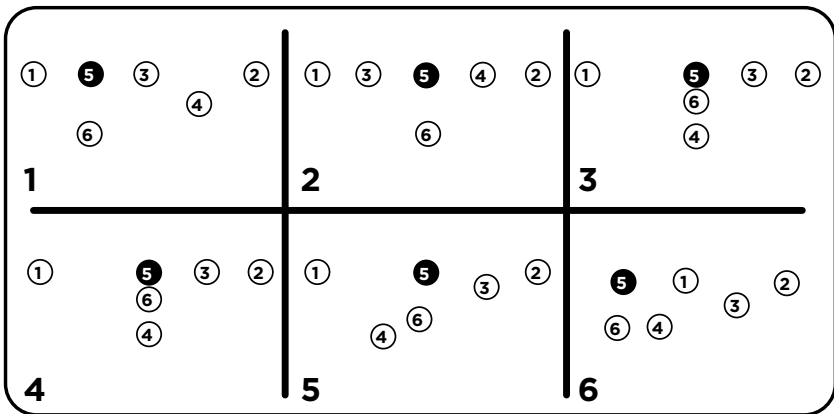
- ◆ Have players line up across a line.
- ◆ On the coach's command, players will backpedal 10 yards, focusing on proper form.
- ◆ Start slow, then encourage players to speed up as they become comfortable with backpedaling. The goal is to backpedal as quickly as the receiver runs forward.

➔ 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 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.

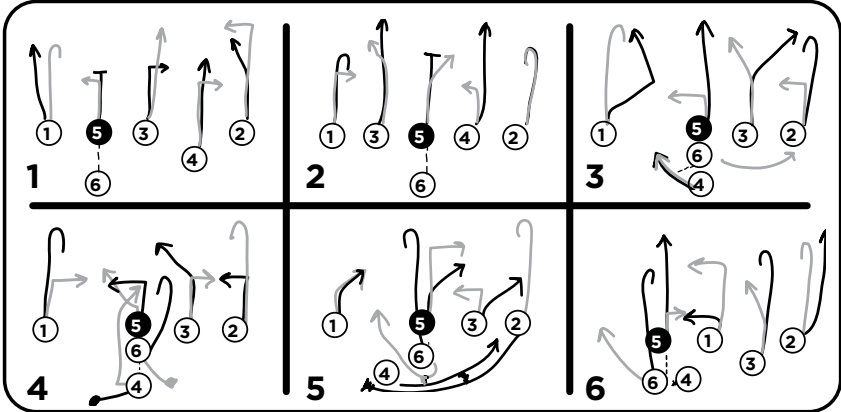


For younger players, we recommend you stay with a single formation and focus on running plays and simple pass routes.

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.



◆ NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines providing space for handwritten notes.

SECTION 4

PRACTICE DEVOTIONS

BIBLICAL THEMES

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

WEEK 1:	Introduction.....	52
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➔ 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 biblical themes. This season will focus on themes which are 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 themes and verses for each group of practices.

PRACTICE NUMBER	BIBLICAL THEME	VERSE
Week 1	<i>Introduction</i>	“One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.” MATTHEW 5:1-2 (NLT)
Week 2	<i>Blessed</i>	“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.” MATTHEW 5:3 (NLT)
Week 3	<i>Light in the Darkness</i>	“In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” MATTHEW 5:16 (NLT)
Week 4	<i>Upside Down</i>	“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you.” MATTHEW 5:43-44 (NLT)
Week 5	<i>How to Pray</i>	“Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.” MATTHEW 6:9 (NLT)

PRACTICE NUMBER	BIBLICAL THEME	VERSE
Week 6	<i>Treasure in Heaven</i>	“Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.” MATTHEW 6:21 (NLT)
Week 7	<i>Don't Worry</i>	“Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?” MATTHEW 6:26 (NLT)
Week 8	<i>Gospel</i>	“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 (NLT)
Week 9	<i>The Golden Rule</i>	“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.” MATTHEW 7:12 (NLT)
Week 10	<i>Trees and Fruit</i>	“Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.” MATTHEW 7:20
Week 11	<i>A Solid Foundation</i>	“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock.” MATTHEW 7:24 (NLT)

PRACTICE 1 | THEME: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

INTRODUCTION

SCOUTING REPORT

Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion!

Background: The Sermon on the Mount contains some of Jesus' most famous teachings. But it contains more than just good ideas for how to live. Here, Jesus was proclaiming the ethic for a new way of life for His followers—an ethic that was, in many ways, upside-down to the culture of His day (and the culture of our day). Portions of this sermon can be found in both the books of Luke and Matthew in the New Testament of the Bible, but we'll be focusing on the account in Matthew 5-7. The author, Matthew, was one of Jesus' disciples—formerly a tax collector, which would have made him an outcast in his culture. He knew firsthand that Jesus called His followers to see the world differently. Matthew is believed to have written his account around 70-100 A.D. Matthew highlights Jesus as a new authoritative teacher (like the historical Israelite leader Moses), an idea that is very much on display in the Sermon on the Mount. But Matthew also identifies Jesus as the savior (or “Messiah”) that God promised to Israel, and as God Himself with us here on earth.

BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Matthew 4:12-5:2, Matthew 9:9-13. If you don't own a Bible, you can download the YouVersion Bible App for free.

ENCOURAGEMENT

The book of Matthew begins (Matthew 1:27) and ends (Matthew 28:20) with the promise that Jesus is God with us. As you coach and teach this season, remember that God is with you.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

How would I describe Jesus? How would I describe Jesus' philosophy for life?

Key Verse: “One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.” – Matthew 5:1-2 (NLT)

Practice Card Reminder: If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 1” at the end of practice.

I am so excited for this season! How about you?! What are you most excited about? (Allow time for a few answers.) One of the best things about playing sports is being part of a team. We're all working together for a common goal. When you're on a team, you're expected to listen to what your coach says—that's me. I'm going to give our team instructions and help you know how to play the game. Our team will go by my game plan, and if everyone is on the same page, we'll play together a lot better.

A long time ago, there was someone who was putting a team together. Not a sports team, but a team that would change the world. This person was called Jesus, and we read about Him in the Bible.

You could think of Jesus as the coach of this team, but He was really more of a teacher. He taught in a way that no one had ever taught before. Because Jesus wasn't just a man, He was the son of God. That means He was perfect. He loved everyone. He never hurt anyone. He performed miracles like healing people and calming storms. And He was a great teacher because He knew the way God wanted people to live.

Jesus was traveling around where He lived, teaching and healing people. He had a group of friends who went with Him everywhere He went—to study what He would teach very closely. These friends were called His disciples. They were the very first members of His team. But when the word got out about Jesus, lots of people started coming to see Him. They all wanted to hear what He had to say.

The Bible says, “One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.” (Matthew 5:1-2, NLT) What Jesus taught them on the mountainside that day is often called the Sermon on the Mount. And one of Jesus' disciples, Matthew, eventually wrote down what He had said—so now we are able to read His words 2,000 years later.

What did Jesus say on the mountain? That's what we're going to be talking about all season. He wanted to give His followers

specific instructions that would show the world they were on His team. Because how He taught them to live would be very different from how they were used to living and from how everyone else around them lived. His followers were going to stand out. And, like I said earlier, they were going to change the world.

The cool thing is, Jesus wasn't done building His team back then. He still wants people to join Him in changing the world today. I can be part of that, and you can be part of that. And this season, we're going to learn more about how we can join His team.

Let's pray.

God, thank You for giving us the chance to play together as a team this season. Help us listen well, learn and grow, and be great teammates to one another. Help us also to learn about Your son Jesus this season and listen to what He has to teach us through the Sermon on the Mount. Let us all be part of Your team and change the world together. We love You, Lord. Amen.

PRACTICE 2 | THEME: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

BLESSED

SCOUTING REPORT

Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion!

Background: The first section of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is often called the Beatitudes. This collection of blessings is full of comfort for those Jesus is teaching. They highlight the "already, but not yet" nature of God's kingdom for those who are on earth. Most of the verses speak of future rewards that the blessed will receive in heaven. "They will be comforted," etc. But verses 3 and 10 tell us, "The Kingdom of Heaven is theirs" now. This is the wonderful mystery of the way of life Jesus calls us to. When we believe in Him, we're already part of His kingdom. But there is still so much more blessing to come. The Beatitudes show us what God blesses and highlight His affection for those with hearts who seek after Him.

BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-23.

ENCOURAGEMENT

On YouTube, search “The Chosen Scene: Jesus Gives the Beatitudes” and watch the video. This excerpt from The Chosen television series is a beautiful, fictional interpretation of Jesus first sharing the Beatitudes with His disciple Matthew before He will preach them to the crowd. Let it cause you to ponder what Jesus’ mindset might have been as He composed these powerful words.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Which blessing stands out to me most? Why?

Bottom Line: God blesses us, and we want to bless others.

Key Verse: “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.” – Matthew 5:3 (NLT)

Practice Card Reminder: If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 2” at the end of practice.

What is the best gift you’ve ever received? (Allow athletes to raise their hands and answer.) Did someone special give you that gift, like a parent or grandparent? Whoever gave you that

gift probably knew you pretty well and knew it would be a great gift for you.

Have you ever heard of the word “bless”? “Bless” can have a few different meanings. Sometimes it means the act of giving someone a gift—and not always a physical gift that you can touch. It also means showing special attention or devotion to someone. Blessing someone is a good thing that shows you care about them.

Last practice, we talked about how Jesus went up on a mountainside to teach a big crowd of people. He’s getting ready to give them some pretty strict instructions for how they should live. But first, He starts with words of blessing. He wants the people to know that God cares about them and that He is going to give them great gifts. Not gifts you can touch, but gifts that will last forever.

First, Jesus says, “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.” (Matthew 5:3, NLT) To have a relationship with God, we have to understand that we need Him in our lives. Jesus says if you recognize how lost you are without God and turn to Him to help you, God blesses you and gives you the kingdom of heaven! That means living forever with God! That’s a really awesome blessing.

Jesus goes on to share more blessings. He says that those who are very sad are blessed and that they will be comforted. He says that those who show mercy and are kind and forgiving are blessed and that they will receive mercy themselves. He says

that people who work for peace are blessed and that they will be called children of God.

Some of these blessings are gifts that we are given right now! And some of them are gifts that God will give us in the future when we are with Him in heaven. But what we most want to remember right now is, first, that God cares about each of us and wants to bless us. And second, Jesus tells us what the hearts of the people that God blesses look like. Those who are part of His team realize how much they need God. They are merciful. They are humble. They work for peace.

Now put these two things together. God blesses us, and we want to be people who bless others.

→ Discussion Questions

(K-2nd Grade)

- ◆ In your own words, what does it mean to bless someone?
- ◆ How has God blessed you?

(3rd-6th Grade)

- ◆ Why do you think Jesus starts His sermon with blessings?
- ◆ Why do we need God?

(7th Grade and up)

- ◆ Why do we need God?
- ◆ How has God blessed you? How can you bless God? How can you bless others?

Let's pray.

God, we want to bless You with how we live and how we bless others. Thank You for blessing us in so many ways. Help everyone here to realize how much we need You. Help us to have humility, to be merciful, and to work for peace. Help us to remember how much You care about us. Amen.

Note for Next Week: Bring a flashlight or be ready to use the flashlight on your phone.

PRACTICE 3 | THEME: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

SCOUTING REPORT

Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion!

Background: Jesus continues to establish the identity of His followers in the verses that follow the Beatitudes. In Matthew: The Gospel of Identity, Michael Card writes, “The two things most useful to the world, salt and light, describe the character of the new identity of his followers.” Salt was used primarily as a food preservative during this time (long before modern refrigeration), so while flavor could be in view here, the much more obvious context would be that Jesus’ followers are to help purify and preserve the world. The other comparison in this section is to light, which is what our devotion will focus on. In the New Testament, Jesus is often called the light of the world, and His followers are supposed to reflect that light and stand out in a dark world. Ultimately, the identity of Jesus’ followers should be a preserving and penetrating witness to the holiness and glory of God in a dark and unholy world. How do we do this? By paying attention to His Word and following what it says.

BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Matthew 5:13-16; Psalm 119:105; John 1:1-9; John 8:12.

ENCOURAGEMENT

This season, there is going to be a lot of focus on doing good things. The bad news? None of us are perfect. We can't measure up to this ethic no matter how hard we try. The good news? We don't have to. We'll see as we go that what God really wants are hearts that seek after Him. And where we fall short, Jesus will fill in the gap.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Could the way I live my life be compared to the salt and the light that Jesus talks about?

Bottom Line: I want to be a light that points people to God.

Key Verse: “In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” – Matthew 5:16 (NLT)

Practice Card Reminder: If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 3” at the end of practice.

Note: *Bring a flashlight or be ready to use the flashlight on your phone.*

What does a flashlight do? (Turn on the flashlight.) It shines a light. Imagine it was really dark—pitch dark—and I turned on this flashlight. Would it make a difference? (Let athletes answer.)

Yes, it would! Because light shines through darkness. It allows us to see what's around us. In a dark room—or outside at night—a light gets our attention! It stands out.

When Jesus is teaching on the mountain like we've been talking about, He tells the people listening to Him, "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden." (Matthew 5:14, NLT) Imagine living in a time with no electricity. No streetlights. No headlights. No flashlights on our phones. If you were traveling at night and saw the lamplight coming from all the buildings of a city up on a hilltop, that would stand out!

But what makes someone shine like a city on a hill? What makes them stand out like that? Jesus goes on to say, "Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father." (Matthew 5:17, NLT) Jesus is telling His listeners that if they do the good things He is teaching them to do, they will stand out and shine like lights in the darkness. Is there someone you know who is really kind? Someone who helps people and does what is right? Those people tend to stand out. That's how Jesus wants us to be.

But, notice WHY He wants us to stand out. It's not so we can get credit for being good people. Instead, it's so the light we give off will reveal how great God is and cause everyone to praise Him. It's not about us—it's about God! We reflect His light, and He helps us shine brightly in the darkness. All good comes from Him. So we want our light to show others how awesome He is!

→ Discussion Questions

(K-2nd Grade)

- ◆ Have you ever been scared of the dark? Why does turning on a light help you not be afraid?
- ◆ What are some things you can do to stand out in a good way?

(3rd-6th Grade)

- ◆ How do our good actions point other people to God?
- ◆ What are some things you can do to stand out in a good way at school, on our team, or in your family?

(7th Grade and up)

- ◆ A small light stands out way more in darkness than in daylight. What do you think this says about how Jesus wants us to live?
- ◆ How do our good actions point other people to God?

Let's pray.

God, we want to shine brightly, like lights in the darkness. Help us to learn what it looks like to do good in a way that points other people to You. Thank You for letting us shine for You. Amen.

PRACTICE 4 | THEME: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

UPSIDE-DOWN

SCOUTING REPORT

Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion!

Background: In the next section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells His listeners that He came to fulfill the Law—referring to the commands given to the nation of Israel through Moses and to the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament as a whole. Some aspects of the Law Jesus would complete (the need for sacrifices, for example), and some He would redefine. He makes the mind-blowing statement that the righteousness required by His followers would need to exceed the righteousness of that day's religious leaders. These leaders were notoriously strict and legalistic. Jesus' listeners knew that what He was asking was impossible. The rest of Chapter 5 looks at specific examples of this expanded idea of righteousness—regarding anger and hatred, litigation, lust and adultery, divorce, making vows, retribution, and treatment of enemies. Jesus truly turns each of these upside-down from the moral expectations of His day by illustrating that sin and righteousness are not just outward actions; they come from the heart. Inward righteousness is far more demanding than just outwardly adhering to rules. And true inward righteousness (as we'll see in our devotion) translates to actions that often go above and beyond what is expected. These behaviors would be revolutionary in Jesus' culture and can be revolutionary in our culture today.

BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Matthew 5:17-48.

ENCOURAGEMENT

“Jesus is not frustrating his hearers with an unachievable ideal but challenging them to grow in obedience to God’s will—to become more like Him.”
–Craig L. Blomberg, *The New American Commentary: Matthew*

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

How do Jesus’ ideas about morality compare and contrast to our culture’s ideas about morality?

Bottom Line: Jesus teaches us to go the extra mile.

Key Verse: “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you.” – Matthew 5:43-44 (NLT)

Practice Card Reminder: If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 4” at the end of practice.

Way back in 2008, there was a college softball player named Sara. She had never hit a home run before—in college or high school—but in a game against Central Washington, she finally hit one. Unfortunately, as she was rounding the bases, she injured her leg very badly. She was in a ton of pain. The umpire ruled that unless Sara could touch all the bases and make it to home plate, her home run wouldn't count. It would be like it never happened. But her teammates weren't allowed to touch her, and she couldn't walk. It didn't look good. Then, something amazing happened. Two players on the opposing team offered to step in. They picked Sara up and carried her around the bases, stopping at each one so she could touch it with her foot. Her home run counted, and the other team lost. But their act of sportsmanship touched people's hearts all over the country. They even won an ESPY!

Why was what these athletes did such a big deal? (Let players answer.) In sports, you're not really supposed to help the other team. It could cost you the game. While we don't like to see athletes being super mean to each other, we aren't used to seeing them care about someone else more than their own team or their own game. What the softball players who helped Sara did went above and beyond what anyone expected. They went the extra mile.

That saying, "going the extra mile," actually comes from the Sermon on the Mount, which we've been learning about. It comes in the middle of a section where Jesus is teaching the crowd that they should go above and beyond in doing good to other people. They should smash all the expectations.

In Jesus' time, it was common for a Roman soldier to stop a random citizen and make them carry their gear for up to a mile. People just had to go along with this law, even though they hated it. But Jesus suggested that instead of just following the law and carrying the soldier's gear one mile, His followers should offer to go two miles!

This would have been unbelievable to Jesus' listeners. It was completely upside-down to the way they were used to thinking. But Jesus didn't stop there! He said other unbelievable things like: if you hate someone in your heart, it's just as bad as murdering them; and don't seek revenge but turn the other cheek. Jesus even said we should love our enemies and pray for people who treat us badly! This didn't come naturally to Jesus' first listeners, and it doesn't come naturally to us today.

Last practice, we talked about how Jesus wants us to stand out. Well, this is how we do it. By living in a way that often looks upside-down to the world around us. Like the softball players who carried Sara around the bases, we can go the extra mile. When we do that, people notice.

→ Discussion Questions

(K-2nd Grade)

- ◆ Would you be willing to lose a game to help someone who was hurt?
- ◆ Why is it upside-down to help people in unusual ways?

(3rd-6th Grade)

- ◆ Why is it unusual to help people in selfless and unexpected ways?
- ◆ Why would Jesus ask us to love our enemies and pray for people who treat us badly?

(7th Grade and up)

- ◆ Has someone ever helped you in a selfless or unexpected way? How did that affect you?
- ◆ What might it look like to go the extra mile in being kind to someone at school or somewhere else?

Let's pray.

God, thank You for going the extra mile when You sent Jesus to die for us. Help us to learn how to go above and beyond in the way we treat people. Help us care about people the way You do. Teach us how to love our enemies. Change our hearts to look more like Yours, Lord. Amen.

PRACTICE 5 | THEME: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

HOW TO PRAY

SCOUTING REPORT

Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion!

Background: As we move into Matthew 6, we see that Jesus' next topic is prayer and fasting. Our devotion will focus on prayer, specifically the prayer Jesus prays as a model for His followers. Jesus' audience prayed daily at 9 am and 3 pm, with many opportunities for public prayer. He warns them against using these times to draw attention to themselves by praying loudly and with flowery language in public. Instead, He directs them to pray simply and privately. While He does not forbid corporate prayer, His point is that prayer should be simple and humble rather than bombastic and vain. His model prayer "is similar in form to a common Jewish prayer (the qaddish). Jesus gave this prayer to his followers as a succinct expression of their new faith." (Notes on Matthew 5-6, Filament Bible App)

BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Matthew 6:5-13; Luke 11:1-13.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Jesus almost always refers to God as Father when He prays. That thought should comfort us—that because of Jesus, we can approach God as our Father.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

How do I pray? Do I approach God with simple words and a humble heart, or do I feel like I need to earn His attention?

Bottom Line: I want to pray like Jesus prayed.

Key Verse: “Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.”– Matthew 6:9 (NLT)

Practice Card Reminder: If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 5” at the end of practice.

One of the best things about being a coach is seeing each of you grow in your skills. We’ve already seen a lot of growth and improvement this year. And we do that by practicing and doing drills. Now, if I’m teaching you how to do a new drill, how do I let you know what to do? I either show you how to do it myself, or I get someone else to show you while I explain it. It’s modeled for you, so you can see how it works.

In the next part of Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, He does something similar. He wants to teach His followers how to pray. But He doesn’t just give them pointers. He actually prays a prayer Himself to show them what to do.

Before we jump in, what is prayer? (Let athletes answer.) Prayer is talking with God. Any of us can pray to God at any time, and He hears us.

The prayer we're going to talk about is probably the most famous prayer in the Bible. A lot of people call it the Lord's Prayer, but another name for it is the Model Prayer because Jesus uses it to show us how to pray.

Let's go through it together.

The first thing Jesus prays is: "Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy." (Matthew 6:9, NLT) Jesus talks to God as His Father, and we can, too. He honors God's name and acknowledges His holiness. This shows that when we pray, we also want to take time to praise God for who He is.

Then Jesus prays, "May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10, NLT) When we pray, we want to tell God that His priorities are our priorities. We want to show that we trust His plans and want them to happen.

Next, Jesus prays, "Give us today the food we need." (Matthew 6:11, NLT) Jesus shows us that we can ask God for the things we need.

Then Jesus prays, "Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us." (Matthew 6:12, NLT) We need to ask God for forgiveness for the ways we disobey Him, but this is also a reminder that we need to forgive other people.

Jesus ends His prayer with this: "And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:13, NLT) This shows us that we should ask God to help us not to give in to sin.

When we put all this together, Jesus' prayer praises God for who He is, shows trust in God's plans, and asks God for what He needs—including things like food, but also forgiveness and rescue from sin. This is how we should pray, too.

But Jesus isn't saying we should just pray His model prayer word-for-word all the time. We want what we say to God to come from our hearts. Jesus tells His followers that it doesn't matter if they use big words or pray a really long time—what matters is the attitude behind their prayer. When we pray, God wants us to focus on Him with humble hearts, knowing we need Him.

→ Discussion Questions

(K-2nd Grade)

- ◆ Why does God want us to pray?
- ◆ What questions do you have about prayer?

(3rd-6th Grade)

- ◆ Why is prayer important to having a good relationship with God?
- ◆ Which part of Jesus' prayer is easiest for you to pray? The hardest?

(7th Grade and up)

- ◆ 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Never stop praying.” What do you think that looks like in real life?
- ◆ In your own words, share what a prayer you would pray might sound like if you were following Jesus’ model.

Let’s pray.

Father God, we praise You because You are great. We want to see Your plans and promises come true in our lives and in this world. Please give us everything we need to get through this week. Forgive us for our sins, and help us forgive anyone who has hurt us. Protect us from Satan and help us stand strong when we are tempted to sin. Thank You for hearing our prayers and for showing us how to pray. Amen.

Note for Next Week: Bring a trophy to use as a visual aid.

PRACTICE 6 | THEME: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

TREASURE IN HEAVEN

SCOUTING REPORT

Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion!

Background: The argument could be made that we live in one of the most materialistic cultures in history. Wealth and possessions are tied to status, and often, we believe—to happiness. It is natural for us to cling to what we own and to try to acquire more. In Matthew 6, Jesus points out the foolishness of hoarding wealth for yourself in this life. Instead, He says, store up treasure in heaven, where it will last forever. What is this treasure we can store up in heaven? “Spiritual treasure should be defined as broadly as possible—as everything that believers can take with them beyond the grave—e.g., holiness of character, obedience to all of God’s commandments, souls won for Christ, and disciples nurtured in the faith. In this context, however, storing up treasures focuses particularly on the compassionate use of material resources to meet others’ physical and spiritual needs...” (Craig L. Blomberg, *The New American Commentary: Matthew*)

BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Matthew 6:19-24, 33; Mark 10:17-31.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Our attachment to wealth can sometimes be tied to our desire for security. In the context of the rest of the chapter, we see that we don't have to hold so tightly to our wealth because we can trust that God will take care of us.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Read Matthew 6:24 again. Which am I more devoted to: God or my money/possessions?

Bottom Line: I want to store my treasure in heaven.

Key Verse: “Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.”– Matthew 6:21 (NLT)

Practice Card Reminder: If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 6” at the end of practice.

Note: *Bring a trophy to use as a visual aid if you have one.*

Who here has ever gotten a trophy? (Hold up trophy.) What was your trophy for? (Allow athletes to answer.) A trophy is fun when you first get it, but most of the time, your excitement

for it doesn't last. Where do you think your trophy will be in 5 years? Twenty years? One hundred years?

The next thing Jesus is going to teach His followers is how they should think about the things they own and their money. Like our trophies, Jesus says the things we own aren't going to matter in the long run. Over years and years, things get dusty and rusty. They might get lost or stolen. A toy you love right now probably won't matter to you much in a few years.

Jesus also says that you can't follow Him and be obsessed with money. You can't focus on serving God if all you're doing is trying to get more and more money for yourself. Money isn't bad by itself and can be used to help people. But if you save and save all of your money your whole life and never use it to help anyone, what happens when you die? You lose it. You can't take it with you. What was the point?

Have you ever seen pictures of the pyramids in Egypt? Many centuries before Jesus taught these things, the Egyptian pharaohs were building these massive tombs where they could store all their treasure and bring it with them when they died. But that's not what happened. They died, and their stuff stayed put. Eventually, people came and robbed many of the pyramids and took the treasure for themselves.

Jesus says we don't want to end up like that. Instead, He says we should store our treasures in heaven where they will be safe. What does that mean? It means the treasures that will last aren't the things we think of as treasures. We can't take our possessions or our money with us to heaven. But the treasures

we can store in heaven are the things we do because we have faith in God and want to follow Jesus.

Jesus says, “Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.” (Matthew 6:21, NLT) Are the desires of your heart for the things of this world—like the stuff you can buy? Or do you want to live in a way that will matter forever—even after you die?

→ Discussion Questions

(K-2nd Grade)

- ◆ Have you ever had a toy you loved at first, but then you got tired of it after a while? What was it?
- ◆ What is something you treasure that isn't something you own?

(3rd-6th Grade)

- ◆ Would you rather be rich and have lots of stuff on earth or have treasure in heaven? Why?
- ◆ Why would Jesus care about what His followers think about possessions and money?

(7th Grade and up)

- ◆ Why would Jesus care about what His followers think about possessions and money?
- ◆ What kinds of things do you think make up the treasure we can store in heaven?

Let's Pray

God, thank You that our value isn't in the stuff and the money we collect on earth. Thank You for giving us the chance to store treasure in heaven, where it will last forever, showing everyone how You have worked in our lives. Teach us to care more about following You and loving other people as You love them than we care about money and things. Amen.

PRACTICE 7 | THEME: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

DON'T WORRY

SCOUTING REPORT

Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion!

Background: Worry. There's something we can absolutely relate to. Jesus concludes Matthew 6 with a simple but powerful case against worry. God cares for all of creation. We are the most valued part of His creation. Therefore, we can trust Him to take care of us. So we don't need to be consumed by worry. Instead, we can focus on God's kingdom—His will and work in the world. Jesus' original audience here was Jewish, but they were surrounded by cultures where pagan religions taught adherents to fear and worry about how to appease their gods. In contrast, Jesus says His Father cares for us and provides for our needs. Focusing on pleasing God is not a prescription for worry but for rest in Him. (Matthew 11:28-30)

BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 11:22-32; Psalm 23:1-6.

ENCOURAGEMENT

"The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need." - Psalm 23:1 (NLT)

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What do I struggle to trust God with most?

Bottom Line: I can trust God to take care of me.

Key Verse: “Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are?”– Matthew 6:26 (NLT)

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

If you were to visit a certain group of islands off the southern coast of Iceland during the late summer, you might be able to help with the annual local tradition of rescuing baby puffins, or “pufflings.” Puffins are seabirds that live in cold climates—and millions of them live around Iceland. The pufflings will fly out of their nests on the cliffs into the ocean, where they will live for the next few years. But sometimes, the pufflings can get lost on their way from the nest to the sea at night, mistaking the lights of the town for the moon and the stars. Their wings aren’t strong enough yet to get them the rest of the way to the ocean. So local residents, especially children, go out at night with boxes to find these lost pufflings around town and deliver them to the ocean.

In the next part of the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus mentions birds. Like these Icelanders, Jesus says God watches out for the birds. Birds work hard, but they don't store up lots of food for the future. They live one day at a time, just doing their thing, and God provides food for them. He takes care of them.

Then Jesus asks His audience, "Aren't you far more valuable to [God] than they are?" (Matthew 6:26b, NLT). People are made in the image of God. He loves us. We are worth so much more to Him than birds! But sometimes, it's easier to believe He will take care of the birds than it is to believe He'll take care of us.

See, Jesus knows that all of us struggle with worry. We worry about all kinds of things—school, friends, sports, the future. It's easy to get caught up in thoughts of all the things that could go wrong. But Jesus' point here is that if God takes care of the birds, then, of course, He will take care of you! You can choose to trust God instead of worrying. He is in control.

Jesus tells His followers not to worry about tomorrow and all the little things that weigh them down. He's not telling them to be irresponsible. Instead, He tells them that rather than worrying about all of these things they can't control about their lives and about the future, they should live in a way that focuses on God and His plan for the future. They can trust that He will give them what they need.

The next time you feel like you are worrying too much, remember that God takes care of the animals and the plants and the whole world. He is in control, and He cares for all living things. But He cares about you even more.

→ Discussion Questions

(K-2nd Grade)

- ◆ What is something you were worried about this week?
- ◆ Why do you think God cares about us so much?

(3rd-6th Grade)

- ◆ Why do you think we worry so much?
- ◆ How can you remember to trust God instead of worrying?

(7th Grade and up)

- ◆ What are some things people your age worry about a lot?
- ◆ How can knowing God cares for you keep you from getting caught up in worry?

Let's Pray

God, thank You for caring about us and for taking care of us. We know that everything we have and everything we need to survive ultimately comes from You. Help us to remember how valuable we are to You. When we find ourselves worrying, give us peace and help us learn how to trust in You. Amen.

PRACTICE 8 | THEME: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

GOSPEL

SCOUTING REPORT

Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion!

Background: Take your time with this important devotion. The Sermon on the Mount brilliantly describes how a follower of Jesus should live, but it does not exist in a vacuum. We don't want to come away from learning about the Sermon on the Mount with the idea that we must do good things to be accepted by God. The truth is that none of us can ever do enough good things for that to happen. The Sermon on the Mount highlights how perfect God's standards are and how it would be impossible for us to live up to them. God is holy. The only hope we have for a relationship with Him is in what Jesus did by dying on the cross in our place and rising from the dead. Placing our trust in Him as the perfect substitute is the most important decision any of us can make.

BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Matthew 27:11-28:20; 1 Peter 2:21-25.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Read Matthew's account of Jesus' death and resurrection in Matthew 27:11-28:20. Realize that Jesus endured all of this for us. For you. That is how much He loves you.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Have I trusted in Jesus to pay the price for my sins?

Bottom Line: I can trust in Jesus as the perfect substitute.

Key Verse: “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 (NLT)

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

If an athlete is playing in a game and they get tired or hurt, what happens? The coach puts in a sub. Someone else steps in to take their place. Today we’re talking about how Jesus is our perfect substitute. Not in a game. But for something far more important.

You see, all of us do this thing called sin. Sin is anything we do, think, or say that disobeys God. We sin when we lie, say mean things, or try to get what we want even if it hurts someone else—and those are just a few examples. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus mentions God’s law. God gave the people of Israel rules to follow to help them live good lives through obedience to Him. But the Israelites were terrible at following these rules. They failed over and over again.

When Jesus came to earth, He made it clear that following God's law isn't about outwardly sticking to the rules as much as it's about the heart behind the rules. We see this in what He teaches in the Sermon on the Mount. God wants us to trust that He knows what is good for us. He wants us to want to obey Him out of love.

But like the Israelites, Jesus' disciples were terrible at following God's law in this way, too. And so are we. We all sin. We all decide to do things our way instead of God's way. If we tried to do everything Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount on our own, we couldn't. It would be impossible because we're not perfect.

The Bible says the cost of sin is death. We have all sinned and deserve to die for our sins. The only way we can have a relationship with our perfect God and live forever in heaven with Him is if someone pays for our sins. This is exactly why God sent Jesus to earth. Remember: Jesus wasn't just a good teacher—He was God's son!

A few years after the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was captured by the religious leaders who didn't like what He was teaching. They got the Roman government to send Him to die on a wooden cross. Because Jesus is God and He never sins, when He died, He was able to take our place and pay the price for our sins. The sins of everyone in the whole world were paid for once and for all, including your sins and mine. Jesus was the perfect substitute.

But that's not all. After Jesus died and was buried in a tomb, three days later, He came back to life! He defeated sin AND death. He appeared to His friends and returned to heaven, where He is still alive today! The Bible tells us that if we trust in Jesus, we can have a relationship with God now and when we live with Him forever in heaven after we die. That's amazing!

The crowd listening to Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount didn't know all this would happen. But later, when it did, many of them accepted what Jesus had done for them as their substitute. They believed in Jesus and lived the rest of their lives following His example and teaching because they loved Him. They told many other people about Him.

Now we have the same opportunity as His followers back then. We can choose to believe that He is the son of God, that He died for us and rose again, and that He can save us from sin and death. We can admit we can't live up to God's law on our own, and instead ask Jesus to be our perfect substitute.

If you have questions or want to talk more about what all this means, I'd be happy to talk with you after practice.

Let's Pray

God, thank You for sending Jesus to be our perfect substitute. Help us all to believe in You. Forgive us of our sins and help us trust in what Jesus has done for us. We love You, Lord. Amen.

PRACTICE 9 | THEME: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

THE GOLDEN RULE

SCOUTING REPORT

Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion!

Background: In Matthew 7, Jesus' sermon touches on judging others (stop doing that) and persistent prayer (keep doing that). And then we have the Golden Rule. As we'll see in our supporting passage from Matthew 22, this is truly foundational to the way of life Jesus is laying out for His followers. Hillel, a well-respected Jewish rabbi whose life overlapped with Jesus' time on earth, had already shared a similar teaching: "Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you." This, of course, is also a good rule for dealing with people and not causing them harm. But, as Bill Mounce writes in his commentary on Matthew, "In its negative form, the Golden Rule could be satisfied by doing nothing. The positive form moves us to action on behalf of others." Jesus tweaks this teaching to compel us to love, not just abstain from hate.

BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Matthew 7:1-5, 12; Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-37.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Jesus' life is a great example of the Golden Rule. A fantastic exercise is to go through one of the Gospels and note how Jesus interacts with each person He meets. His compassion, patience, and acceptance shine through.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

How do I treat others—not just my family and friends, but everyone I interact with? Is the Golden Rule part of my daily life?

Bottom Line: I will treat others the way I want to be treated.

Key Verse: “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.”- Matthew 7:12 (NLT)

Practice Card Reminder: If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 9” at the end of practice.

Have you ever heard of the Golden Rule? This is one of the most famous teachings of Jesus to come out of the Sermon on the Mount. The Golden Rule says that you should treat other people the way you want to be treated. Have you ever heard that before?

It's a simple idea, but it can be more difficult than it sounds. If you want to be treated kindly, you should treat other people with kindness. If you want people to encourage you, you should encourage other people. The problem is that we don't always feel like giving other people kindness or encouragement. It's hard to treat others the way you want to be treated all the time, especially if they aren't nice to you.

But if we're going to follow Jesus' teaching and example, that's what we need to do. Someone once asked Jesus what was the most important thing they needed to do to obey God. "Jesus replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37-39, NLT)

A huge part of following Jesus is living in a way that focuses on these two things: loving God and loving people. In fact, the Bible teaches us that our love for God should help us love other people. If God loves them, we should love them, too.

Loving your neighbor as yourself is another way of saying the Golden Rule. In this verse, your neighbor isn't just someone who lives close to you. Your neighbor is anyone you meet. People are important to God, and we want to love them as much as we love ourselves. We want to treat them the way we want to be treated.

→ Discussion Questions

(K-2nd Grade)

- ◆ What is the Golden Rule?
- ◆ How can you treat others the way you want to be treated?

(3rd-6th Grade)

- ◆ How can you treat others the way you want to be treated?
- ◆ What does it mean to “love your neighbor as yourself”?

(7th Grade and up)

- ◆ What does it mean to “love your neighbor as yourself”?
- ◆ Why do you think this command was so important to Jesus?

Let's Pray

God, we are amazed at Your love for us. Thank You for all You have done for us. Teach us how to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Teach us how to treat others the way we want to be treated. Let our love for You overflow into love for the people we interact with every day. Amen.

PRACTICE 10 | THEME: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

TREES AND FRUIT

SCOUTING REPORT

Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion!

Background: As Jesus begins to wrap up His sermon, He gives His followers a blueprint to identify those who are truly part of His team versus those who claim His name under false pretenses. The latter can cause great damage. Still today, plenty of people say they are Christians, but their lives don't back up that claim. It's not that Christians have to be perfect, but that if they are connected to Jesus as the source of their life (John 15:1-12), the grand sum of their actions will be good. They will not be self-serving but God-honoring. While you can't judge an individual's heart for certain, the fruit of their lives will give you a good idea of their motivations and of what they truly believe. Those who have trusted in Jesus for salvation will want to do God's will. Our devotion will focus on a simpler but still powerful application that comes out of these concepts.

BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Matthew 7:13-23; John 15:1-12.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Matthew 7:21-23 can be, at face value, quite scary. But when you look at these verses in the context of the rest of the chapter, you see that Jesus isn't saying that He will randomly disown some of us on judgment day. Instead, this is a warning for those who claim to follow Him but never truly allow Him to change their hearts and their lives. Those who are connected to Christ will seek to do His will. And He will not forsake us. (John 10:27-30)

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What do my actions reveal about what is in my heart?

Bottom Line: I want my actions to show that I love God.

Key Verse: “Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.” – Matthew 7:20

Practice Card Reminder: If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 10” at the end of practice.

Note: If possible, bring a small variety of fruit.

(Hold up fruit.) Who can tell me where these come from? (Let athletes answer.) You might buy them at the grocery store, but first, someone picked them off a tree or a bush. Trees give us fruit. When trees grow good fruit like this, we know the tree is good. But sometimes, trees can grow bad fruit that isn't really fit for eating—or no fruit at all. Then we know the tree is bad.

In the next part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about trees and their fruit. He says, “A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit . . . Just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.” (Matthew 7:17, 20; NLT)

Jesus is explaining that, like trees with their fruit, you can tell what someone is like on the inside by their actions. If they do bad things and hurt people, you know that their heart is focused on themselves. If they do good things and help people, you know their heart is also good.

Sometimes we do good things for selfish reasons (like getting attention for ourselves), but we can't fake it forever. When you look at all your actions put together, they will show what your heart looks like.

This whole time, Jesus has been teaching us that what is in our hearts is very important. And this is why. If your heart belongs to God and is full of love for Him, good actions will follow. Someone who follows Jesus will serve and love other people like He did and point others to God, just like He did. When you see this in someone's life, you can tell that they are on Jesus' team. Because He has changed them and given them new life.

→ Discussion Questions

(K-2nd Grade)

- ◆ What do you think your actions say about you?
- ◆ Why would a good tree have good fruit and a bad tree have bad fruit?

(3rd-6th Grade)

- ◆ What do you think your actions say about you?
- ◆ Why do you think Jesus compared our actions to fruit?

(7th Grade and up)

- ◆ What do you think your actions say about you?
- ◆ How should our love for God change how we behave?

Let's Pray

God, we give our hearts to You. Grow our love for You in such a big way that it changes our behavior. Help the fruit of our lives to be good. Help our actions show people around us that we belong to Jesus. When our motivations are selfish, lead our hearts back to You. We love You, Lord. Amen.

PRACTICE 11 | THEME: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

A SOLID FOUNDATION

SCOUTING REPORT

Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion!

Background: Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount with a powerful illustration. His point can be summed up like this: you've listened to the things I've taught you—now do them. This will give you a solid foundation for life that will stand strong when hard times come. Later in the New Testament, Simon Peter—one of Jesus' disciples who would have been present for this sermon—refers to Jesus multiple times as the chief cornerstone (Acts 4:10-12; 1 Peter 2:4-8). He believed Jesus was the foundation of the foundation. His words, His life, His sacrifice, His resurrection—they would define the lives of those in this audience who decided to follow Him wholeheartedly. The question we must ask ourselves is: will we allow Him to define our lives today?

BIG PICTURE

For more insight, read Matthew 7:24-29; James 1:22-25; Proverbs 24:3.

ENCOURAGEMENT

We have primarily studied Jesus' teaching this season, but His teaching is made even more powerful by His actions. Read Matthew 8 to see what Jesus does when He comes down off the mountain—He goes around healing and helping people from all walks of life. Jesus doesn't teach us these things in a vacuum. He was and is our greatest example of a life lived for the glory of God.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

What foundation have I built my life on? What have I learned from the teaching of Jesus this season that I need to apply to my life?

Bottom Line: I want to build my life on what Jesus taught.

Key Verse: “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock.” - Matthew 7:24 (NLT)

Practice Card Reminder: If your league uses practice cards, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 11” at the end of practice.

Raise your hand if you've ever built a sandcastle at the beach. Sandcastles can be a lot of fun to build, but they also have a big problem—they wash away when the waves come! Why does this happen? Because sandcastles are made of sand! Real buildings have a foundation—usually concrete—that ensures they aren't going to wash away or fall down with a little bad weather.

As we come to the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, this is what He says: "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock." (Matthew 7:24-25, NLT)

Jesus tells the crowd that listening to all these things He's been teaching them and then actually doing them is like building a house on a strong foundation. If the people listening choose to follow Him, their lives will be built on what matters. They will stand strong no matter what comes.

Then Jesus goes on to say, "But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash." (Matthew 7:26-27, NLT)

This means that if someone ignores what Jesus teaches, their life will be like a sandcastle! It will not have a solid foundation to help it stand strong when hard times come.

This season, we've learned that being a good athlete requires a strong foundation, too. It takes practice. It takes listening to your coach (me) and following my instructions. If you never listened and never practiced, you wouldn't improve much at all. And you wouldn't be much help to the team.

We've talked about how Jesus was building His team of people that would change the world and coaching them on how to live. After Jesus died, rose again, and went back to heaven, it was His followers that went all over the world to tell people about Him and live in a way that pointed people to Him. Because of them, millions of people have heard about Jesus—including you and me.

Jesus invites us to be part of this team, too. He offers us new life when we believe in Him as our perfect substitute. He has given us words to live by that will make us stand out. We can change the world. And we start by following Him and all He's taught us.

→ Discussion Questions

(Apply to All Grades This Week)

- ◆ Why is it important not just to know what Jesus says, but to actually do it?
- ◆ What has been your favorite part of this season?
- ◆ What is one thing you have learned this season?

Let's Pray

God, thank You for an awesome season. Thank You for helping us learn and grow. Thank You for the new friends we've made. Help all of us to remember what we've learned about who Jesus is and the kind of life He wants us to live. Help us to build our lives on the solid foundation of Your Word. We love You, Lord. Amen.

SECTION 5

GAMES

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➔ 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 more details on the rules unique to Upward Flag Football, please refer to your referee handbook on MyUpward.org.

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:

- 1.** 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.
- 2.** 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

<i>Situation</i>	<i>Starting Field Position After Change Of Possession</i>
<i>After a touchdown and extra point(s) attempt</i>	<i>Offense's 5-yard line</i>
<i>After a turnover on downs</i>	<i>Offense's 5-yard line</i>
<i>After an interception</i>	<i>At the spot of the interception</i>

3rd Grade and Up

<i>Situation</i>	<i>Starting Field Position After Change Of Possession</i>
<i>After a touchdown and extra point(s) attempt</i>	<i>Offense's 5-yard line</i>
<i>After a "punt"</i>	<i>Offense's 5-yard line</i>
<i>After a turnover on downs</i>	<i>No-run zone going into the first down (midfield line)</i>
<i>After an interception</i>	<i>At the spot of the interception</i>

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 (wearing the lighter-colored jerseys) 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.***
- ◆ A low-profile field cone or beanbag is used to mark the line of scrimmage.

RUNNING THE FOOTBALL

- ◆ The quarterback cannot run the ball across 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.
- ◆ 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.

RECEIVING 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 with any part of his body (knee) other than their feet or hands on the ground, the play is dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the completion. This rule helps to keep the no contact rule intact.
- ◆ 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 completed 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 point of an interception
 - ◇ 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 not be returned. Change of possession will be awarded at the point of the interception. ***This rule will force a substitution so players will not sit out more than one possession at a time and helps to maintain equal playing time.***
- ◆ Interceptions made 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 7 yards from the line of scrimmage. Before each snap, the referee will designate the 7-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 7 yards from the line of scrimmage. Having three players line up 7 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 7-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 to 10 yards.

→ 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 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 (7 yards from the line of scrimmage) 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 blown, 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 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:

- ◆ No player sits out more than one possession at a time
- ◆ Every player plays offense and defense in every game
- ◆ Every player will start on either offense or defense in each game
- ◆ In most cases, each player will play against someone of equal ability
- ◆ Coaches are not to alter the substitution system or to be accused of doing so
- ◆ Coaches do not have to monitor playing time for each player
- ◆ Playing time for all players is virtually even over the course of the season

Here are some basics about the substitution system:

- ◆ Each team fields six players at a time
- ◆ 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.

FILLING OUT THE SUBSTITUTION FORM

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	Tommy								
2	Chris								
3	Julio								
4	Shane								
5	Jerome								
6	Tim								
7	Marc								
8	Gregg								
9	Felix								
10	Derek								

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 Tommy	X	X		X		X	X	
2 Chris	X	X		X		X	X	
3 Julio	X		X	X		X		X
4 Shane	X		X	X		X		X
5 Jerome	X		X		X	X		X
6 Tim	X		X		X	X		X
7 Marc		X	X		X		X	X
8 Gregg		X	X		X		X	X
9 Felix		X		X	X		X	
10 Derek		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 player who follows next in the rotation from the second column (Julio). 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 (Chris). Then, continue in the lineup with Julio, Shane, Jerome, Tim, and Marc. 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.

		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	Tommy								
	2	Chris	X						
	3	Julio	X						
	4	Shane	X						
	5	Jerome	X						
	6	Tim	X						
	7	Marc	X						
	8	Gregg							
	9	Felix							
	10	Derek							

Week 3 will start with Julio, Week 4 will start with Shane and so on.

SUBSTITUTION SCENARIO

It's Week 3 and, as game time approaches, Tim 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:

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	Tommy		X						
2	Chris		X						
3	Julio	X	X						
4	Shane	X	X						
5	Jerome	X	X						
6	Tim	—	—						
7	Marc	X							
8	Gregg	X							
9	Felix	X							
10	Derek		X						

STEP 1 *Begin with your original starting three (Julio, Shane and Jerome). For the first segment only, draw a line through the box for Tim. Fill in the boxes for Marc, Gregg, 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	Tommy		X	X		X		X	X
2	Chris		X		X	X		X	
3	Julio	X	X		X	X		X	
4	Shane	X	X		X		X	X	
5	Jerome	X	X		X		X	X	
6	Tim	—	—	X	X		X		X
7	Marc	X		X	X		X		X
8	Gregg	X		X		X	X		X
9	Felix	X		X		X	X		X
10	Derek		X	X		X		X	X

If Tim arrives at the start of the second quarter, continue with the proper rotation including Tim 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.



Blue is for Effort



Gold is for Sportsmanship



Gray is for Offense



Red is for Defense



White is for Christlikeness

Encourage players to display the stars they receive on their posters. Here is a list of the game day stars and what they represent.

SECTION 6

FORMS

Substitution Form132

Star Distribution Form133

UPWARD SPORTS
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: _____

First Half

Second Half

Player Name	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								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

Flag Football Star Distribution Form



Use a pencil to record the color of the star that the players receive each game.

Name	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3	Game 4	Game 5	Game 6	Game 7	Game 8

AWARD STAR MEANINGS + ABBREVIATIONS
BLUE (B): Effort | GOLD (GO): Sportsmanship | GRAY (GR): Offense
RED (R): Defense | WHITE (W): Christlikeness

Find tools online at MyUpward.org to teach the sport and share the gospel.

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*

