

The background of the cover is a dark, textured image of a football field at night, with a bright light source creating a lens flare effect. A football is positioned behind the word 'PLAYBOOK'.

FLAG FOOTBALL

COACH

PLAYBOOK

UPWARD
SPORTS

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO PROVIDING THE **BEST LEAGUE EXPERIENCE!**

DEVELOP SKILLS | STRENGTHEN CHARACTER | HAVE FUN





FLAG FOOTBALL COACH PLAYBOOK

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→ Goals For The Season

The goal of our sports ministry is:

Success looks like:

Success in our sports ministry is measured by:

➔ 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

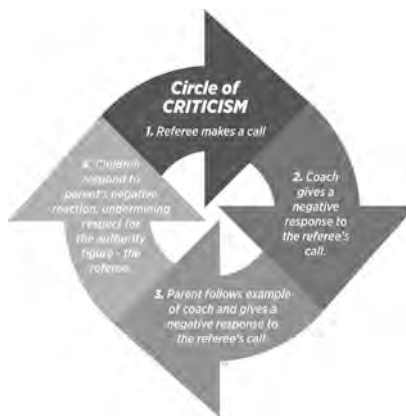
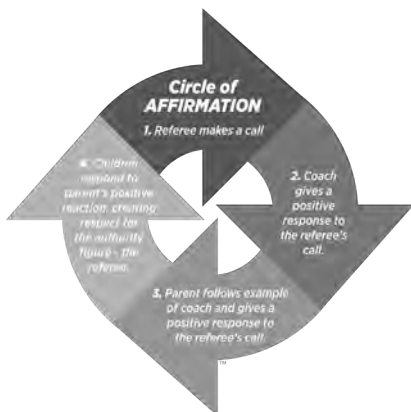
“Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person.”

→ 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.

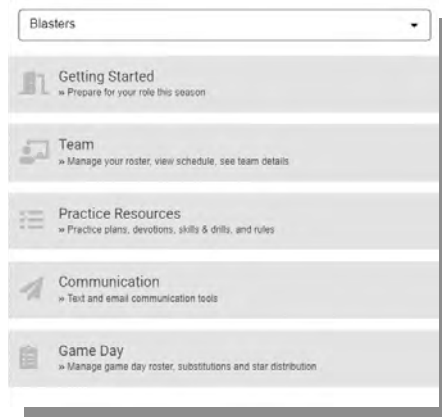
One practical way to create a positive team culture and teach communication is to establish a team huddle at the end of practice. Have players circle up and include the coach. The coach can talk about things done well in practice.

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.

➔ 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 under the “Practice Resources” and can also be found in the Coach Playbook.

GAME DAY STARS – Use these stars on game day to highlight each player’s contributions during the game. The Star Distribution Form can be found in the Appendix of the Coach Playbook.

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

GREEN PRACTICE STARS – Use these stars at practice to encourage participation in the practice devotion, scripture learning, or the goals your league has outlined for the devotion content.

PRACTICE CARDS – The practice cards show the bible verse associated with the weekly devotion. Depending on the devotion track, you will hand out cards every week or only at designated weeks noted in the devotion.

PRACTICE PLANS – Use the practice plans found on MyUpward.org under the “Practice Resources.” These can

be printed 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.

Team pages can be accessed on MyUpward.org through the “Team” tab. A link to the Team Page will be under the team name and division.



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

➔ **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.



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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 (see page 39) · Receiving (see page 42) · Snapping (see page 35)
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 45) · Flag-pulling (see page 43)
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 41)
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 43)
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

➔ Warm-Ups & Stretching

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

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

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

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

➔ 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 with their feet shoulder-width apart, knees bent, elbows resting on knees, head up.
- ◆ Players should reach their throwing hand out to the football, which is on the ground. Grip the football with the first knuckle of the thumb placed in-between the white line and the first lace furthest from the player. The palm of the hand should then rest on the outside of the ball, with the four fingers spread across the back closest to the ground.

Be sure to have players lift their head before snapping the ball.

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

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

Shotgun Snap

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

Depending on the player's ability to grip the football with one hand, a center may shotgun-snap the football with either one or two hands. If two hands are needed, a player should use his non-

dominant hand to guide the football as it is snapped by placing that hand on the open side of the football.

PASSING 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 defense.

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

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

Routes

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

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

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

RECEIVING DRILLS

Moving Catch

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

Cone Weave

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

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. Be sure to let players know about this penalty.

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.

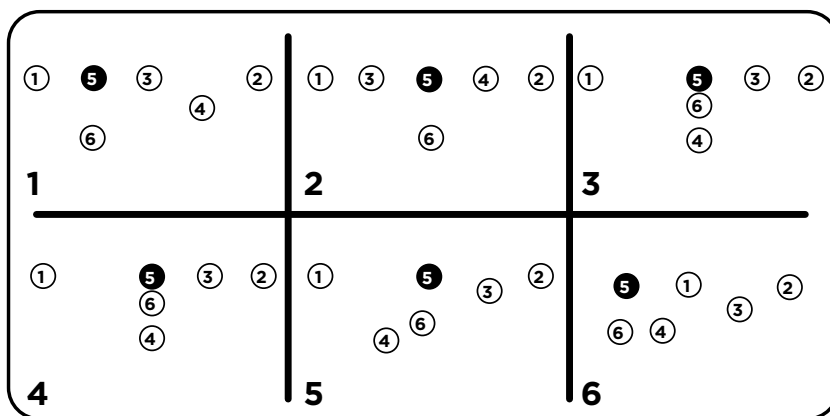
- ◆ Have players line up across a line.
- ◆ On the coach's command, players will backpedal 10 yards, focusing on proper form.
- ◆ Start slow, then encourage players to speed up as they become comfortable with backpedaling. The goal is to backpedal as quickly as the receiver runs forward.

➔ 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.

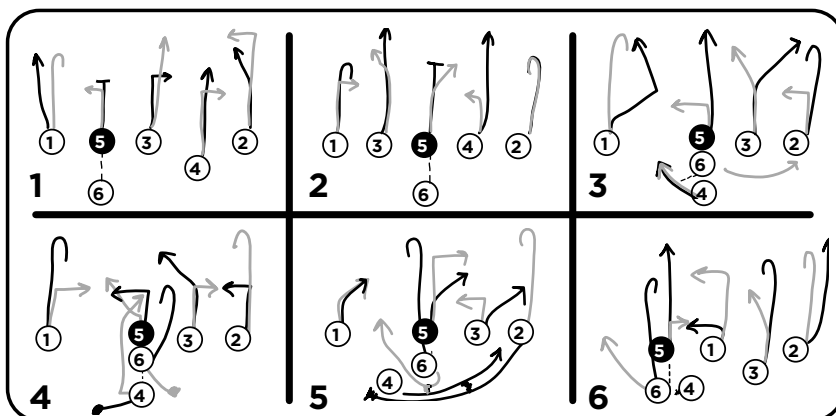


For younger players, we recommend you stay with a single formation and focus on running plays and simple pass routes.

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.



SECTION 3

PRACTICE DEVOTIONS

BIBLICAL THEMES

DAVID

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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>A King for Israel</i>	But the people refused to listen to Samuel's warning. "Even so, we still want a king," they said. 1 SAMUEL 8:19 (NLT)
Week 2	<i>God Sees the Heart</i>	People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. 1 SAMUEL 16:7b (NLT)
Week 3	<i>The Singing Shepherd</i>	The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. PSALM 23:1 (NLT)
Week 4	<i>Facing the Giant</i>	David replied to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies." 1 SAMUEL 17:45a (NLT)
Week 5	<i>Faithful Friends</i>	A real friend sticks closer than a brother. PROVERBS 18:24b (NLT)

PRACTICE NUMBER	BIBLICAL THEME	VERSE
Week 6	<i>On the Run</i>	Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you. PSALM 37:5 (NLT)
Week 7	<i>King David</i>	Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever 2 SAMUEL 7:16 (NLT)
Week 8	<i>Good News</i>	Have mercy on me, O God, because of your un- failing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. PSALM 51:1 (NLT)
Week 9	<i>Keeping a Promise</i>	But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. JOHN 1:12 (NLT)
Week 10	<i>Songs of Praise</i>	I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done. PSALM 9:1 (NLT)
Week 11	<i>After God's Heart</i>	And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength MARK 12:30 (NLT)

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 1

DAVID


A KING FOR ISRAEL



Scouting Report | Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion.

- **Background:** This season, our devotions will focus on the story of David. David is one of the most important characters in the Old Testament, with more chapters relating to him than any other person. The Bible goes into great detail about his story, which features political intrigue, military feats, and complicated relationships—much more than can be exhaustively covered here. Instead, our purposes will be to 1) introduce the athletes on your team to the character of David in a way that is helpful for a deeper understanding of the Bible, 2) show how God was at work in David's life, and 3) draw out important lessons we can learn from David's story.

This first devotion will set the stage for David's entrance into the biblical narrative. The tribes of Israel were settled in the promised land of Canaan, but they had not driven out all the other hostile nations from the land as God had commanded. Because of this, they continued to have enemies raiding their villages and trying to gain control of Israel's land. Israel was still a theocracy under God, but the tribal leaders came to Samuel, a prophet and judge, with a request. They wanted a king like the other nations. The irony is that God, the greatest king, had chosen them as His special people, set apart from all other nations. Nevertheless, God allowed them to choose a monarchy like the nations around them. Saul, the first king of Israel, was a fascinating character. At first, he seemed like an impressive choice for king. But when Samuel came to declare his kingship publicly, Saul was found hiding among the baggage (1 Samuel 10:22). This has sometimes been interpreted as humility on Saul's part, but perhaps this is foreshadowing—because after an initial time of success under God, the rest of Saul's reign was fraught with insecurity and fear. When it came down to it, Saul did not trust God, and that would be his downfall. And his downfall would lead to David's rise.

- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read 1 Samuel 8-15. If you don't own a Bible, you can download the YouVersion Bible App for free. 
- **Encouragement:** How do Saul and David contrast? How do they compare? These are important questions to consider as we study David's story from 1 and 2 Samuel this season. One clear difference is that Saul is often driven by insecurity, worrying about what other people will think. Meanwhile, David is usually driven by integrity and is most often concerned about what God will think. God is looking for integrity and devotion to Him rather than being impressed by the things people are most often impressed by.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** What is holding me back from fully trusting God?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

But the people refused to listen to Samuel's warning. "Even so, we still want a king," they said.
1 Samuel 8:19 (NLT)

This season, we're going to be learning about someone named David, who is a very important character in the Bible. We can read about David's story in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel in the Old Testament. But before we get to his story, I want to tell you about what was happening right before David's story began.

The nation of Israel was God's chosen people. The Bible, especially the Old Testament, tells us how God was at work throughout the history of Israel. Not long before David was born, God allowed Israel to have their first king. Before this, Israel did not have a king. They were supposed to be following God as their king, but they weren't very good at that. The Bible says that during this time, "all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes." (Judges 21:25b, NLT)

The Israelites did not fully trust God to take care of them, even though He'd always protected them. All the other nations around them had kings, and they wanted to have a king, too.

ASK (K-2nd Grade): What does a king do?

ASK (3rd Grade and up): Why do you think the Israelites wanted a king?

God told the prophet Samuel to warn Israel about what it would mean to have a king. A king could take the best of their land, crops, and animals. He could draft them into the army. He could make them pay taxes. If they had a king, they would have to serve him.

"But the people refused to listen to Samuel's warning. 'Even so, we still want a king,' they said. 'We want to be like the nations around us. Our king will judge us and lead us into battle.'" (1 Samuel 8:19-20, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): Have you ever wanted to fit in more with the people around you? Why is that not always the best thing?

God allowed Israel to have a king. A man named Saul, who was taller than everyone else in Israel, was chosen. At first, King Saul followed God and won battles with God on his side. But then, King Saul started doing things his way instead of God's way. He worried more about what the people around him wanted instead of what God wanted. So, God took His blessing away from Saul.

ASK (All Ages): Why is it better to do things God's way instead of our way?

The prophet Samuel told Saul, “Now your kingdom must end, for the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. The Lord has already appointed him to be the leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command.” (1 Samuel 13:14, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): God said he would now choose a king who would be a man after his own heart. What do you think that means?

Later in 1 Samuel, it becomes clear that David was the man after God’s own heart. He was the one that God chose to be the new king. For the rest of this season, we’ll be learning about who David was and how God worked in his life. We’ll learn what it means to be someone after God’s own heart. For right now, I’ll tell you this: someone after God’s heart is a person who loves God and wants to follow Him more than anything. This is the kind of person I want to be and the kind of person I hope you’ll want to be, too.

LET’S PRAY

God, thank You for our team and for bringing us all together. Please help us have an awesome season where we grow as athletes and learn a lot about You. Teach us what it looks like to be people who are after Your heart. We love You, Lord. Amen.

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

Green Practice Star Reminder: If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 2

DAVID

GOD SEES THE HEART



Scouting Report | Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion.

- **Background:** One thousand years before some humble shepherds met the King of Kings in Bethlehem, another humble young shepherd was anointed king in Bethlehem. Anointing is not a familiar practice in our culture, but according to The Bible Project, "Ancient Israel shared with its cultural neighbors the practice of pouring modified oil on the heads of individuals as a way of marking them and setting them apart for a sacred and special task. This practice is called 'anointing,' and it was something that was done to kings, priests, and holy objects in ancient Israel." The anointed person or object served as a kind of bridge between heaven and earth. What is strange is that David was anointed to be king, even though his predecessor, Saul, had also been anointed and was still alive and serving as king. Unfortunately, Saul had failed several tests as the anointed one, and God sent Samuel to find a new king who would follow Him—David. God's words about Eliab, David's older brother, in 1 Samuel 16:7, could also be applied to Saul. God had seen Saul's heart and found him lacking in fulfilling this special role. On the other hand, David was humble and ready to serve God alone rather than his own interests.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Matthew 23:27-28; Psalm 139.
- **Encouragement:** "O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!" – Psalm 139:1-6 (NLT)
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** Am I quick to judge based on appearances? How can I look at other people from God's perspective?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.
1 Samuel 16:7b (NLT)

Bottom Line: God cares about what's in our hearts.

Last practice, I told you that we will be learning about a guy named David this season. David's story in the Bible actually begins when David wasn't much older than you are now. David was the youngest in his family, with seven older brothers. His main responsibility was taking care of the family's sheep and goats.

One day, while David was hanging out in the fields with the animals, a famous prophet of God named Samuel came to David's town. David's father, Jesse, and all of David's brothers met Samuel. God had told Samuel to anoint a new king from among Jesse's sons.

ASK (All Ages): What comes to mind when you think of what a king might look like?

Jesse introduced Samuel to his older sons. They were grown men, big and strong. Samuel took one look at David's oldest brother and thought he must be the one God wanted to be king.

"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'" (1 Samuel 16:7, NLT)

ASK (3rd Grade and up): What do you think this verse means?

God wasn't impressed by how tall and strong the oldest brother looked. Instead, God knew what the oldest brother was really like as a person. God knew his character. He knew he would not be a good king who would do his best to follow God.

"Then Samuel asked, 'Are these all the sons you have?' 'There is still the youngest,' Jesse replied. 'But he's out in the fields watching the sheep and goats.'" (1 Samuel 16:11a, NLT) Jesse hadn't even thought to include David with the rest of the family! But they finally sent someone to get David, and when he arrived, God told Samuel, "This is the one."

ASK (All Ages): God rejected David's older brothers because he could see that their hearts did not belong to Him. What does it tell us about David that God chose him instead?

Samuel anointed David by pouring a special olive oil over his head. This might sound kind of strange to us today, but in the time of the Old Testament, it was a way to mark someone as special. It wasn't time for David to be king just yet, but his anointing showed that he was set apart to be king in the future.

David was just a teenager when all this happened. He was used to being unimportant, an afterthought in his family. He spent more time with sheep and goats than with important people. He wasn't big and physically impressive like his brothers. He was just a kid. But God chose David because he knew David's heart. He knew that David was the right person to be king because David loved God and wanted more than anything to follow Him.

ASK (All Ages): What's more important to God, how we look on the outside or who we are on the inside?

ASK (3rd Grade and up): What can this story teach us about how we should look at other people? Should we judge based on appearance or on other things?

LET'S PRAY

God, we're so glad that You see who we really are on the inside. Thank You for loving us and caring about who we are and who we will become. Help us to see other people as You see them. Amen.

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

Green Practice Star Reminder: If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 3

DAVID

THE SINGING SHEPHERD



Scouting Report | Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion.

- **Background:** After God rejected Saul, the king went through depressive moods, exacerbated by an evil spirit. It was suggested that music might help ease his mind. One of Saul's advisors knew David was a skilled harpist, and the young man was brought to Saul's palace. David's music helped Saul—and Saul, for however brief a time, liked David, and the young man became both his music therapist and armor-bearer. "Though today we typically think of David as a harpist, he actually played a lyre . . . A fingerboard made it possible for strings to play multiple pitches." (Becky Lombard, "With Harp and Lyre: Musical Instruments in the Old Testament," *Holy Land Illustrated Bible*) For a time, Saul was soothed by the music of the one who would soon be the subject of his jealousy and rage. David, meanwhile, got an introduction to the royal court and to the daily life of a king. However, it seems that he split his time between Saul's court and his family homestead in Bethlehem. He served as a skilled musician and young courtier, as well as a family shepherd who fiercely protected his animals.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read 1 Samuel 16:14-23; 1 Samuel 17:32-37; Psalm 23.
- **Encouragement:** The idea of God as a shepherd isn't limited to Psalm 23. In John 10:1-18, Jesus describes Himself with similar imagery. He says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep." (John 10:11, NLT) God loves us, cares for us, and watches over us like a shepherd.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** What talents and experiences has God given me that I can use to bless others?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

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

Bottom Line: I can use my talents and abilities to serve God and others.

Last practice, we talked about how a young man named David was anointed by the prophet Samuel. He was special and set apart by God. One day, he would be king. But not just yet. Today, we're going to talk about some of the things David did in the meantime.

David was a shepherd. But he didn't just babysit his family's sheep and goats. He protected them from lions and bears. He was brave and strong. These things would help him become a fierce warrior later on. But David was also thoughtful and musical. He played an instrument like a harp and wrote amazing songs that expressed his emotions.

ASK (All Ages): What are some things you're really good at?

When Saul, the current king of Israel, was feeling down, his servants had an idea. "One of the servants said to Saul, 'One of Jesse's sons from Bethlehem is a talented harp player. Not only that—he is a brave warrior, a man of war, and has good judgment. He is also a fine-looking young man, and the Lord is with him.'" (1 Samuel 16:18, NLT) So they sent for David to come and play the harp for the king. When David played, Saul would feel better.

ASK (3rd Grade and up): Why do you think God gave David a talent that led to him spending time serving the current king?

David's talents and abilities helped prepare him to be king. Because he was a protective shepherd and a mighty warrior, David would be able to lead the people of Israel in battle on multiple occasions, trusting that God would help them be victorious. Because he was a musician and songwriter, he was able to help others (like Saul) with his music and write many songs of worship to God.

ASK (All Ages): How can you use the talents and abilities God has given you to bless other people and serve God?

One of the places where David's experience as a shepherd and a songwriter come together is in one of his most famous songs, Psalm 23. Here, David compares God to a shepherd. He writes, "The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name." (Psalm 23:1-3, NLT)

David the shepherd knew that God was like our shepherd. He takes care of us, comforts us, gives us gifts we can use to serve Him and others, guides us, and prepares us for the future. We have so much to be grateful for.

LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for being our shepherd, for watching out for us and protecting us. Thank You for the different talents and abilities You have given us. Show us how we can use them to serve You and others. Amen.

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

Green Practice Star Reminder: If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 4

DAVID

FACING THE GIANT



Scouting Report | Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion.

- **Background:** The Philistines were antagonists of Israel throughout much of David's story. They occupied some of the land God had intended for the Israelites to conquer when they took possession of the promised land, including a major trade route. The Philistines were technologically advanced for the time and had iron weaponry, while Israel did not. Goliath's challenge to King Saul's army was a common style of warfare. The Hebrew word translated *champion* here literally means *the man between two (armies)*. "The role of this man in the middle was to engage a champion from the opposing army in single combat, with the understanding that the outcome would decide the fate of the respective armies. The outcome was deemed to represent the will of the gods." (V. Phillips Long, *1 and 2 Samuel*) When Goliath challenges the army of Israel, he is also challenging the God of Israel. Yet every one of Israel's warriors is too afraid to step up. There is a distinct lack of trust in God in the camp. When David arrives, he seems bewildered at their inaction and fear. Though he is young, he is absolutely confident that God will bring the victory. He takes courage in God rather than weapons, armor, or even himself. "As far as David is concerned, his action was a sign not of his own greatness, but of God's power. It would indicate to everybody, Philistine and Israelite alike, the extent of God's sovereignty and that he did not need army, armour or armaments to defend his cause." (Mary J. Evans, *The Message of Samuel*)
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read 1 Samuel 17.
- **Encouragement:** "Goliath is not really the problem here. A leather strap and a little rock can fix him. The real menacing giant in this story is the unbelief that dominates the hearts of God's people." (Heath Thomas and J.D. Greear, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*) The next time you find it difficult to face your fears and obey God, examine your own heart. How do your fears stack up against God?
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** Do I find courage and confidence in God or in other things?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

David replied to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies."

1 Samuel 17:45a (NLT)

Bottom Line: God can do amazing things, and I can trust in Him.

ASK (All Ages): Today, we're going to talk about one of the most famous stories in the Bible. Can anyone guess what it might be?

We're talking about David and Goliath! In our culture today, David versus Goliath is often used to describe an underdog going up against the top dog. This comes from a story in the Bible. King Saul and his army were camped on a hill across from the Philistine army. The Philistines had invaded Israel's territory and wanted to conquer them. But rather than fight a normal battle, the Philistines sent out their secret weapon: Goliath. Goliath was a big guy—up to 9 feet tall! He looked so big and strong that all the Israelite soldiers were scared of this one guy!

Every day for 40 days, Goliath would walk around in the valley between the two armies, trash-talking the Israelites. He said that instead of the two armies fighting, Israel could send just one of their warriors out to fight him alone. Whoever won would automatically conquer the enemy's whole army. But no one in all of Saul's army volunteered to fight Goliath. They were all too afraid.

David's three oldest brothers were in Saul's army, and David's dad sent him to their camp with some food. When David realized what was happening, he told Saul not to worry about Goliath—David would go fight him. In a whole army full of soldiers, David, the young shepherd, was the only one brave enough to volunteer to fight Goliath. Saul wasn't so sure about it, but David told him how he had defeated a lion and a bear while watching his father's sheep. Saul decided to let David give it a try. He gave David his own armor.

ASK (All Ages): Does anyone know what happened next?

David wasn't used to the king's armor, so he took it off. "He picked up five smooth stones from a stream and put them into his shepherd's bag. Then, armed only with his shepherd's staff and sling, he started across the valley to fight the Philistine." 1 Samuel 17:40 (NLT)

Goliath was not impressed by puny little David coming to face him without so much as a sword. He kept trash-talking. But David moved forward. He said to Goliath, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." (1 Samuel 17:45, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): What does this tell us was on David's mind when he was heading out to face Goliath?

David's motivation for facing Goliath was not his own fame or glory. His motivation was to protect the people of Israel and defend the name of God. Goliath couldn't get away with acting like he was bigger and better than God and His people. David also knew this wasn't something he could do on his own—this was something God would have to do through him. Goliath would fight with all the weapons of war, but David had God on his side. He was confident that he could win.

David reached into his bag, took out one of the stones, and put it in his sling. He wound up and let go, and the stone flew through the air until it hit Goliath right in the forehead, knocking him down. Goliath was dead, and David had won. The rest of the Philistines ran away, and the Israelite army gave a shout and chased them.

ASK (All Ages): Why do you think David had enough confidence and courage to face Goliath when no one else did?

David trusted in God. He knew that God would be with him and would give him the victory. Instead of going along with what everyone else was doing, David was concerned with doing what God wanted.

God wants to do amazing things in your life, too. He wants you to trust in Him and realize that He is with you. When you go into a situation that might be difficult or scary, think about what God would want you to do. Be confident in Him, and let Him show you the amazing things He can do.

LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for being with us and for helping us face the big and scary things in life. Help us to trust in You and have confidence in You. Help us choose to follow You instead of following other people. Amen.

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

Green Practice Star Reminder: If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 5

DAVID

FAITHFUL FRIENDS



Scouting Report | Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion.

- **Background:** In 1 Samuel, Jonathan often appears as the opposite of his father, Saul. Saul is fearful and self-centered. Jonathan is brave and self-sacrificing. Saul makes promises that he does not keep. Jonathan keeps his promises. Saul grows to hate David and lets jealousy control him. Jonathan adores David and protects him from Saul. Jonathan, as Saul's firstborn son, would likely have been heir to the throne of Israel after his father died—so he had much more to lose than Saul did should David be crowned king. But Jonathan has no problem accepting David as God's chosen king. He even assures David of his support, saying, "You are going to be the king of Israel, and I will be next to you." (1 Samuel 23:17, NLT) Though we know David cares for his friend Jonathan, it is more so Jonathan who stands out as an extraordinary friend in 1 Samuel through his words and actions. He accepts God's will and proves to be a loyal ally to David when he desperately needs one.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read 1 Samuel 18:1-4, 19:1-7, 20:1-42, 23:15-18. See also 1 Samuel 13:23-14:46 for a deeper look into Jonathan's character.
- **Encouragement:** Everything the Bible tells us about Jonathan implies that he would have made a great king. However, his father's decisions made this impossible. As a testament to his character, Jonathan doesn't appear bitter toward God, David, or even Saul. Instead, he serves as a great support for David, the future king. Jonathan is a great example for us when we experience rejection or are tempted to be jealous.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** What does friendship mean to me? How can I be a better friend?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

A real friend sticks closer than a brother.
Proverbs 18:24b (NLT)

Bottom Line: I can be a good friend.

ASK (All Ages): Tell us about a really good friend of yours. What makes them a good friend?

After David defeated Goliath, he met Saul's son, Jonathan. David and Jonathan hit it off and became great friends. David also became very popular among the people. Saul put him in charge of the army, and David won great victories. The people sang songs about him. This made Saul jealous to the point of wanting to kill David. He thought David was after his throne.

Jonathan was Saul's firstborn son, which meant that he would likely have become king after his father died if God had not chosen David to be the next king. But even though Jonathan had a lot to gain from David's death, he was on David's side.

ASK (All Ages): Can you think of a time when one of your friends sacrificed something for you? What did they do? How did that make you feel?

Jonathan tried many times to convince his father not to go after David, but Saul wouldn't listen. Eventually, David realized he may have to go on the run. He and Jonathan came up with a plan. Jonathan would speak to the king about David to see if it would be safe for David to return to the palace and would let David know about Saul's reaction.

When Jonathan spoke to his father about David, the king grew so angry that he tried to throw a spear at Jonathan, his own son! That convinced Jonathan that there was no hope for the situation. He went out to where David was hiding and let David know that he would have to leave for good. The two friends said goodbye and gave each other a big hug. "At last Jonathan said to David, 'Go in peace, for we have sworn loyalty to each other in the Lord's name. The Lord is the witness of a bond between us and our children forever.'" (1 Samuel 20:42a, NLT)

Even though David and Jonathan could have been enemies, they stayed true to their friendship with one another. Jonathan even put his life on the line for David.

ASK (All Ages): How do you think God wants us to treat our friends?

God wants us to be faithful friends to one another. He wants us to look out for each other and be there for each other in hard times. He wants us to love one another as we love ourselves and to treat one another as we want to be treated.

Later, when Saul was trying to hunt down David, God wouldn't allow Saul to find David.

But Jonathan did find David, and he spent time encouraging his friend to stay strong in his faith in God. Jonathan was a great friend.

ASK (All Ages): How can you encourage a friend this week?

LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for our friends. You knew how much we would need each other. Teach us how to be great friends to one another. Help us be there for our friends when they need us most. Thank You for being a great friend to all of us. Amen.

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

Green Practice Star Reminder: If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 6

DAVID

ON THE RUN



Scouting Report | Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion.

- **Background:** First Samuel 21-31 describes the complex web of events during David's time as a fugitive from Saul. David and his entourage of outcasts might make us think of the adventures of Robin Hood and his merry men. David's priority certainly seemed to be saving his own skin, but when he heard that the Philistines were raiding an Israelite town, he asked God if he should come to their aid, and God said he should, so David rescued them. Later, David and his men would end up staying in the town of Ziklag, in Philistine territory, in alliance with a Philistine king. However, David deceived the king and attacked Israel's enemies rather than Israel on his raids. When David cut the corner from Saul's robe in the cave at En-Gedi, it pointed back to a moment between Saul and Samuel in 1 Samuel 15, in which a desperate Saul, whom God had rebuked for his sin, clung to Samuel's robe until it tore. Samuel responded, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to someone else—one who is better than you." (1 Samuel 15:28b, NLT) So, David tearing Saul's robe is symbolic, as David was indeed the one to whom God would give the kingdom of Israel after it had been torn from Saul. In the second incident where David spared Saul, Saul's stolen spear is also symbolic of his kingship. David returned the spear, showing yet again that he would not take the kingdom from Saul by force.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read 1 Samuel 22:1-2; 1 Samuel 23-24, 26; Psalm 37:5.
- **Encouragement:** "Saul could still have known God's blessing, not as the founder of a dynasty but as a mentor for David, but he threw away the opportunity." (Mary J. Evans, *The Message of Samuel*) Saul is a good example of how *not* to respond when things don't go our way. Even if we have disobeyed God in the past and must live with the consequences, we can choose not to go the way of Saul. We can choose to do things differently in the future.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** When do I find it the most difficult to trust in God?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.
Psalm 37:5 (NLT)

Bottom Line: I can trust God even in tough times.

This season, we've been learning all about David from the Bible. The next part of David's story was a very challenging time for him. Remember, David had been anointed as the next king of Israel, but he wasn't king yet, and the current king, Saul, was jealous of David and was convinced that David was trying to take his throne and kill him. So, David went from playing the harp and winning battles for Saul to running from Saul because the king wanted him dead.

ASK (All Ages): How do you think David felt during this time?

David tried to find a place where he would be safe from Saul, but it seemed like he wasn't safe anywhere. People betrayed him and told Saul where he was. David started hiding in caves out in the middle of nowhere. The Bible says, "Then others began coming—men who were in trouble or in debt or who were just discontented—until David was the captain of about 400 men." (1 Samuel 22:2, NLT)

David now had a group of other outcasts around him. Over time, David must have trained them well because later, they became known as David's mighty men. David and his mighty men hid in the wilderness for several years, living in caves and even taking shelter with former enemies. At times, they fought to protect the Israelite people. All the while, Saul was still chasing David. But the Bible says that God would not let Saul find David.

ASK (All Ages): How did God protect and provide for David during this difficult and scary time?

One day, while Saul and his army were hunting David, they stopped for a break near the very same cave where David and his men happened to be hiding. Saul went into the cave by himself, unaware that David was nearby. Some of David's men urged him to take the opportunity to kill Saul. But David refused. Instead, he snuck up behind Saul and cut off the corner of his robe.

Later, David came out of the cave and shouted to Saul. He showed the piece of Saul's robe and told Saul to stop listening to anyone who was telling Saul that David wanted him dead. David said, "May the Lord judge between us. Perhaps the Lord will punish you for what you are trying to do to me, but I will never harm you." (1 Samuel 24:12, NLT)

ASK (3rd Grade and up): Why do you think David refused to harm Saul?

David respected that Saul was the current king. David trusted in God enough to be confident that God would make David king according to His timing. It wasn't right to become king by force if that meant taking Saul down. David knew that God was with him,

and he trusted in God's plans.

Saul and his men left after David proved he didn't want to hurt Saul. But the peace didn't last very long. Later on, Saul and his army came hunting for David once again. But David found Saul first. He and one of his soldiers snuck into Saul's camp while everyone was sleeping. They stole Saul's spear and water jug from right beside him. Once they were far enough from the camp, David called out and revealed what he had done. Once again, he could have killed Saul, but he didn't.

The biggest difference between David and Saul was their trust in God. David trusted and followed God. Saul had disobeyed God in the past and continued to go against God by trying to hunt down the person God had chosen to be king after him. He didn't trust God enough to give David the throne—or even just to leave him alone!

Like David, we can learn to trust in God in the good times and in the tough times. We can be confident that God is with us and will help us no matter what we face. Trusting in God means doing things His way instead of our way. Sometimes, it means letting go of things we really, really want—like Saul and his kingdom. We need to trust that God will work everything out according to His good plans.

ASK (All Ages): When is it the most difficult to trust God?

LET'S PRAY

God, we believe in You and trust that You are with us in the good and bad times. Help us not to give in to fear or jealousy or pride. Instead, help us follow You and do things Your way, even when it takes time to see how Your plans will work out. We love You, Lord. Amen.

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

Green Practice Star Reminder: If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 7

DAVID

KING DAVID



Scouting Report | Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion.

- **Background:** First Samuel ends with the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, and 2 Samuel begins with David hearing this news. David was able to ascend to the throne of his own tribe of Judah with ease, but Saul's surviving son Ish-bosheth was placed on the throne of Israel (consisting of all the other tribes). Civil war and brutal assassinations (not approved of by David) ensued until finally, the tribal leaders came to David and made him king over all of Israel and Judah, as Saul had been. God's anointed one was now king.

Second Samuel 7 is the high point of David's life and one of the most important chapters in the Old Testament. Though the term *covenant* is not used in the text, this is known as the Davidic covenant, and it has similarities to the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis and the Israelite covenant in Exodus. A word used throughout 2 Samuel 7 is the Hebrew word *bayit* or "house." The wordplay is apparent in both the original Hebrew and in English, as this term is used to refer to David's palace and to a temple, but also to David's family and dynasty. God denies David's request to build His temple for several reasons, though God will allow David's son Solomon to build His temple later on. Instead of David building God a house, God will build David's "house." As with most biblical prophecies, this promise of God contains an initial fulfillment (in Solomon, who will have a prosperous reign over a united Israel) and an ultimate one (in Jesus). Though David's descendants as individuals would not preserve the ideals of a Davidic king who faithfully serves God and would therefore lose the throne, David's line would continue in Jesus, who would be the ultimate servant of God and who will reign as king forever. "This prophecy points through Solomon to another King: Jesus. He was the descendant of David whose kingdom would last. He was the descendant who would establish a real temple--not a building constructed with human hands but the temple of His own body. And after His ascension He would send His Spirit to make us, His people, the temple of God." (Heath Thomas and J.D. Greear, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*)

- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read 2 Samuel 1-7; 1 Chronicles 17; Jeremiah 33:14-16; Acts 13:16-39.
- **Encouragement:** Second Samuel 7 "which began with what David wanted to do for God ends with David's astonished response to what God promises to do for him. The promise to David becomes a recurrent motif in the remainder of the Old Testament, but it is not fulfilled until the coming of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham' (Matt. 1:1). The New Testament, from beginning to end, is fixed upon this one, this Jesus, who says concerning himself, 'I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star' (Rev. 22:16)." (V. Phillips Long, *1 and 2 Samuel*)
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** Do I trust God to keep His promises?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time,
and your throne will be secure forever.
2 Samuel 7:16 (NLT)

Bottom Line: I can trust in God's plans and promises.

ASK (All Ages): Have you ever gotten something you really wanted after waiting for it for a long time? What did that feel like?

After years of shepherding, harp playing, fighting for Israel, and running from Saul, it was finally time for David to become king as God had promised. Saul and Jonathan were both killed in a battle with the Philistines, and David was very upset when he found out.

First, David became king of Judah, the tribe of Israel that his own family was from. Seven and a half years later, he became king of all the rest of the 12 tribes. Now, he was king over all Israel.

ASK (3rd Grade and up): We don't know exactly how long it was from when David was anointed to when he became king, but it was quite a few years. Why do you think God had David wait so long?

ASK (All Ages): What do you know about David that might have made him a good king?

David conquered the city of Jerusalem. He made it his capital and built a palace there. He had the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the presence of God, brought to Jerusalem. He and the people of Israel celebrated and worshiped God together. God brought peace to the land and gave David rest from his enemies for a time.

David wanted to build a temple for God, but God told him through the prophet Nathan that David's son would be the one to build this temple. God said he would build David's family into a dynasty of kings that would last forever. David thanked God and said, "Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?" (2 Samuel 7:18b, NLT) He knew that all the great things that had happened in his life and in Israel's life had come from God, and he humbly accepted God's promise.

ASK (All Ages): Why can we trust God to keep His promises?

While David did have descendants who ruled as kings, God's promise was actually bigger than just that. About a thousand years after David, a baby named Jesus would be born in David's hometown of Bethlehem. He was a descendant of David, but he was also the Son of God. He would be the ultimate king. He would follow God in all His ways. And He came not just to rescue and rule Israel but the whole world. We'll talk more about Jesus and what all this means next practice.

LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for blessing us and for keeping Your promises. Help us to remember that You have a plan for our lives even when we have to wait on You. Help us to trust in Your promises. Amen.

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

Green Practice Star Reminder: If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

UPLAND
SPORTS

PRACTICE 8

GOOD NEWS

This week's devotion includes a Gospel presentation.

Scouting Report | Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion.

- **Background:** In the devotion, we will not go into the details of the sin David refers to in Psalm 51 due to its mature nature, but it will be helpful to read through the context (2 Samuel 11:1-12:25) beforehand, especially if you have older athletes on your team who might be familiar with the story. This is the low point of David's narrative. Within the events of 2 Samuel 11, he breaks four of the Ten Commandments. "His obligations to other people and to God and God's law were set aside. David's passionate nature, his wholehearted commitment to the task in hand which was used so well in the service of God, could also be used in the service of his own lust." (Mary J. Evans, *The Message of Samuel*) When confronted with his sin through the power of story (via the prophet Nathan), David immediately and genuinely repents, and God forgives him. Nevertheless, the consequences of David's sin remain, and the following chapters detail the sad ripple effects of selfishness and violence within David's family that began with him. Sin is serious, but in God's great mercy, He offers forgiveness—through Jesus, His Son and the ultimate fulfillment of His covenant with David. The rest of our devotion will focus on Jesus and what He has done for us.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Psalm 51; John 19-20. For a look into the context of Psalm 51, read 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25.
- **Encouragement:** Sometimes, it's difficult to believe that David, the man after God's own heart, could have done something as wicked as he did. It was evil at every turn. Yet, David repented, and God forgave him. And even in this terrible story, we find hope for ourselves. We know the depths of our own sin and wickedness, but no matter what we've done, we can repent, trust in Jesus' sacrifice, and God will forgive us. His mercy is beyond what we can imagine.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** Have I considered what Jesus did so that I could have forgiveness and a relationship with God? Have I trusted in Him to rescue me from sin and death?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love.
Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins.
Psalm 51:1 (NLT)

Bottom Line: I can be forgiven through Jesus.

This season, we've learned about David and His great faith in God. We know God used David in mighty ways. A lot of people might think of David as a hero. But here's the thing about heroes (even heroes in the Bible). They're not perfect. David made some really big mistakes, especially once he became king and got used to having power.

There was one time that David sinned so badly that God sent a prophet, Nathan, to confront David about his sin. Once David realized the seriousness of what he'd done, he was extremely sorry and begged God for forgiveness. He wrote Psalm 51 about this time. Listen to some of the things David wrote in this psalm.

"Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just." (Psalm 51:1-4, NLT)

ASK (7th Grade and up): What did David admit in these verses? What did He ask God to do?

David asked God to have mercy on him. He knew he had sinned and that what he had done was wrong, and he was honest about that. David also knew that the guilt of sin leaves a stain on our lives. We can't get rid of it on our own. We need God to wash us clean from sin. David believed that God would forgive him and wash him clean because of God's great love and compassion.

The truth is we all sin. Sin is when we do things our way instead of God's way. It's anything we do, say, or think that disobeys God. And, like David, we all have the stain of sin on our lives. This stain keeps us from being able to have a relationship with God because He is perfect and completely without sin. And this isn't a stain that we can get rid of by doing laundry. In fact, there's nothing we can do to make ourselves clean on our own.

ASK (All Ages): Why do you think sin is like a stain on our lives?

Like David, we need God to have mercy on us. We need Him to make a way for us to be clean. The good news is, God did make a way.

God promised that one day, long after David was dead, a new hero would be born into David's family. He would come to wash all people clean from their sins. His name was Jesus. He was born in Bethlehem, David's hometown, about a thousand years after David. Jesus was not a king in the way David was, but He was called the King of Kings because He was the Son of God. God sent Jesus to earth to save us because of His great love and compassion for us.

Unlike David, Jesus never sinned. He never disobeyed God. He was the true hero the world needed all along. Jesus lived a perfect life, helping people, performing miracles, and teaching people about God. But eventually, Jesus was arrested and killed by people who didn't like the things He said and did. Jesus died a painful death on a wooden cross. But what might sound like a sad end to Jesus' story is actually part of a huge plot twist and amazing victory.

You see, when Jesus died on the cross, He took the punishment for all our sin. The Bible says that the consequence of sin is death and separation from God, but when Jesus died on the cross, He died for us. He took our place. And because He was perfect and without sin, His death cancels our guilt. We can be washed clean because of His sacrifice. When we trust in Jesus and what He did for us, we can, like David, ask God to have mercy on us and forgive us for our sins, and He will.

But there's more. Three days after Jesus died on the cross, God raised Him from the dead! He came back to life and appeared to many of His friends and followers before going back to heaven, where He is still alive today! When we trust in Jesus to save us, we get to have a relationship with Him here and now, but after we die, we will live with Him in heaven forever! Wow!

ASK (All Ages): How does what Jesus did for us show God's love for us?

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 loving us so much that You sent Jesus to save us by dying on the cross and rising again. We are sorry for sinning against You and doing things our own way. Please let everyone here accept Your gift of forgiveness through Jesus. Wash us clean of our sins and make us right with You. We love You, Lord. Amen.

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

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

Green Practice Star Reminder: If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 9

DAVID

KEEPING A PROMISE



Scouting Report | Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion.

- **Background:** We will rewind David's story a bit for this devotion. Though Saul and his family have faded into the background, they will always play a significant role in David's overarching narrative. In 2 Samuel 9, David shows kindness to Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. This story comes just two chapters after God's great promise to David and David's awe-filled response in 2 Samuel 7. David has received God's promise and now looks to keep his promise to his dear friend (Jonathan) and God's former anointed one (Saul). "Given the amount of time that has passed since Jonathan's death and the nature of their relationship, it does seem strange that David appears to have no knowledge of Jonathan's remaining family. However, it was not uncommon in the Ancient Near East for all those associated with a previous regime to be killed when a new and unrelated king was installed. It is possible that Mephibosheth's carers had deliberately kept secret his continuing existence and his whereabouts." (Mary J. Evans, *The Message of Samuel*)
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read 2 Samuel 9.
- **Encouragement:** When David inquires after Mephibosheth, Mephibosheth is living in Lo-debar, which means "without pasture." How fitting is it that David, the shepherd king, is able to bring a long-lost son without a home back into the fold? David returns his family lands to him, and Mephibosheth eats at the king's table like one of his own sons. Home, family, and honor are all restored to him. This is a beautiful picture of what God does for us through Jesus (Matthew 18:12-14). Without Him, we are alone and without pasture. But King Jesus seeks after us, and when we accept His kindness, as Mephibosheth does David's, we are adopted into His family. He exchanges our shame for honor and our exile for inclusion.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** When have I seen God bring good out of a bad situation?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.
John 1:12 (NLT)

Bottom Line: I want to keep my promises.

Raise your hand if you remember the name of David's friend, who was also the son of King Saul. His name was Jonathan. Even though Jonathan had died several years before, David still remembered his friend and his promise to always treat Jonathan's family with the faithful love of the Lord. Of course, this was a little complicated because Jonathan's family was also Saul's family, and Saul had made David his enemy.

But once David was king and his power was secure, David wondered if there was a way to keep his promise to Jonathan about showing love to Jonathan's family. The Bible says, "One day David asked, 'Is anyone in Saul's family still alive—anyone to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?'" (2 Samuel 9:1, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): Why do you think David wanted to show kindness to Jonathan's family?

A man who had been one of Saul's servants told David that one of Jonathan's sons was still alive. His name was Mephibosheth. Everybody, repeat that after me: Me-phi-bo-sheth. Mephibosheth! That has to be one of the most fun Bible names to say.

Mephibosheth was just five years old when his father, Jonathan, and grandfather, Saul, were killed in battle. The servant taking care of him was terrified when she heard the news. She picked Mephibosheth up and tried to run to safety, but she dropped him, and his legs were hurt, giving him a disability for the rest of his life.

When David heard that Mephibosheth was still alive, he sent for him. Mephibosheth, the grandson of a king, had lost his family and had been hiding out in the middle of nowhere for years.

ASK (All Ages): What do you think Mephibosheth thought might happen when David sent for him? How do you think he felt?

Mephibosheth bowed down to David and said, "I am your servant."

But David said, "Don't be afraid! . . . I intend to show kindness to you because of my promise to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the property that once belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will eat here with me at the king's table!" (2 Samuel 9:7, NLT)

Mephibosheth couldn't believe it. David didn't have to show him such great kindness, but he kept his promise to Jonathan and cared for Jonathan's son. David basically adopted Mephibosheth into his family. The Bible says, "from that time on, Mephibosheth ate regularly at David's table, like one of the king's own sons." (2 Samuel 9:11b, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): Why should we keep our promises?

The story of David and Mephibosheth can remind us of how God keeps His promises to us. God promised He would send someone to save us, and He sent Jesus. When we believe in Jesus, we are forgiven of our sins and adopted into God's family as one of His children. That's amazing! David didn't have to go out of his way to help Mephibosheth, but he did because of his love for Jonathan. God didn't have to go out of His way to help us, but He did because of His love for us.

ASK (3rd Grade and up): How does it make you feel to know that God adopts you into His family when you put your trust in Jesus?

LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for always keeping Your promises. Thank You for loving us so much that You sent Jesus to rescue us. Thank You for adopting us into Your family when we believe in Him. Thank You for loving us as our Heavenly Father. We love You, Lord. Amen.

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

Green Practice Star Reminder: If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.



Scouting Report | Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion.

- **Background:** David had much to praise God for. He made David king. He delivered David from his enemies and gave him victory time and time again. He made a covenant with David, promising that David's house would last forever. Throughout David's life, he praised God. David had long been a musician and poet, and it appears he did not leave his creative gifts behind once he became king. The many poems or songs connected to David in the book of Psalms cover a variety of subjects, but a theme of praise runs throughout. Hebrew poetry doesn't rhyme or have meters like traditional styles of English poetry, but it is quite artistic in its structure. It is often arranged in couplets, where one line makes a statement, and then the following line corresponds with that statement by paraphrasing it, expanding on it, or contrasting to it. David masterfully composed many psalms to God. His heart for worship is also evident in the narrative of 1 and 2 Samuel. He danced wildly before the Lord as the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem. He desired to build a temple for God (even though God turned him down). In 1 Chronicles 16, we learn that David appointed worship leaders to serve in the Tabernacle. Worship was an essential part of David's life. The epilogue of 2 Samuel contains David's song of thanksgiving to God (2 Samuel 22), which is also recorded (mostly) in Psalm 18. It also shares similarities to Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2, and the two songs serve as praise-filled bookends to the book of Samuel, which was originally one scroll. Both songs end by highlighting God's faithfulness to His anointed one.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Psalms 9, 13, 28, 145; 2 Samuel 22.
- **Encouragement:** David's psalms might be one of our greatest clues to understanding his heart for God. It seems that even when David was at his lowest, even when he lost his way, he was quick to turn to God in humble confession and worship (Psalm 51, for example). And he doesn't appear to hold much back. David is bold, honest, and expressive. He trusts God enough to communicate with him every facet of his joys, sorrows, and frustrations. David's closeness toward God resulted in psalms that can still draw us toward God today.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** How often do I praise God? What makes me want to praise Him?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done.
Psalm 9:1 (NLT)

Bottom Line: I want to praise God.

ASK (All Ages): Does anyone know what the word *praise* means?

To praise someone is to tell them you think what they've done or who they are is great. Your teacher might praise you for doing well on a test. When you make an awesome play in a game, your teammates might praise you with high fives. Your parents might praise you by telling you how proud they are of you.

We all love to receive praise, and it's good for us to praise, appreciate, and encourage others. But who do you think we should praise above everyone else? Who is great above all others? Who has done more for us than anyone? The answer is God! He deserves all the praise we could ever give Him and more. That's why we sing songs to Him, thank Him, and obey Him. All these things are part of our worship of Him. To worship God means we see how great He is and want to express our praise to Him.

ASK (All Ages): Why is God so great? Why is He worthy of our praise and worship?

God created us. He created everything! He is the most powerful, the most good, the most perfect. He knows all things. These are all reasons we should praise Him. Beyond that, God loved us so much that He sent Jesus, His Son, to die for us so we could be with Him. If we truly understand how big that love is, we will absolutely want to praise God for it. It's amazing.

Even though David had his ups and downs, one of the things he always understood was how much God deserved his praise. We've talked about how David was a talented musician and songwriter. He wrote 73 of the 150 poems or songs in the book of Psalms in the Bible. David's songs talk about a lot of things. He is honest about his sins. He celebrates his victories. He begs God for help. But over and over again in these psalms, David praises God.

Let's look at just a few of the many times David writes about praising God. Listen for the reason why David is praising God in each verse.

"I will sing to the Lord because he is good to me." (Psalm 13:6, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): Why does David say he will sing to the Lord? (*Because He is good to him.*)

"I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done." (Psalm 9:1, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): What does David say he will tell about? *(All the marvelous things God has done.)*

“Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! No one can measure his greatness.”
(Psalm 145:3, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): Why does David say God is most worthy of praise? *(No one can measure His greatness.)*

(3rd Grade and up only) “The Lord is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.” (Psalm 28:7, NLT)

ASK (3rd Grade and up): Why does David trust God? *(God helps him. He is David’s strength and shield.)* Why does David burst out in song? *(His heart is filled with joy and thanksgiving.)*

We are reading David’s songs of praise 3,000 years after he wrote them. That’s amazing! And guess what? Three thousand years later, God is still good. He still does marvelous things. He is still great and worthy of our praise. Like David, we want to worship Him every chance we get.

ASK (All Ages): If you were going to write a song to God, what would it say?

LET’S PRAY

God, You are great and so worthy of all our praise. There is no one like You. Help us have hearts overflowing with love and praise for You. Help remind us of all the great things You have done. Show us how we can worship You every day of our lives. We love You, Lord. Amen.

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

Green Practice Star Reminder: If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 11

DAVID

AFTER GOD'S HEART



Scouting Report | Coaches, here's an inside look at this week's devotion.

- **Background:** We will end this season by answering the question we asked at the very beginning: what does it mean to be someone after God's own heart? We will look to Jesus, the fulfillment of God's covenant with David, to answer that question. In Mark 12, Jesus is asked which of the commandments in God's law was the greatest. Out of the 613 commandments recognized by the religious leaders at the time, Jesus quotes the *Shema* from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. This was the foundational creed of Judaism, so it would have been a sensible answer to Jesus' listeners. But Jesus goes on to add Leviticus 19:18, linking love for God with love for other people. Interestingly, the scribe who asked him this question responds by referring to 1 Samuel 15:22, from Samuel's reply to Saul after God has rejected him as king. Instead of outward symbols of devotion, God prefers obedience and genuine submission to Him. This idea is echoed in Psalm 51:16-17. This was why David was chosen as a man after God's own heart. This was the kind of king God wanted for His people.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Mark 12:28-37; 1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22-23.
- **Encouragement:** Sometimes, we talk about stories from David's life as if he is the hero. But the truth is, God is the hero of this story. Someone who is after God's heart is not afraid to live in the shadow of the Almighty. Someone who will let their very life and story be devoted to God. It is not about perfection or the outward appearance of piety. It is about whether or not your heart belongs to God.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** What does it look like for me to love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart,
all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.
Mark 12:30 (NLT)

Bottom Line: I want to love God with my whole heart.

All season, we've been learning about King David. Once in the Old Testament and once in the New Testament, David is called "a man after God's own heart."

ASK (All Ages): That's kind of a weird thing to say. What do you think it means to be someone who is after God's own heart?

This is a unique way of saying that David was someone who was loyal to God and to what God wanted to do. David loved God and wanted to obey Him and live for Him.

ASK (3rd Grade and up): What are some of the ways David showed His love and faithfulness toward God? We've talked about several this season.

David was far from perfect. Especially as he grew older and got more wrapped up in being a king, he made some huge mistakes. He didn't always do what God wanted him to do. But, you know what? That's true for all of us. No matter how much we love God and want to obey Him, there will still be plenty of times when we make the wrong decisions. There will still be plenty of times when we do things our way instead of God's way.

David's story teaches us that what really matters is what's in our hearts. When David sinned, he was sorry for it and asked God for forgiveness. And he tried to do better in the future. Because he loved God and cared about letting Him down. Thankfully, because of what Jesus did for us on the cross, when we sin, we can realize our wrong actions, ask for forgiveness, and try to do better in the future, too. That's called repentance.

The New Testament tells about a time when someone asked Jesus a question about what God's greatest commandment was. This is what Jesus answered: "And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength." (Mark 12:30a, NLT)

David loved God with all his heart and mind. We know this from all the songs He wrote, pouring out praise and prayers to God. David loved God with all his strength. We saw this when he picked up his sling and took down Goliath to defend the name and the people of God. David loved God with all his soul. When he sinned, he repented and trusted in God to wash him clean.

ASK (All Ages): How can you love God with all your heart and soul? What about with all your mind? What about with all your strength?

You can be a person after God's own heart. God loves you, and when you love Him back with everything you've got, trusting in Jesus and doing your best to live for Him at every opportunity, that's being a person after His heart.

LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for blessing us with such a great season. We are so thankful for our team and for all the fun we've had. Thank You for the story of David and what it teaches us about being people after Your own heart. Thank You so much for loving us, Lord. Help us love You with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Amen.

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

Green Practice Star Reminder: If your league uses green practice stars, remember to distribute one to every athlete at the end of practice.

SECTION 4

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 the referee handbook on MyUpward.org.

FIELD DIAGRAM AND RULES

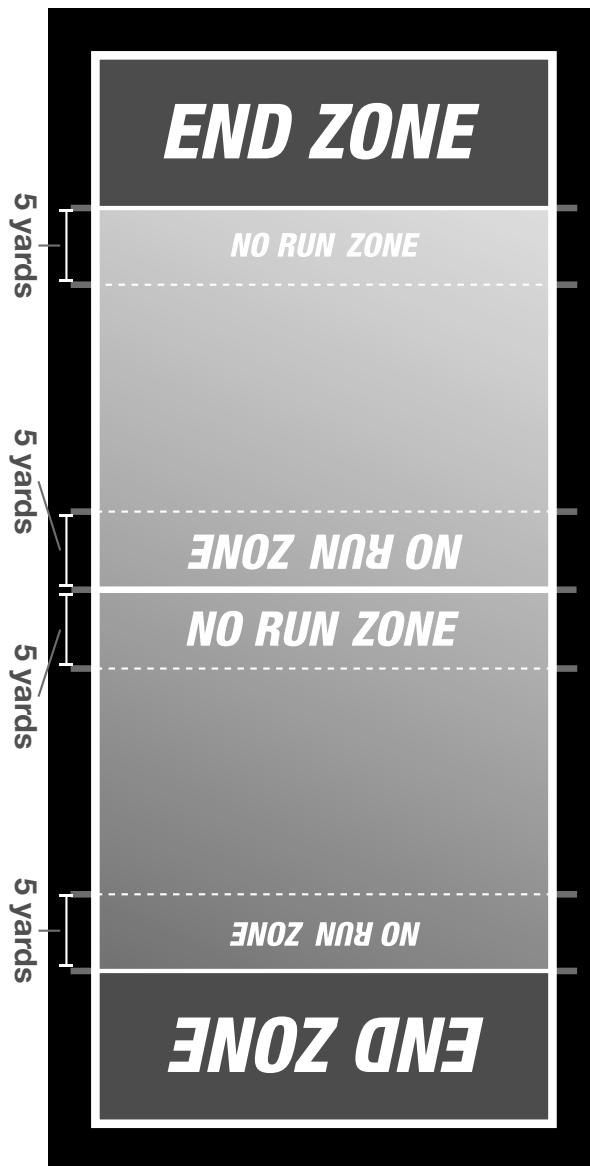
The offensive team is awarded a first down when it crosses the midfield line. Based on the field size, one first down is sufficient to advance the football for a score.

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

Diving

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

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

False Start

The whistle is blown, flag thrown, and play is dead immediately.

The penalty is 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a replay of the down.

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

Flag Guarding

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

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

Illegal 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 second column (Luke). Then fill in the remaining 5 players. Then, begin with the next person in the rotation for the next column. This process should be done quarter by quarter.

GAME 2 - YOUR TURN

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

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

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

<i>Game 2</i>		1st Quarter		2nd Quarter		3rd Quarter		4th Quarter	
Player:		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 Luke, Week 4 will start with Caleb and so on.

SUBSTITUTION SCENARIO

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

How to fill out the form:

Game 3		1st Quarter		2nd Quarter		3rd Quarter		4th Quarter	
Player:		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 (Luke, Caleb, Ja'Marr). For the first segment only, draw a line through the box for Auggie. Fill in the boxes for Ledger, Quinn, and then Felix.*

Game 3

Player:	1st Quarter		2nd Quarter		3rd Quarter		4th Quarter	
	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def	Off / Def
1 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 Auggie arrives at the start of the second quarter, continue with the proper rotation including Auggie when his turn arrives. Then continue with the rest of the rotations through the end of the game.

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

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

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

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

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

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO CONDUCT A STAR PRESENTATION:

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

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 5

FORMS

Substitution Form115

Star Distribution Form123

UPWARD SPORTS
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: _____

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

UPWARD SPORTS
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: _____

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

UPWARD SPORTS
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: _____

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

UPWARD SPORTS
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: _____

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

UPWARD SPORTS
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: _____

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

UPWARD SPORTS
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: _____

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

UPWARD SPORTS
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: _____

Player Name	First Half				Second Half			
	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER
	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def	Off or Def
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

UPWARD SPORTS
Flag Football Substitution Form



Game: _____

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

UPWARD SPORTS Flag Football Star Distribution Form



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

[illegible]

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*

