

UPU RD SPORTS

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO PROVIDING THE BEST LEAGUE EXPERIENCE!

DEVELOP SKILLS | STRENGTHEN CHARACTER | HAVE FUN



BASKETBALL COACH PLAYBOOK

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SECTION 1

COACHING ESSENTIALS

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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 d	o you p	olan to gi	row spiri	tually a	nd as a d	coach thi	s season	?

→ 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."

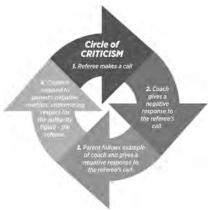
→ Circle of Affirmation

Game Day Attitude

Choosing the right game-day attitude is a key to being an effective Upward Soccer 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.

In Upward Soccer, 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.

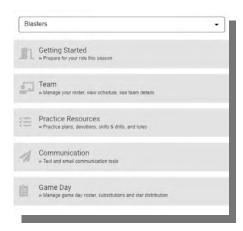
One practical way to create a positive team culture and teach communication is to establish a team huddle at the end of practice. Have players circle up and include the coach. The coach can talk about things done well in practice.

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 out before practice or used directly from your mobile device.

Season Celebration - Celebrate the season with your team. Your league may have individual team parties or a leaguewide 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.

Home / Team		
Roster	Games	Practices
	Ocean Ramblers	
	1st-2nd Division 4v4	
	Team Page 2	

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.

NOTES	

SECTION 2

PRACTICE

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→ Invest in the team by preparing for practice

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

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

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

→ Practice Breakdown

Opening practice huddle (3-5 minutes) - Start on time the signal to the team parents that you are ready to begin. Point out a couple of things that you will cover in practice. Once games occur, use the first few minutes of practice to talk about the previous game and something you will work on from the game and highlights from the game.

Warm-up activity (3-5 minutes) - Provide players with the opportunity to warm up their bodies slowly.

Practice skills through drills (20 minutes) – Focus on specific skills that matter to the sport. Use drills and game scenarios that reinforce skill development.

Practice devotion (5-7 minutes) – Share the practice devotion for each week. Be mindful of the opportunities to demonstrate the gospel throughout practice, so players see you living it out.

Scrimmage or 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.

Practice	Practice Focus	Team Meeting	Rules to Cover	Skills & Drills
1	Get to know each other Evaluate skills Set practice rules	Teammate introductions Discuss practice ground rules Introduce basic footwork, dribbling, and shooting skills		> Footwork > Dribbling > Shooting
2	Continue skill evaluation Teach passing fundamentals Teach positions and responsibilities	Re-introduce players and coaches Discuss some common violations	Traveling Double Dribbling Palming or Carrying the ball	> Footwork > Ball Handling > Dribbling > Shooting
3 week of first game	Review re-start situations Teach shooting fundamentals	Review traveling, double dribble, and palming the ball Game situations and court spacing	> Three second violation > Common fouls > Help defense	> Passing and Receiving > Defense > Rebounding
4	Teach 3-second violation Discuss positions on the court Skill developments	Review defensive rules Game situations and court spacing	> Three second violation > Common fouls > Help defense	> Rebounding > Defense > Scrimmage or more drills
5	Teach offensive movement Continue to teach court spacing	Discuss practice focus Review the last game Review basic rules	> Review all rules as a fun quiz	> Offensive plays > Areas the need improvement from the game
6-11 through last practice	Continue skill development Analyze game performances, coach through improvements	> Review the last game and improvements that need to be made > Discuss practice focus	> Continue to review rules for clear understanding	> Work on both offense and defense > 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.
- High Knees: With hands in front and waist high, lift knees up and alternate between knees. Vary speed as desired.
- Hops: This can be done in one sport of moving forward.
 It can be done on one foot of both feet.
- Jumping Jacks
- Log Step: With both feet on one side of an imaginary log high step sideways with one foot and then the other to cross over the "log." Vary speed.
- Lunges: From a standing position large step forward while keeping the back foot in place without the knee touching the ground.
- Push-ups: May use a modified version for very young players.
- Running: One minute around the room. If you have limited space, run in place and change the pace.
- Shoulder circles: With arms by your side, lift your shoulders and take them back down, creating a circular motion.

- **Side lunge**: Fee 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.
- Trunk twists: From a standing position, twist back and forth slowly.

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

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

Skills & Drills

This section reviews the fundamental skills of basketball, explains why each is important and emphasizes the skill's basic teaching points. Each skill is followed by a basic drill that reinforces the skill. For more 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 you have available.

KEY TO DIAGRAMS

Use this key for the drills located on the following pages.

X = player
 = player movement without the ball
 = dribble

P = pass

\$ = shoot

R = rebound

= screen

coach

1 2 3 = sequence

= cone

→ Footwork Drills

Proper footwork promotes balance, quickness, and readiness to make something happen on the court. Being proficient at this skill will improve a player's performance both offensively and defensively. Here are the three basic footwork skills:

Triple Threat Position

- Provides a player the option to pass, shoot, or dribble
- Position the basketball in the "shooting pocket" with shooting elbow over the knee
- Have "strong hands" with possession of the basketball so that defenders cannot easily knock the ball away

Jump Stop

- Allows a player to establish a pivot with either foot off a dribble or pass
- Leap/jump should be low to the floor (like sitting in a chair), not a high jump
- Both feet hit the floor at the same time good balance
- ♦ Land on the floor in triple threat position
- Use when catching a pass; teach "ball in air/feet in air" concept

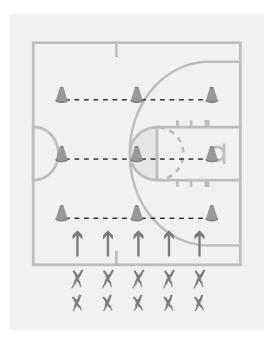
Front Pivot and Reverse Pivot

- Lift the heel, protect the ball, stay low, and lead with the elbow
- Allows a player to pivot in one or more directions by keeping one foot planted on the ground
- Allows an offensive player to move away from defenders while protecting the basketball
- Remind players to keep their eyes up to be able to see the court and their teammates
- ♦ This skill is also important for setting screens and rebounding

→ Footwork Drills

Footwork Line Drills (no basketball required)

- Players form lines on the baseline or sideline two players deep
- Use cones or mark the court for starting/stopping spots minimum 3 spots
- No basketball necessary players dribble and hold an imaginary basketball
- ♦ Players will start/stop on voice command or whistle
- Players should stop at each spot with jump stop and land in triple threat position
- Pause between stops/starts to check for proper balance
- The second player in line starts as the preceding player leaves the first spot



Rotate the Following Footwork Line Drills:

- Jump Stop/Triple Threat
- ♦ Jump Stop/Triple Threat/Right Front Pivot
- ♦ Jump Stop/Triple Threat/Left Front Pivot
- ♦ Jump Stop/Triple Threat/Right Reverse Pivot
- ♦ Jump Stop/Triple Threat/Left Reverse Pivot

Have each player raise his or her hand in the air that coincides with the desired pivot direction. This will help each player pivot in the correct direction.

Variation: Add basketballs after your players understand the above concepts. Allow them to practice the above skills after picking up their dribble and receiving passes.

Pivot Drill (no basketball required)

- Players should spread out in your practice area no basketball necessary
- Players start in triple threat position, protecting an imaginary basketball
- ♦ Instruct players to establish a pivot foot
- Practice half-turns and front/reverse pivots
- Repeat with opposite foot established as the pivot

Variation: Add basketballs and defenders after your players understand the above concepts. Allow them to practice the above skills after picking up their dribble and receiving passes.

→ Ball Handling & Dribbling Drills

An adept ball handler and dribbler can make things happen on the court. Mastering these skills can help create open shots, obtain better passing angles, and lead to fewer turnovers. A great offensive player must be able to handle the ball!

- Dribble with fingers, not palms similar to typing on a keyboard
- Proper body position, with knees bent and body flexed at the waist
- ♦ Keep head up see the court
- Protect the basketball use your non-dribbling arm as an "arm bar," meaning sticking it outward with the elbow slightly bent to protect the dribble from defenders reaching in
- Work both hands be able to go right and left
- When picking up a dribble, end in the triple threat position

→ Basic Dribbling Skills

Control Dribble

(Use against defensive pressure)

- With the body turned to the side, dribble basketball near the back knee
- Keep the dribble low and compact, below the knees
- The non-dribbling arm should be held out in front of the body to protect the ball from defenders – arm bar

Speed Dribble

(Use to push the ball up the court and on fast break situations)

- ♦ Dribble is pushed out in front of the body but controlled
- Dribble is higher and softer

Retreat Dribble

(Use to avoid defensive pressure and to keep dribble alive)

- Dribble backward (hop back) to avoid pressure
- Dribble requires a change in speed and change in direction
- Dribble teaches players not to habitually pick up their dribble when heavy, defensive pressure is applied

Crossover Dribble

(Use to break down a defender; good penetration move)

- Dribble must be kept low when crossing over from one hand to another, keeping it away from the defender
- Use head and shoulder fakes to help "sell" the move
- Goal is to get the defender on his or her heels
- Explode to the basket with speed dribble after the crossover

Whirl Pivot Dribble

(Use to avoid defensive pressure and to dribble by defender)

- ♦ Pull the basketball through low during the pivot
- ♦ Keep the basketball in the same hand until completing the pivot
- ♦ Pivot should be low and quick with head up
- Explode to the basket with speed dribble after the whirl pivot

Behind the Back Dribble

(Use to break down a defender; good penetration move)

- ♦ Use head and shoulder fakes to help "sell" the move
- ♦ Swing the basketball behind your waist, turning the hips and driving the ball down with a snap of the wrist
- ♦ Slap opposite back thigh during the exchange

→ Ball Handling Drills (Team Drills)

(one basketball per player or divide your team into two groups)

Ball Slams - With feet shoulder-width apart, have players slap the basketball with fingers spread wide. Players should "slam" the ball by alternating their right and left hands.

Fingertip Drill - With feet shoulder-width apart, players pass the basketball from hand-to-hand in front of the body using only the fingertips. Move ball from ankles, to knees, to waist, to chest, to head, and to above head using the fingertips. Encourage players to keep their arms straight.

Side to Side Dribble Drill - With feet shoulder-width apart, have players dribble with one hand while moving the ball from side to side in front of them.

Front to Back Dribble Drill - With feet shoulder-width apart, have players dribble with one hand while moving the ball at their side from front to back.

→ Ball Handling Drills (Team Drills)

Dribbling Line Drills (three to five basketballs required)

During all dribbling line drills, you should stand in front of the players to teach, encourage, and evaluate each player's performance.

- Players form lines on baseline or sideline (two players deep) - one basketball per line
- Use cones or chairs to represent stopping/ starting points or changeof-dribble spots
- Players will begin the drills in triple threat position
- 4. Players will start/stop/ change dribble on voice command or whistle
- Pause between stops/ starts to check for balance, arm bar, and if head is up
- At the turnaround point, require jump stops with pivots
- 7. Work opposite hand on return dribble
- 8. Players should end drills with a jump stop, giving the basketball to the next player in line

Rotate the following dribbling line drills:

- Speed Dribble
- Speed Dribble/Control Dribble - on command, stationary control dribble
- Speed Dribble/Retreat Dribble - on command, two to three dribbles backward against imaginary defender followed by speed dribble



→ Passing and Receiving

Passing and receiving a basketball allows a team to effectively and quickly move the ball around the court. A team that has players with strong passing and receiving skills will spread the defense and be hard to guard.

Passing Teaching Points

- Two hands on the basketball, with fingers on the sides of the ball
- Ball in middle of body
- Step toward target
- Push thumbs through ball and snap wrists, creating backspin on the basketball
- Extend arms completely as you follow through toward target

Receiving Teaching Points:

- Both hands up in ready position - show a target
- Step toward the ball when passed - meet the pass
- "Ball in air/feet in air" concept - leads to jump stop, triple threat position, and ability to pivot with either foot
- ♦ Look the ball into the hands

→ Basic Passing Skills

Two-Hand Chest Pass

- Basketball is held with two hands at chest level
- Keep elbows out and wide
- Passer targets the receiver's chest area
- Passer steps toward their target with either foot as the ball is thrown

 Snap the thumbs down extending the arms

Two-Hand Bounce Pass

- Basketball is held with two hands at chest level
- Passer aims for a spot on the floor about two-thirds (a little more than halfway) of the way to the

receiver

 Passer targets the receiver's chest area from the bounce

Overhead Pass

- Basketball is held with two hands above head
- Passer targets the receiver's chest area

→ Passing and Receiving Drills

Distance Passing (one basketball for each pair of players)

Be sure to incorporate all three basic passes into this drill.

- Pair up players and have them face each other, six to eight feet apart
- Instruct players to pass the basketball back and forth using a chest pass
- After several repetitions, have each player take one to two steps backwards and continue passing
- Continue moving players back until they are passing from a challenging distance

Two-Line Passing (two basketballs required)

Two pairs of players can perform this drill at one time.

- Pair up players and have them face each other six to eight feet apart
- Establish a starting and turnaround point
- One player in each pair needs a basketball
- Using defensive slides, players move up and then back down the court
- While sliding, instruct players to pass the basketball back and forth using a chest pass
- Players pass the ball immediately upon receiving the ball



Variations: Both players running up and down the court, rather than sliding. You may also require the receiver to perform a jump stop upon catching the basketball and immediately passing it to his or her moving partner.

→ Shooting

Shooting Teaching Points

- Square up shoulders to the basket
- ♦ Ball on fingertips, not palms
- Opposite hand should be lightly placed on side of ball (balance/weak hand)

Practice BEEF Principles

- Balance Learn to prepare for the shot by stopping with the feet set, knees slightly bent, ready to jump (good triple threat position)
- ♦ Elbow Proper shooting alignment; ball should be directly over the elbow with the wrist cocked
- ♦ Eyes Pick a spot (front of the rim, back of the rim, etc.) and focus on that target as the shot is being attempted
- Follow through Release the ball smoothly, completely extend the arm, and snap the wrist, which should create good backspin on the basketball

→ Shooting Drills

Lay-Up Steps (no basketball required)

Instruct your players to shout "STEP-HOP-SHOOT" when performing this drill. Mirror this drill to practice left-handed layups.

- Allow players to spread out in your practice area, at least four to five feet apart
- 2. Players start in the triple threat position, holding imaginary basketballs with heads up and eyes on the target
- 3. On the STEP command, players step with their left foot (right-handed lay-ups)
- 4. On the HOP command, players raise their right knee and right arm toward the basket (visualize a string connecting a player's right arm and right leg)
- s. On the SHOOT command, players extend their right arm as they shoot an imaginary ball

Wall Shooting

(one basketball per player or divide your team into two groups)

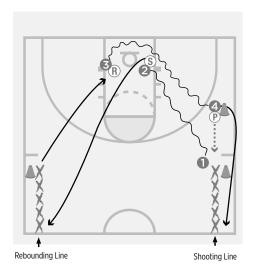
This is a great drill to keep idle players busy while running a drill on the court that may not involve your entire team.

- 1. Player stands about four to five feet away from the wall
- 2. Help the player find a reasonable shooting target on the wall
- 3. Player assumes the triple threat position
- 4. Player shoots the ball at the target, concentrating on keeping the elbow in and full extension
- 5. Player should finish the shot up on his or her toes with proper follow through, creating good backspin

Variations: If coaching third through sixth-grade players, allow them to shoot using only their shooting/strong hand.

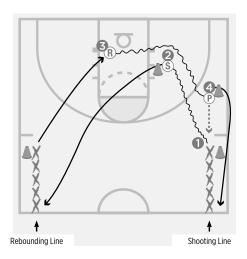
Two Line Shooting Drills (one or two basketballs required) Players rotate lines after each turn. After several repetitions shooting from one side of the goal, change the designation of both lines and shoot from the other side of the court.

- Players form two lines opposite the goal in each corner of practice area: a shooting line and a rebounding line (use cones or chairs to mark a starting point)
- **2.** Shooting line: Assume the triple threat position, showing ready hands to receive a pass.
- 3. Rebounding line: Players should block out an imaginary defender and rebound the ball above their head.
- 4. The player from the rebounding line secures the rebound and dribbles to a designated cone, makes a good jump stop landing in the triple threat position, and uses proper passing techniques when passing to the next shooter in line.
- **5**. Shooter receives the basketball and performs the drill as instructed by a coach.



Rotate the following two line shooting drills:

- ♦ Lay-ups Stress jumping off the proper foot and using the backboard (STEP-HOP-SHOOT)
- Pull-up Off the Dribble Set a cone at desired shooting spot (stress good jump stop and use of backboard when shooting from appropriate angle)



→ Rebounding

When discussing offensive rebounding, remind players that each shot taken by a teammate is a pass to them! Second chance points (put-backs) can be a big contributor to a team's offensive production.

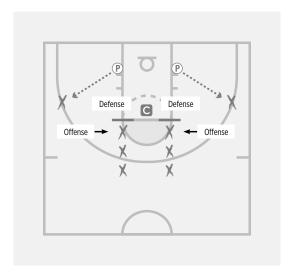
Rebounding Teaching Points:

- Defensive player stays between the opponent and the basket
- Using a front or reverse pivot, the defensive player pivots and makes contact with the opponent's body when the ball is shot ("block out")
- Defensive players should yell "shot" to signal a rebounding opportunity
- Hold the "block out" position momentarily, with the head up and body facing the goal
- Release the "block out" be hungry for the basketball
- Secure the basketball
- Be strong with the basketball, keeping the ball at chin level with elbows out

→ Rebounding Drills

Rebound Outlet Drill - no defender (one basketball required)

- Facing the basket, players form two lines: one at the corner of the free-throw line (elbow), the other at the foul line extended (wing)
- Coach stands at the other elbow with a basketball. Coach throws the ball off the backboard
- The first player in line at elbow catches the rebound with strong hands, elbows out, and ball to the chin. The player then pivots toward the first player in the wing line and throws a two-handed chest pass
- ♦ Player from the wing line passes ball back to the coach
- Both players swap lines and drill is repeated with second players in each line



Rebound Outlet Drill - with defender (one basketball required)

- Facing the basket, players form two lines: one at each corner of the free-throw line
- Place one player at each wing area to serve as an outlet receiver
- 3. The player in the front of each line will turn his back toward the basket (defensive player), facing the next player in line (offensive player)
- 4. When the coach shoots the basketball, the defensive players will yell "shot" and pivot into the offensive players to obtain a good "block out"
- 5. Offensive players cannot move
- **6**. Once a defender secures the basketball, pivot and throw a crisp overhead outlet pass to an outlet receiver
- 7. Players rotate from offense/to defense/to outlet receiver/to back of the line

Variations:

- ♦ Use one line instead of two
- ♦ When the ball is shot, the offense can move and try to score off a missed shot

→ Defense

Defense Teaching Points:

- Proper defensive stance
 - » Stand with feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart
 - » Knees bent, with waist slightly bent forward
 - » Good balance ready to move and slide
 - » Place weight on the inside front of the feet, but not on the toes
 - » Extend arms to the side, slightly bent
 - » Open hands, so palms face the offensive player
 - » Eyes on the offensive player's chest or "head on the ball"
- Ball/you/basket principle: When the offensive player being guarded has the ball, the defensive player should stay between this assigned offensive player with the basketball and the basket
- See the ball at all times
- Sprint down the floor on a change of possession, stopping any fast breaks

→ Defense Drills

Defensive Slides (no basketball required)

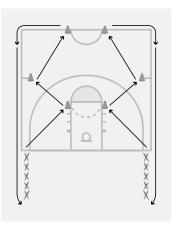
Focus on players' feet sliding (rather than hopping or skipping) and players maintaining a proper defensive stance. Have fun with this drill! Allow players to express enthusiasm and desire by slapping the playing floor and yelling "DEFENSE" on command. Drill should last 20-30 seconds. Allow a short rest and repeat as desired.

- Allow players to spread out in practice area, at least four to five feet apart
- 2. On command, players yell "DEFENSE" and freeze in the defensive stance
- 3. On command (either verbal or hand signals), players will slide left, right, up, and back

Zigzag (no basketball required)

Focus on players making a drop step each time they turn (rather than crossing their feet) and on players sliding correctly while maintaining a proper defensive stance.

- Form a line of players at one end of your practice area
- 2. Set-up cones or chairs in a zigzag pattern, spaced 10-12 feet apart (minimum 3 spots)
- 3. On command, the first player in line will assume the correct defensive stance and will slide in a zigzag pattern as dictated by the cones or chairs
- 4. The next player in line starts as the preceding player leaves first spot
- **s**. As each player reaches the final spot, he or she should sprint back to the end of the line



→ Offensive Plays

The following offensive plays are provided to help your team with floor spacing and floor balance. These plays are intended for Levels 3 and 4.

Reminder: View the Skills and Drills videos on the coach section of MyUpward.org for live demonstrations of the following offensive plays.

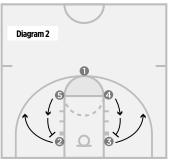
HALF-COURT SETS

Box Set - Motion

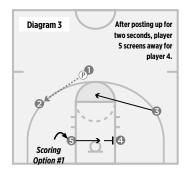
Scoring Options:

- Player 5 posting up down on ball-side block
- 2. Player 4 coming off of low screen
- 3. Player 3 cutting to the free-throw line
 - Players 2, 3, 4, and 5 are in the "box" offensive set (diagram 1)
 - Player 1 (point guard) yells "MOTION" or "GO" to start the play (player 1 should keep dribble alive until making a pass)
 - Players 4 and 5, who are standing outside the lane area at the freethrow line extended areas, will screen down for players 2 and 3 (diagram 2)
 - ◆ Before the screens occur, players
 2 and 3 will take two to three steps toward the lane area
 (to set up their defenders) and then make hard V-cuts to their respective wing areas (diagram 2)

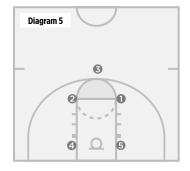




- Player 1 will pass the basketball to player 2 or 3 (assume player 2 in this example) who will square up to the basket (diagram 3)
- Player 5, post player on the ball-side of the court, will post up for two seconds (diagram 3)
- After two seconds, player 5
 will screen away for opposite
 post player player 4 (diagram
 3)
- As player 5 turns to screen away for the opposite post player, player 3 will cut toward the free-throw line and player 1 will "fill" his or her spot at the wing (diagram 3)
- If a pass cannot be made to player 4 coming off the low screen or to player 3 on the cut to the lane area, player 3 will move to the top of the key area to receive a pass from player 2 (diagram 4)
- If the pass is made to player 3 at the top of the key area, team will be in the "box" offensive set again (diagram 5)







Box Set - (Double Down)

Scoring Options:

- 1. Player 3 coming off of low screen
- 2. Player 2 coming off the double screen

Procedure:

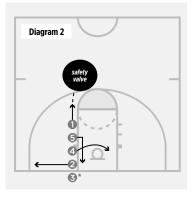
- 1. Players 2, 3, 4, and 5 are in the "box" offensive set
- 2. Player 1 (point guard) yells "DOUBLE" or "GO" to start the play (player 1 should keep dribble alive until making a pass)
- 3. Player 1 dribbles to right-side of the goal can go to right or left (diagram 1)
- 4. As player 1 dribbles to the wing area (attack zone), player 2 will screen away for player 3 (diagram 1)
- **s**. Player 3 cuts to the ball-side block area hoping to receive a pass from player 1 (diagrams 1 and 2)
- 6. As player 3 cuts to the ball-side block area, players 4 and 5 will set a double screen in the middle of the lane for player 2 (diagram 2)
- 7. Player 1 looks for player 2 as he or she curls around the screen for an open jump-shot (diagram 3)

→ Inbounds Plays

Stack (baseline)

- All four players line-up straight across from the player throwing in the basketball (diagram 1)
- 2. When the passer slaps the basketball or yells "break," the players move simultaneously as follows (diagram 2):
 - First player in line breaks to ball-side corner
 - Second player in line cuts to opposite block
 - Third player in line moves straight down to block area toward the ball
 - Fourth player in line takes two to three steps back, serving as a safety valve





Note:

All inbounds plays - Players should use fakes and jab steps to set up their defenders and get open. Encourage players coming off a screen to rub shoulders with the screener. As the person throwing in the basketball can pass to any teammate, encourage ready hands.

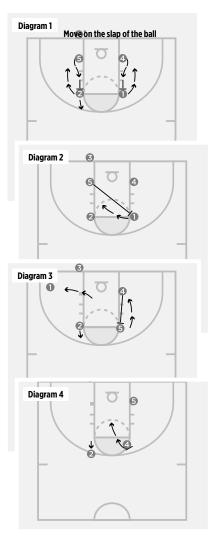
Reminder: This play can also be used on the sideline, with players moving in the same pattern as above.

Box (baseline)

- Each player takes a spot outside the lane area, with the post players (Players 4 and 5) at the block areas and the perimeter players (Players 1 and 2) at the free-throw line extended areas. Player 3 will throw in the basketball (diagram 1).
- When the passer slaps the basketball or yells "break," the players move as follows:

Box Option #1

- Player 5 sets a diagonal screen for Player 1 (diagram 2)
- 2. Player 1 waits for the screen and moves toward the basketball to the opposite block (diagram 2)
- If Player 1 does not receive the basketball, he or she continues to the ball-side corner (diagram 3)
- 4. Player 4 moves up to set a screen on Player 5, who cuts down toward the weak-side block (diagram 3)
- **s**. Player 4 rolls toward the middle of the lane after setting the screen (diagram 4)
- 6. Player 2 serves as a safety valve (diagram 4)
 BASKETBALL COACH PLAYBOOK



Box Option #2

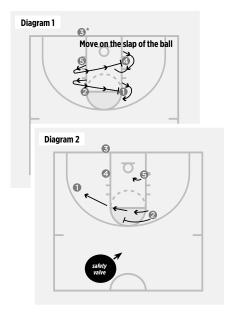
- Players 4 and 5 screen up for Players 1 and 2 (diagram 1)
- If a pass cannot be made to either 1 or 2, they each move to the closest corner (diagram 2)
- After setting the screens, Players 4 and 5 should roll back toward the ball (diagram 2)

Diagram 2 Diagram 2

Box Option #3:

All four players will take one to two steps toward the closest sideline to set up their defenders (diagram 1)

- Players 5 and 2 will both cross-screen for Players
 4 and 1 on the weak-side (diagram 1)
- 2. After setting a screen, Player 5 will turn around with ready hands (diagram 2)
- 3. Player 2 will roll back to ball-side, free-throw line extended area to serve as a safety valve (diagram 2)



PRACTICE DEVOTIONS BIBLICAL THEME

MIRACULOUS: THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

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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 the a Biblical theme. This season's theme will focus on stories 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 theme and verses for each group of practices.

PRACTICE NUMBER	BIBLICAL THEME	VERSE
Week 1	God With Us	But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name. John 20:31 (NLT)
Week 2	Fish Story	Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" Luke 5:10b (NLT)
Week 3	One Out of Ten	Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT)
Week 4	In the Storm	The disciples were amazed. "Who is this man?" they asked. "Even the winds and waves obey him!" Matthew 8:27 (NLT)
Week 5	Far-Reaching Power	Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible." Matthew 19:26 (NLT)

PRACTICE NUMBER	BIBLICAL THEME	VERSE
Week 6	Healed	And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over." Mark 5:34 (NLT)
Week 7	Back to Life	Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying." John 11:25 (NLT)
Week 8	Good News	If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9 (NLT)
Week 9	Through the Roof	And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God. Luke 5:25 (NLT)
Week 10	The Big Meal	Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:35 (NLT)
Week 11	Walking on Water	But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!" Matthew 14:27 (NLT)



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

• Background: What is a miracle? In our culture, a miracle is something outside of the norm, something that seems impossible or incredibly unlikely. We see miracles as uncommon but usually still somehow explainable. Yet the miracles of the Bible are different. "Miracles in the Bible are very diverse, but they have certain qualities in common. In essence, they are events for which all naturalistic explanations are firmly inadequate. They are temporary, extraordinary exceptions to the usual course of nature, things that would never happen, and could never happen, were natural processes left on their own . . . God constantly upholds and sustains every part of creation. He does that in ways we've labeled 'the laws of nature.' But, on some occasions, for reasons that belong to Him alone, He chooses to change His normal pattern, which results in a miracle." (Gary Inrig, The Miracles)

Our devotions this season will focus specifically on the miracles of Jesus, their purpose, and what they teach us about Him. Learning what the New Testament says Jesus did and why He did these impossible things will help the athletes on your team become better acquainted with Jesus and help build their faith in His divine power. Through Jesus' miracles, He gives us a glimpse into the kingdom of heaven, shows us God's priorities, demonstrates His authority, and reveals Himself as God in human form.

As recorded in the Gospels, Jesus' miracles include acts of power over nature, physical afflictions, and demonic activity. In the scope of this study, we won't spend much time on miracles of that third category. We also won't tackle another nuance of some of Jesus' miracles—that some were performed on the Sabbath to challenge the traditional understanding of the Sabbath laws and show Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath. Though these are both important elements of Jesus' miracles, they can be complex ideas for young minds, and we want to focus primarily on the overall concepts of Jesus' power and identity.

• Big Picture: For more insight, read John 20:30-31; Luke 7:18-23. If you don't own a Bible, you can download the YouVersion Bible App for free.



• Encouragement: Can we believe that the miracles of Jesus really happened? Of course, this is a matter of faith, but as is mentioned in the devotion, there is historical evidence for Jesus' miracles outside of the Bible. In the late first century AD, non-Christian Jewish historian Josephus wrote that Jesus was "a doer of startling deeds." Some of Jesus' ancient critics also reference Him as a sorcerer—evidence that He did things they could not explain. Early Christian sources outside of the New Testament show that followers of Jesus certainly believed in His miracles just a generation or

two after they took place. The Gospel accounts themselves were all likely written within about 60 years of Jesus' death and resurrection.

 Coach's Question for Reflection: Do I believe that Jesus really did the things the Bible says He did?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.

John 20:31 (NLT)

ottom Line: The miracles of Jesus show us who He is.

SK (All Ages): What is a miracle?

miracle is something good that happens that we can't explain. It's something outside ne rules of nature and life as we know it. It's something that isn't supposed to be able to appen, but it does.

he Bible is an ancient book that tells us about God's plan for the world and how He has een at work throughout history. There are many miracles recorded in the Bible because od created everything, including the way the world works. He isn't bound to the same lies of nature that we are because He created nature. He made the rules!

/e read about miracles God does throughout the Bible, but when you read the first four ooks of the New Testament, called the Gospels, it seems like there is a miracle on every ther page! That's because the Gospels tell us about Jesus' life on the earth. Jesus is the on God. Along with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus is one of three persons f God, which together are called the Trinity. Jesus is God. He came down from heaven to re earth to live among people like us so that He could teach us about God and show us nore of who God is.

esus did many miracles during His time on the earth. At least 35 of them are recorded in ne New Testament. We're going to learn about several of Jesus' miracles this season. And nere are a few things I want you to know as we talk about these amazing stories.

irst, I want you to know that the miracles of Jesus teach us who He is and show us 'hy He came to the earth. Jesus did a lot while He was on the earth, not just miracles. e taught many things about God. He asked people to follow His example. He was kind nd loving toward people who were sinners and outcasts. Jesus didn't just do miracles of show off. His miracles had a purpose. Many of Jesus' miracles involved healing people. his showed that Jesus cared about people and wanted to help them. Jesus' miracles lso showed His power. They showed that He was God. He could do things no one else

could do, like calm a storm or walk on water. Jesus' miracles were also signs that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, the Savior who was going to come and rescue the Jewish people and, ultimately, the whole world. The Old Testament told of the amazing signs and wonders this Messiah would do. If people were paying attention, they'd be able to see that Jesus was the Messiah. He was God, He cared about people, and He came to save us all.

ASK (All Ages): Why do you think the miracles of Jesus are important?

I also want you to know that the miracles of Jesus really happened. It's easy to be skeptical about things that seem impossible, but there are good reasons to believe in Jesus' miracles.

The Gospel books about Jesus were written within a lifetime of Jesus' death. Two of these books were written by Matthew and John, two of Jesus' followers or disciples, who traveled with Jesus and witnessed many of these miracles with their own eyes. The other two books, Mark and Luke, were written by Christians who heard eyewitness accounts from people who knew Jesus and saw His miracles. After Jesus died and rose from the dead, He returned to heaven, where He is still alive today. But His followers were still on the earth, and Jesus told them to go to the whole world and tell people about Him. So they traveled far and wide, telling people about Jesus and facing persecution and even death. Would they have done that for something they knew wasn't true? There's no way!

There are even a few historical records outside of the Bible that mention Jesus as someone who performed miracles or signs. The people who wrote these documents weren't Christians and didn't have any reason to make it up. Still, when they recorded who Jesus was, it was clear that He had done unusual, even miraculous things. All this helps us to believe that the miracles of Jesus really happened.

ASK (3rd Grade and Up): How do you think this evidence helps us believe in the miracles of Jesus?

ASK (All Ages): What do you think it would have been like to see a miracle of Jesus in person?



God, thank You for bringing us together as a team this season. We are excited to learn about the miracles of Jesus. Thank You for sending Jesus to show us more of who You are. We believe that You have the power to do amazing things. 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.



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

- · Background: Though Jesus grew up in Nazareth, a village in inland Galilee, He made the bustling town of Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee His base of operations when He began His earthly ministry. The Sea of Galilee is actually a freshwater lake and was the primary source of the fishing trade in ancient Israel. Career fishermen like Peter, Andrew, James, and John worked long hours of intensive physical labor. "Fishermen would go out in their boats at night and bring in their catch early in the morning. Then they would separate the fish they caught, salt them down to preserve them, and deliver them to the market." (Argile A. Smith Jr., "Fishermen in the First Century," The Holy Land Illustrated Bible) We can imagine they might have felt it was dismissive of both their night-long labor and their expertise when Jesus told them to go back out and cast their nets again. Yet, they complied. They respected Jesus and had already seen Him do some miraculous things. The result was the biggest haul of their careers, more than two boats could hold without sinking. Everyone was astonished. "Peter was intimidated that someone who was obviously working with divine backing was in his presence . . . He feared his sinfulness might lead to judgment, but Jesus would show him otherwise." (NET Bible Notes on Luke 5) Through this fishing miracle, Jesus the rabbi recruited four rugged fishermen to become His students, three of whom would become His inner circle for the rest of His ministry.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read Luke 5:1-11.
- Encouragement: The second miraculous catch of fish recorded in John 21 provides a beautiful parallel to this story. It recounts one of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to His disciples. In Luke 5, Jesus tells the fishermen that they will be fishing for people. In John 21, He tells Peter, "Feed my sheep." These are both key passages to understanding what being a disciple of Jesus is all about: people. When we think of these miracles, they should remind us that our mission as followers of Jesus is to seek after people so we can share God's word and care for them with God's love.
- Coach's Question for Reflection: What does being a disciple of Jesus mean to me?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!"

Luke 5:10b (NLT)

ottom Line: The miracles of Jesus invite us to follow Him.

aise your hand if you've ever heard of a fish story or a fish tale. Someone might say pmething is a fish story when they think someone is exaggerating or stretching the truth. comes from the idea that fishermen have been known to exaggerate a little, especially pout the size of the fish they caught! They might have caught a fish this big (hold up ands facing each other about a foot apart), then when they tell the story, they say the fish as this big (hold up hands a little further apart). Then, the next time they tell the story, ney'll say it was this big (hold up hands even further apart), and the size keeps growing very time they tell the story!

he first miracle of Jesus that we're going to talk about is a story about fish, but it's not an kaggerated fish story. This really happened. We read about it in the book of Luke in the ible.

ome of Jesus' closest followers, called disciples, were fishermen for a living. They would ake their wooden boats out onto the Sea of Galilee and let down nets to catch as many sh as possible to bring back and sell. The name of the Sea of Galilee is a bit of a fish story self because it's more like a lake than a sea. Two brothers, Andrew and Simon Peter, were ome of these fishermen. In our story today, they had already met Jesus but weren't His isciples yet.

ndrew and Simon Peter fished all night and came back with nothing. They couldn't even all any fish stories, because they had nothing at all to show for their hard work. In the aylight, they were back at shore, washing their nets.

leanwhile, Jesus arrived. A crowd followed Him, and Jesus started to teach them. He ot into Simon Peter's boat and asked for Simon to push the boat out a little bit from the nor. Jesus sat down in the boat and taught from there. When He had finished teaching, sus told Simon to take the boat back out into the deep part of the lake and let down the ets to catch some fish.

Master,' Simon replied, 'we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you ay so, I'll let the nets down again.'" (Luke 5:5, NLT)

SK (All Ages): Do you think Simon, who was probably tired from fishing all night, really anted to take the boat back out and let the nets out again? Why do you think he did it nyway?

Once they had let their nets down in the deep part of the lake, the nets suddenly filled up with so many fish that they started to tear! Andrew and Simon Peter signaled to their fishing partners, James and John, to come and help them. James and John brought their boat over, and they filled both boats with all the fish in the net. There were so many fish that the boats started sinking!

Everyone was amazed. Simon Peter fell to his knees in front of Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man."

ASK (3rd Grade and up): Why do you think this was Simon Peter's response to seeing what Jesus could do?

The Bible says, "Jesus replied to Simon, 'Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus." (Luke 5:10b-11, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): What do you think Jesus meant when He said they would be fishing for people?

Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John would follow Jesus as He traveled through many towns and villages, teaching people about God and what it means to live for Him. They would witness many other miracles. Eventually, they would come to realize that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, who had come to save everyone from sin and death. They would get to see Jesus after God raised Him from the dead, and they would spend the rest of their lives telling anyone who would listen about Jesus. Fishing for people meant they would do everything they could to help others believe in Jesus.

ASK (All Ages): What are some things you can do to help other people believe in Jesus?



God, let us be amazed at Jesus and the things He can do, like Simon Peter and the other disciples. Help us to fish for people by doing what we can to help people believe in Jesus. Thank You for showing us more of who You are. 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.



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

- Background: In this devotion, we'll examine two scenes in which Jesus heals someone from leprosy. When the New Testament was written, leprosy could refer to a number of skin diseases, but the social and emotional effects would have been familiar to all with such conditions. They were not only suffering physically; they also were cut off from society. In the first scene (Luke 5:12-16), the man with leprosy disregards all protocol and falls to his knees right in front of Jesus. When Jesus touches him, it should make Jesus unclean. Instead, the leper is healed and made clean. In the second scene, ten men are calling from a distance so as not to pose a threat of uncleanness. Jesus doesn't touch them but sends them on their way to the priests for confirmation of their healing and, ultimately, sends them back to a normal life. In each scene, Jesus responds to a request for mercy with a simple but absolutely life-changing answer. In the second scene, the return of the lone healed man is striking. He now falls at the feet of Jesus, not in search of mercy, but in overwhelming, overflowing praise and gratitude.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Luke 5:12-16; Luke 17:11-21; Mark 1:40-45; Matthew 8:2-4.
- Encouragement: We have all likely prayed for healing for ourselves or someone we love. The words of the leper in the first scene are helpful to remember when we bring such requests to the Lord. "The leper reveals an astonishing confidence in Jesus' power ('you can') . . . At the same time, the leper defers to Jesus' sovereignty ('if you are willing'). These twin thrusts are crucial in all Christian prayers for healing." (Craig L. Blomberg, *The New American Commentary: Matthew*) When we seek Jesus' power to heal our mortal bodies, we believe in His ability and defer to His will.
- Coach's Question for Reflection: When was the last time I was overwhelmed with gratitude to God?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT)

ottom Line: The miracles of Jesus teach us to be thankful.

uring the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the things we were all told to do as to stay at least six feet away from other people when we left our homes. At the time hen Jesus was on the earth, there was a skin disease called leprosy. People who had prosy had to stay at least six feet away from other people, including their families, all the me. If it was windy, they had to stay 150 feet away from other people. They also had to nout, "Unclean, unclean!" to alert others they were nearby. They couldn't even live in their wn homes but had to go live outside the town until they got better or passed away.

SK (All Ages): What do you think it would have felt like to live with leprosy during esus' time?

ne Bible tells us about Jesus healing quite a few people with leprosy. The first time this appened, a man with leprosy came and fell to his knees in front of Jesus, saying, "Lord, you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean." Jesus did something simple but nazing. No one else would have dared to touch this man. But Jesus reached out and suched him and said, "I am willing. Be healed!" And the man was healed.

nere's another story about Jesus healing leprosy that really stands out. Jesus and His sciples were traveling. As they were going into a village, ten men with leprosy stood at a stance. Instead of shouting, "Unclean," they were shouting, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on s!"

sus told them to go show themselves to the priests. Showing themselves to the priests as how they could confirm they were healed and be allowed back into their community, ack to their families. As they hurried off to see the priests, they were healed.

ne Bible says, "One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, nouting, 'Praise God!' He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had one." (Luke 17:15-16a, NLT)

SK (All Ages): Why do you think only one of the ten men came back to thank Jesus for ealing him?

ne one man who came back was a Samaritan. Jesus and His disciples were Jews. Usually, aws and Samaritans did not get along. Yet, it was only the Samaritan who came back to tank Jesus.

esus was amazed that this one man out of ten was the only one who came back to give

glory to God. "And Jesus said to the man, 'Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you." (Luke 17:19, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): Why should we praise God? Why is it important to stop and thank Him when we realize what He's done for us?

There are many verses in the Bible about being thankful. One of them is 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT). It says, "Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." God cares about us and does wonderful things for us. We want to stop and thank Him as much as we can. We want to show Him we appreciate Him and are grateful for everything He does for us, from healing us from disease to creating a beautiful sunrise to giving us good friends.

ASK (All Ages): What's something you'd like to thank God for today?

LET'S PRAY

God, we want to say thank You! Thank You for all the wonderful things You have done for us. Thank You for all the beautiful things You've created and for how You are working in each of our lives. Thank You most of all for sending Jesus. Help us to remember to take the time to stop and give you the praise You deserve. We love You, Lord. 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.



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

- Background: The Gospel accounts tell us about two different storms that occur while the disciples are traveling by boat across the Sea of Galilee. These occur at two different times in Jesus' ministry, with the scene we're looking at for this devotion being the earlier of the two. Peter, Andrew, James, and John have likely faced a few storms on this lake, but this one is different. "Matthew refers to the storm as a 'shaking' (seismos). Mark calls it a 'great wind' (megale anaemu). It is a demonic attempt on their lives. Satan has Jesus and the disciples together in a single boat on the lake. It is his opportunity to wipe out the ministry in a single stroke. It has all the hallmarks of a demonic attack . . . So Jesus speaks to the storm the same words he speaks to silence demons: 'Be muzzled!' (see Mk 1:25)." (Michael Card, Mark: The Gospel of Passion) In all three Gospels that record this miracle, the very next event that occurs is Jesus healing someone from demon possession. Jesus certainly shows His power here over nature, but also over the supernatural. His mission will not be thwarted by anyone.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:18, 23-27; Luke 8:22-25.
- Encouragement: "Lord, help!' they cried in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He calmed the storm to a whisper and stilled the waves. What a blessing was that stillness as he brought them safely into harbor! Let them praise the Lord for his great love and for the wonderful things he has done for them." Psalm 107:28-31 (NLT)
- Coach's Question for Reflection: What fears do I struggle to trust God with?

KEY VERSE

The disciples were amazed. "Who is this man?" they asked. "Even the winds and waves obey him!"

Matthew 8:27 (NLT)

ottom Line: The miracles of Jesus show us we can trust in Him when we're afraid.

SK (All Ages): What do you do when there's bad weather?

hen bad weather is on the way, most of us would probably like to be at home with our mily, watching the weather report on TV. But what if a storm came up suddenly and you eren't at home—in fact, you were on a little wooden boat out in the middle of a big lake?

nat's the situation Jesus' disciples found themselves in one day. They had set out in a shing boat to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. A storm came up without arning. The wind was strong, and the waves were huge. Water started crashing into the bat. Several of the disciples were fishermen who spent a lot of time on this lake, but even bey were afraid.

eanwhile, Jesus was taking a nap. Really! He was sleeping on a pillow in the back of the pat. The disciples had to wake Him up. They told Him, "We're going to drown!"

ne Bible says, "When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Silence! e still!' Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. (Mark 4:39, NLT)

SK (All Ages): What would happen if you went outside in a storm and yelled at the ind and rain to be still?

sus had power over the wind and the waves. He has power over all nature. Jesus is God, nd He was there when everything was created. So everything, even the biggest storm, ust listen to Him. If He tells it to stop, it will!

fter Jesus calmed the storm, He asked His disciples, "'Why are you afraid? Do you still ave no faith?' The disciples were absolutely terrified. 'Who is this man?' they asked each :her. 'Even the wind and waves obey him!'" (Mark 4:40-41, NLT)

ne disciples were still figuring out who Jesus was. They hadn't realized yet that He was od and had everything under His control. They didn't fully trust Him yet. Instead of alizing Jesus was on the boat and everything would be okay, they were afraid. Later, lese same men would let their faith in Jesus overcome their fear. They would face ardship, prison, and even death, all to tell people about Jesus. They would trust in God and His plan for their lives. They would no longer let fear get in the way.

SK (All Ages): What is something that scares you? How can you trust God in that tuation?

God won't calm every storm in our lives. He won't make everything easy. But, just like Jesus was with the disciples on the boat, God is with us. Even when we can't see that He's got everything under control, He does. He just asks us to trust Him, even in the middle of the storm.

LET'S PRAY

God, we can really relate with the disciples in this story. It would have been scary to be in that storm, but it also would have been amazing to see Jesus make it stop. God, please help us to trust in You when we're afraid. Remind us that You are with us and that You are in control. Amen.

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



- Background: In this devotion, we'll look at two separate but similar miracle stories. They both involve someone with authority, and they both end with the sick person being healed while Jesus is not even in the building—or in the first story, even in the same town. These miracles highlight Jesus' authority in a powerful way. The centurion's story is especially poignant. Centurions were the highest-ranked noncommissioned officers in the Roman army, leading divisions of around 100 soldiers each. This man knew about authority. His life revolved around following and giving orders. Though he was a Gentile, he "is almost certainly a 'God-fearer,' a Gentile who observes the basic tenets of Judaism but had not become a full convert." (Michael Card, Matthew: The Gospel of Identity) He is respectful of Jewish rituals, and knowing Jesus would be rendered unclean if he entered the centurion's home, he stops Jesus—though Jesus is willing to come in. Instead, he shows remarkable faith when he tells Jesus he knows He can heal his servant just by giving the command from where He is. Though his understanding is certainly incomplete, this soldier seems to understand more about Jesus' authority than even Jesus' own disciples at this time.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read John 4:43-54; Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10; Matthew 19:26.
- Encouragement: The centurion "asks for what he knows he doesn't deserve and faithfully expects to get it anyway . . . He seems to intuitively understand that although he has a right to expect nothing from Jesus, still Jesus is willing to give him everything." Michael Card, Luke: The Gospel of Amazement
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Is there anything I struggle to believe Jesus has authority over? If so, why is that?

KEY VERSE

Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking it is impossible. But with God everything is possible."

Matthew 19:26 (NLT)

lottom Line: The miracles of Jesus reveal His authority.

n 2001, a French surgeon in New York City performed the first-ever completely remote urgery by operating on a patient over 3,000 miles away in France. He controlled the obotic equipment in France over a wireless network to perform the surgery as if he were ght there in the room with the patient. While some surgeons today operate remotely, it's till not very common, though one day it may be.

iut, like any surgery, it takes time to complete the operation and even more time for the erson's body to heal and recover. Depending on their condition, they may require future urgeries and treatments.

ouring the time Jesus was on the earth, this kind of technology would have blown neir minds. There was no such thing as the Internet, phones, texts, or online doctor's ppointments. There was no way to interact or communicate with someone else far away to the exact same time. Distance got in the way. There was no way to get around it. Unless ou were Jesus.

One day, Jesus met a government official whose son was sick and dying in another town niles away. The official came to Jesus and begged Him to come and heal his son. Jesus and the man that his son would live. The man believed Jesus and left.

he Bible says, "While the man was on his way, some of his servants met him with ne news that his son was alive and well. He asked them when the boy had begun to et better, and they replied, 'Yesterday afternoon at one o'clock his fever suddenly isappeared!' Then the father realized that that was the very time Jesus had told him, 'our son will live.' And he and his entire household believed in Jesus." (John 4:51-53, NLT)

ISK (All Ages): What does this story tell us about Jesus and His power?

nother time, a centurion came to Jesus. A centurion was a Roman military leader in harge of a large group of soldiers. Most Romans did not believe in the God of the Bible. hey had conquered Israel, and it was now under their control. This man came to Jesus, sking for help. One of his favorite servants was sick and dying. Jesus said He would come nd heal the servant.

urprisingly, the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. ust say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed." (Matthew 8:8b, ILT) The centurion went on to say that he knew what it was like to have authority. He was a charge of his troops, and his orders were always followed. He believed that Jesus had

great authority and power. If Jesus said that his servant would be healed, he would be. Jesus didn't even have to be there.

Jesus was amazed at the centurion's faith. "Then Jesus said to the Roman officer, 'Go back home. Because you believed, it has happened.' And the young servant was healed that same hour." (Matthew 8:13, NLT)

ASK (3rd Grade and up): Why did what the centurion say show great faith in Jesus?

Jesus' power wasn't limited by distance. And unlike any kind of surgery, when Jesus healed people, it was complete and immediate. They were suddenly as good as new! These two stories should teach us to be like the centurion and realize that Jesus has incredible power. He is in charge. We can believe in Him to do things we think are impossible.

ASK (All Ages): How might believing that Jesus can do the impossible change how you pray? How might it change the way you live?

LET'S PRAY

God, You amaze us. You can do things we never thought possible. Thank You for how Jesus showed Your power and helped people at the same time. Help us to have faith in Your incredible power and authority. We believe You are in control. Amen.

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



- Background: We've looked at two similar miracle stories side-by-side in some of our devotions so far, but for this devotion, we'll look at two miracles contained in one story. Jesus has just landed on the shore after one of His trips across the lake. The crowd is already gathering, but one man-Jairus, a synagogue leader-seems the most desperate. He falls to His knees before Jesus, begging Him to come and heal his dying daughter. Jesus obliges, but as they are going, they are stopped when Jesus feels power go out of Him. A woman who has been bleeding for twelve years touched the hem of His garment and has been healed. When Jesus speaks to her, He calls her daughter. "It is an affectionate family term, and this is the only time we hear Jesus use it." (Michael Card, Mark: The Gospel of Passion) His tender words are intended to heal her soul just as her body has now been healed. This woman's medical condition had rendered her unclean for twelve years, unable to touch anyone or be part of her community. Jesus' reaction shows how much He cares about her as a person. But the interruption seems to have cost them some time. Jairus receives word that his daughter has died. Jesus tells him not to be afraid. When they arrive at Jairus' house, the professional mourners are making a racket. Jesus dismisses them, and, as tenderly as He spoke to the bleeding woman, He now speaks to the dead girl and tells her to get up. Amazingly, she does! This is the first of three times Jesus will raise someone from the dead
- Big Picture: For more insight, read Mark 5:21-43: Luke 8:40-56: Matthew 9:18-26.
- Encouragement: Jesus set out to heal one daughter but ended up healing two daughters. Note that the bleeding woman has had her debilitating condition for as long as the girl has been alive. Jesus cared for them both and treated them both with gentleness. He didn't let the interruption of the woman negatively affect His attitude toward her. He wasn't in such a hurry that He ignored her. In the often breakneck pace of our lives, we would do well to look at Jesus' example. He took His time in order to really take care of people. He viewed interruptions as opportunities. He cared for the whole person and spoke to them with love.
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Do I often find myself too busy, rushed, or distracted to give others my full presence? What would it feel like to slow down?

KEY VERSE

And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over." Mark 5:34 (NLT)

ottom Line: The miracles of Jesus encourage us to use every opportunity to help thers.

SK (All Ages): How does it feel when you get interrupted while you're trying to do mething important?

/e don't usually like it when something or someone gets in the way while trying to do mething important. It's easy to forget that what's most important is treating people well ad showing them we care. Today, you'll hear about a time when Jesus was interrupted on is way to do something super important. But instead of getting angry or upset, Jesus did mething amazing.

ere's what happened. One day, there was a whole crowd of people around Jesus. "Then a ader of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, arrived. When he saw Jesus, he fell: his feet, pleading fervently with him. 'My little daughter is dying,' he said. 'Please come nd lay your hands on her; heal her so she can live.'" (Mark 5:22-23, NLT) The girl was just velve years old.

esus walked with Jairus toward his house, and the crowd followed them. Jesus was arrounded by people when suddenly He felt something. "Who touched me?" He asked is disciples were a little confused—all kinds of people were pushing against Him in the rowd. "But Jesus said, 'Someone deliberately touched me, for I felt healing power go out om me." (Luke 8:46, NLT)

ventually, a trembling woman came forward and fell to her knees in front of Jesus. For velve years, she had suffered from a painful medical condition that kept her from living normal life. She wasn't allowed to touch anyone else at all. Hidden in the crowd, she had ached out toward Jesus, believing that she would be healed even if she just touched the em of His robe. And she was! Jesus said to her, "'Daughter, your faith has made you well. o in peace. Your suffering is over." (Mark 5:34b. NLT)

SK (All Ages): How do you think this woman felt after she was healed? How do you ink being healed changed her life?

SK (3rd Grade and up): Why do you think Jesus called the woman "daughter"? What ight Jesus' words have meant to someone who had been separated from any family 11 friends for twelve long years?

/hile this was all happening, Jairus got terrible news. His daughter had died before Jesus puld get there. But Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid. Just have faith." When they got to



Jairus' house, Jesus went in to see the girl. He held her hand and said, "Little girl, get up!" And the girl got up and started walking around! Jesus told her parents to get her some food. She was alive and well!

ASK (All Ages): What does this story tell you about Jesus? Why was He always letting people interrupt Him or drag Him around to different places to heal people?

Jesus cares about people. He cared about both the woman who touched His robe and Jairus' daughter. He cares about each one of us. When we are sick, scared, or desperate, we can ask Him for help. He might not help us in exactly the way we are expecting. But we can trust Him. He will be with us no matter what we are going through.

ASK (7th Grade and up): How would our lives change if we saw interruptions as opportunities like Jesus did?



God, thank You for caring about us. Help us remember we can always pray to You when we need help. Help us not to get frustrated at interruptions but to look for opportunities to help others and show them we care. Amen.

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



- Background: For this devotion, we'll look at one of Jesus' most incredible miracles: raising Lazarus from the dead. Though this is not the first time Jesus has brought someone back to life, this story dramatically portrays the sorrow of death and Jesus' power over it. Two primary reasons for this are that 1) Lazarus is a dear friend of Jesus and 2) Jesus raises him after he has been dead for four days. This was much longer than Jairus' daughter and the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11-17) were dead before Jesus raised them. "There can also now be no doubt that Lazarus was really dead. There was a Jewish folk belief that a soul would linger near a body for three days before it left." (Gary Inrig, The Miracles) This powerful story also highlights Jesus' attachment to Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary. The Bible says Jesus loved them (John 11:4); Jesus risked His life to come to them (John 11:8); Martha and Mary spoke to him honestly and didn't hide their emotions from Him (John 11:21, 32); Jesus reacted to the situation with emotion (John 11:33-35, 38); and Jesus brought Lazarus back to life (John 11:43-44). During his conversation with Martha, Jesus gives one of the seven "I am" statements in John, which help reveal His identity, saying, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying." (John 11:25) Martha responds by confessing her belief in Jesus as the Messiah (savior), similar to Peter's confession in Matthew 16:13-16.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read John 10:22-11:53.
- Encouragement: "The rabbis later taught that those who did not believe in the resurrection would not share in the life to come. Perhaps Martha has already heard this teaching. She confirms to Jesus her belief in the resurrection at the last day. But resurrection is no longer a matter of a time or a place, but a person. Jesus is the resurrection. Not a theological abstraction but a living, breathing human being." Michael Card, John: The Gospel of Wisdom
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Do I believe that Jesus really has power over death?

KEY VERSE

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying." John 11:25 (NLT)

ottom Line: The miracles of Jesus prove His power over death.

SK (All Ages): What do you think Jesus' most amazing miracle was?

ast practice, we talked about Jesus bringing a 12-year-old girl who had died back to 'e. That's pretty amazing! Today, we will talk about another miracle where Jesus brings present to life. Jesus was friends with two sisters named Mary and Martha, and their rother Lazarus. The Bible says specifically that Jesus loved them. He would often visit with them in the village where they lived. One day, Jesus got news that Lazarus was very ck. He waited two days and then told His disciples they were going to Bethany, where azarus and his sisters lived.

ome of the religious leaders in Jerusalem were very angry with Jesus because He had aimed to be God, and they didn't believe He was. They had even tried to stone Him. It as dangerous for Him to go back to the area. So Jesus' disciples tried to persuade Him ot to go. But Jesus traveled to Bethany anyway. When He arrived, Lazarus had already assed away.

lartha, one of Lazarus' sisters, came out to see Jesus. She said, "Lord, if only you had een here, my brother would not have died." (John 11:21b, NLT) Martha believed Jesus ould have healed her brother. But she didn't know that, even now, it wasn't too late for esus to help.

lesus told her, 'Your brother will rise again.'" (John 11:23, NLT)

SK (All Ages): What do you think Martha thought when Jesus told her that her brother azarus would rise again?

esus said to Martha, "'I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will ve, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do bu believe this, Martha?" (John 11:25-26, NLT)

lartha said, "'Yes, Lord . . . I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the ne who has come into the world from God." (John 11:27, NLT)

lartha believed Jesus was who He said He was. She believed He was the Son of God. As or Jesus, He was about to show off His power and prove who He was in a truly amazing ray.

esus was God, but He was also human and had human emotions. When He saw Mary,

Lazarus' other sister, weeping, the Bible says Jesus also wept. He cared deeply about this family.

ASK (7th Grade and up): Do you think of Jesus as having emotions? What does this tell you about Him?

Jesus went to the tomb where Lazarus had been buried. It was a cave with a giant stone rolled in front of the entrance.

""Roll the stone aside,' Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man's sister, protested, 'Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible." (John 11:39, NLT)

But Jesus insisted, and they rolled the stone aside. Jesus prayed and then shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus walked right out of the tomb, still wrapped in grave clothes. He was alive! After this happened, many people believed in Jesus. But others became more determined to kill Him.

Even though we know that Jesus raising the 12-year-old girl back to life was just as amazing as this, she had just died before Jesus raised her. Lazarus had been dead for four days, which, in their culture, meant that he was really, truly dead before Jesus brought him back to life. This proved His power to those who saw this miracle—in an incredible way. Jesus had the ultimate power: power over death. Soon, He would be raised back to life Himself and would defeat death forever. We'll talk more about that next practice.

LET'S PRAY

God, thank You that Jesus cared about Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. Thank You that He cares about us. And thank You that He has power over death. Like Martha, help us believe that Jesus really is who He said He is. Help us see that Jesus really is the Son of God. Amen.

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



- Background: This important devotion will focus on the greatest miracle: that God came to the earth to live among us and die for us, ultimately defeating death and restoring our relationship with Him. All of the other miracles Jesus performed were in service to this one. They revealed His identity and His priorities. He was God, and He came to save us. Jesus' death and resurrection prove this to the fullest extent. Only God could conquer death, and only a God who loves us would die for us. The Bible often refers to Jesus being raised from the dead. God the Father vindicated His Son by raising Him from the dead (Galatians 1:1; Acts 2:24, 13:30), through the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:4, 8:11; 1 Peter 3:18). But Jesus also refers to His own involvement in His resurrection in John 2:19-22 and 10:17-18. "The New Testament thus records the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as all performing the miracle of Christ's resurrection." (NET Bible Notes on John 2) This devotion will help the athletes on your team understand the miracle of the cross and the empty tomb, and what it means for them.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read John 19-20; Romans 10:9-13; Romans 5:1-11.
- Encouragement: "The credibility of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the fulcrum on which belief in miracles rests. In the light of the resurrection, the accounts of His miracles fit coherently, and on the basis of His authority, the miracles of the entire Bible gain credence." Gary Inrig, *The Miracles*
- Coach's Question for Reflection: What impact has the miracle of Jesus' resurrection had on my life?

KEY VERSE

If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:9 (NLT)

ottom Line: The greatest miracle is that Jesus died and rose again to save us.

his season, we've been learning about some of the amazing miracles Jesus performed 'hile He was on the earth. But not everyone was amazed. Some people were angry. They eard what Jesus taught and saw what He did, but they didn't believe He was the Son of od. They thought He was an imposter and a troublemaker. The things He said and did reatened their power and their beliefs.

ventually, they arrested and imprisoned Jesus. They put Him on trial with false witnesses, nd He was sentenced to die. Jesus was nailed to a wooden cross, with two criminals on rosses on either side of Him. It was a terrible, painful way to die.

/e know how powerful Jesus was. At any time, He could have stopped this. But He didn't, ecause dying on the cross was part of His mission on the earth. We've seen how much esus cared about people, and His biggest act of love was dying on the cross. He did it to ave all of us.

od created each one of us and loves us very much. He wants to have a relationship with s. But God is holy and perfect, and we are not. We are far from perfect because we all sin. in is anything we think, do, or say that disobeys God. It's things like lying and cheating nd hurting other people on purpose. God can't be in a relationship with us because of our n. It is the opposite of who He is. Sin separates us from Him, now and forever.

SK (All Ages): Why do you think sin separates us from God?

his is where Jesus comes in. The Bible says the punishment for sin is death. When Jesus ied on the cross, He took our punishment on Himself. He paid the price for our sin. And ecause Jesus is God and never sinned, when He died, it canceled our sin forever. When e believe in what Jesus did for us and ask God to forgive us for our sins, He forgives us grough Jesus! We can have a relationship with Him.

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

esus dying on the cross isn't the end of the story, though. He was buried in a tomb like ne one Lazarus was buried in. Three days after He died, some of Jesus' female followers ent to Jesus' tomb and found it empty! They thought someone had stolen Jesus' body nd hurried to tell Jesus' disciples. Simon Peter and John ran to the tomb and found it mpty, just like they said. Then they left.

lary Magdalene, one of the women, stood near the tomb crying. She saw someone in

the garden with her but didn't recognize Him. The man asked her why she was crying. She assumed He was the gardener and asked Him where He had put Jesus' body. Then, the man said her name—and she finally recognized that it was Jesus! He was alive and standing in front of her!

Jesus gave Mary a message for His followers. She ran and found them, saying, "I have seen the Lord!" Jesus appeared to His followers several more times before returning to heaven, where He is still alive today! You see, Jesus' resurrection is the greatest miracle of all. When Jesus raised Lazarus and Jairus' daughter, they probably lived for a few more decades. But eventually, they both died again. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He couldn't die again. He defeated death once and for all. Because of this, if we believe in Jesus and trust in what He did for us, we will live with Him forever in heaven after we die. The Bible says, "If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9. NLT)

ASK (3rd Grade and up): Why is it important that Jesus didn't stay dead and didn't die later on?

This is the greatest miracle of all time and the most amazing thing Jesus did. And He did it all for us. There's a Bible verse that says this: "So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God." (Romans 5:11. NLT) That's amazing!

ASK (All Ages): What do you think it means to be a friend of God?

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. Please let everyone here accept Your gift of forgiveness through Jesus so that we can all be friends of God. 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.



- · Background: The miracle we'll look at in this devotion is rich with meaning. Here, Jesus exercises remarkable authority over both the spiritual and the physical world by forgiving and healing a paralyzed man. "The Lord Jesus was claiming not only the ability but also the authority to forgive sins on the earth. In other words, He was claiming for himself the prerogative of God. He will make that 'incredible' claim credible by giving the grumbling religious leaders a visible display of His divine authority in the spiritual realm by demonstrating His authority in the physical realm. His healing power was not an end in itself. It was a flashing arrow, pointing to His divine authority. In what He was about to do, there was an implicit claim to deity." (Gary Inrig, The Miracles) This will help fuel the religious leaders' antagonization toward Jesus. Meanwhile, we also see how Jesus emphasizes the spiritual need for forgiveness even over physical needs. Several significant things are going on here! Yet, we often come away from this story focused on the tremendous faith of the four friends who brought the paralytic to Jesus and didn't let any obstacles (including a roof they would probably have to pay to repair) stand in their way. The main point of this miracle is Jesus' identity, power, and authority, but the story also reminds us that if we are convinced that Jesus is who He says He is, we should stop at nothing to bring people closer to Him. It was the determined faith of the stretcher-bearers that Jesus Himself responded to.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read Luke 5:17-26; Mark 2:1-12; Matthew 9:1-8.
- Encouragement: We see Jesus care for people's physical needs in many instances throughout the Gospels. But He also cares for their spiritual and emotional needs. When we seek to follow His example, we should certainly do our best to help people in tangible ways. But we can often overlook the less obvious needs. How can we help with needs we can't see? Are there people around you who need prayer, encouragement, friendship, forgiveness, etc.? Look for a way to meet an intangible need of someone in your life this week.
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Have I ever let an obstacle keep me from helping someone else get closer to Jesus? How can I overcome that obstacle in the future?

KEY VERSE

And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God.

Luke 5:25 (NLT)

ottom Line: The miracles of Jesus remind us to help bring others to Him.

want you to imagine that you're living 2,000 years ago, in the time of Jesus. Something appened to you when you were younger—either an injury or an illness—that caused ou to be paralyzed. You can't walk. There are no wheelchairs, so when you want to go nywhere, you have to rely on someone else. It is a difficult life. But you have great friends. hey are always looking out for you.

ne day, one of your friends comes running into your house. Three more friends are with im. "The teacher is back!" he says, full of excitement. "We have to take you to Him. He can eal you!" You've heard of the amazing things this man named Jesus has done. "Let's go!" ou say, and your friends help you onto the stretcher they use to carry you.

our friends are practically running, with you bouncing along on the stretcher. But they ow down as they get closer to the house where Jesus has been teaching. There is a huge rowd. Your friends try one way, then another. They can't get through. One of them looks round and has an idea. They start carrying you up the outside stairs on the side of the ouse—the stairs that go up to the roof.

our friends set you down and start digging a hole into the straw roof of the house. It's got be big for your stretcher to fit through, but they manage to do it. The people below are aring with shock and curiosity as your friends lower you on your stretcher into the house sing a rope. Suddenly, you are staring up at Jesus, the one you have heard so much bout—the one who might be able to change your life.

SK (All Ages): What would you be feeling in this moment?

everal of the books about Jesus in the Bible tell us about a paralyzed man who was rought to Jesus by his friends and was lowered through a hole in the ceiling right in front f Jesus, just like this! Let's find out what happened in the real story.

he Bible says, "Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, 'Young man, your sins are prgiven." (Luke 5:20, NLT)

.SK (All Ages): Do you think this is what the man and his friends were expecting? Why rould Jesus say this?

his made some of the religious leaders who were in the crowd angry. "Who can forgive ns but God?" they thought. They were mad that Jesus was claiming to be God. Little did ney know that Jesus was God, and He knew exactly what they were thinking.

Jesus said, "Why do you question this in your hearts? Is it easier to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up and walk?" (Luke 5:22b-23, NLT) Jesus would prove that He had the authority and the power to forgive sins by showing He had the authority and power to do something no one else could do.

The Bible says, "Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!' And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God." (Luke 5:24b-25, NLT)

ASK (3rd Grade and up): Why do you think Jesus forgave the man before He healed him? How did healing the man show that Jesus also had the authority to forgive sins?

Jesus did something amazing by healing this man, but He knew that physical healing wasn't all the man needed. He needed forgiveness for His sins. Jesus healed many people during His time on the earth, but He never forgot that people needed forgiveness, too. And one day, He would do something even more amazing by dying on the cross so that we could all find forgiveness in Him, which we talked about last practice.

ASK (All Ages): Think about the paralyzed man's friends. What can we learn from them?

The man's friends were determined to bring their friend to Jesus. They didn't know exactly what would happen, but they believed Jesus could help their friend. And they didn't stop when the crowd got in their way. They did everything they could to bring their friend to Jesus. They can inspire us to tell our friends about Jesus and do what we can to help them experience the hope, healing, and forgiveness Jesus offers.

LET'S PRAY

God, You know what we need. Thank You for the forgiveness we can have through Jesus. And thank You for the people in our lives who have taught us about Jesus and brought us closer to Him. Help us to be that kind of friend to others. Amen.

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



- Background: The miracle we'll discuss in this devotion is the only one recorded in all four Gospel accounts (aside from Jesus' resurrection). The context is significant. The disciples have recently returned from their mission trip to preach, cast out demons, and heal. Jesus has recently learned of John the Baptist's beheading. John writes that it is near Passover, so it is about one year before the Passover when Jesus Himself will be executed. Jesus and His disciples withdraw by boat to a remote, quiet place to rest and recharge away from the ever-present crowds that follow Jesus. But the crowds follow on foot around the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. They are relentless. But so is Jesus. He is likely emotionally and physically weary, but He has compassion on them, heals their sicknesses, and teaches them. When the hour grows late. He tells the disciples to feed these masses, which amount to 5.000 men-with women and children, there were likely at least triple that number. The disciples, who are also tired from their travels, have no answer. They don't have the resources to feed this many people! But Jesus is about to perform an astonishing miracle and teach them a valuable lesson at the same time. "The Lord had two seemingly opposing things He wanted to teach His disciples: their responsibility and their inadequacy." (Gary Inrig, The Miracles) But Jesus will also prove His sufficiency. In Judaism, the leftovers collected after a meal, known as the peah, were given to the slaves. After this miraculous meal, there are exactly twelve baskets of leftoversone for each of the twelve disciples. Jesus expects them to serve, but He doesn't leave them out.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read John 6:1-15; Matthew 14:13-23; Mark 6:31-46; Luke 9:10-17
- Encouragement: "Although He had not needed the boy's lunch as a starter for a miracle, and although He didn't need the disciples to be distributors of the food, He had chosen to use them both. The main inadequacy the disciples displayed wasn't the inadequacy of their finances or their food resources, but the inadequacy of their faith in Him. As long as they calculated without Christ, they were helpless in the face of overwhelming needs. But when they simply obeyed Him, His sufficiency proved to be more than enough to meet not only the needs of the crowds but their own needs as well." Gary Inrig, The Miracles
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Do I believe Jesus is sufficient to meet my needs?

KEY VERSE

Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

John 6:35 (NLT)

ottom Line: The miracles of Jesus teach us that He will provide.

SK (All Ages): What kind of food or meal do you think of when you're really hungry? /hat sounds so good when your stomach is grumbling? (Give a personal example.)

re usually feel the most hungry after we've been working hard and we've gone a while ithout food. You've probably been pretty hungry after a game or a hike, or after working ard helping your parents around the yard or the house. Today, I want to tell you about time when Jesus was surrounded by some hungry people. Jesus and his disciples had iken a boat to another area around the Sea of Galilee, but a huge crowd of people illowed Jesus around to the other part of the lakeshore, traveling by foot.

) be honest, Jesus wanted a break. He had just gotten the very sad news that His cousin ad died. He wanted to be alone to pray. Plus, He'd been surrounded by crowds for a long me and probably wanted some peace and quiet. But when Jesus saw that the crowds ad followed Him, He had compassion on them. He healed those who were sick and arted to teach.

SK (All Ages): Jesus cared for the crowds even when He was tired and needed a break. /hat does that tell us about Him?

was getting late, and they were in the middle of nowhere. The people were probably atting pretty hungry. They were miles away from home and had walked a long way. Jesus' sciples suggested that they send the crowd away so that they could buy food in the arrby villages and countryside. But Jesus told His disciples, "You give them something to at."

ne disciples were shocked. The Bible says there were 5,000 men there. With the women nd children, there were probably more like 10 or 15,000 people in the crowd. The sciples couldn't afford to feed all these people!

ut Simon Peter's brother Andrew spoke up. He'd found a boy with five small loaves of read and two small fish. He said, "But what good is that with this huge crowd?" (John 9b, NLT)

esus took the boy's lunch and told His disciples to have the crowd sit down in groups. The ible says, "Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the eople. Afterward he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted." John 6:11, NLT)

ASK (K-2nd Grade): What makes this a miracle? Could Jesus have fed all those people with the food He was given?

ASK (All Ages): What does this miracle tell us about Jesus? Why do you think He decided to feed the people instead of sending them away?

After everyone was full, Jesus sent His disciples back around to gather any food that was left. They ended up with twelve big baskets of leftovers! Jesus didn't just feed people what they needed. He went above and beyond—and there was a basket left over for each of His twelve disciples.

ASK (All Ages): What are some ways you can show compassion to people and care for their needs?

Later, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35b, NLT) Jesus wasn't just talking about food. Even though He provided for the physical needs of the crowd, He knew that wasn't all they needed. They needed Him. He was the only one who could save them and give them eternal life. He cared about them and didn't want them to only have what they needed during their lives on this earth, but also after they died.

LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for caring about us. Remind us to turn to You when we need help. Show us how we can have compassion for people around us and meet their needs. Thank You for sending Jesus so that we could have eternal life with You. 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.



- · Background: Our next miracle takes place immediately after the one we studied last practice. John writes that the people who witnessed Jesus multiply a small lunch into enough food for thousands were ready to force Jesus to be their king. This was not the plan. Jesus dismisses the crowds, sends His disciples ahead of Him by boat, and slips away into the hills to finally get His much-needed alone time with God. When Jesus walks toward the disciples on the water, He identifies Himself and tells them not to be afraid. In the original Greek, the words literally mean, "I am; no fear!" Jesus had just provided bread to people in the wilderness (as God did for the Israelites in the Old Testament). Now, He identified Himself in the same way that God identified Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14) as He walked on the water, an act also associated with God in the Old Testament (Job 9:8-10; Psalm 89:9). Though the disciples couldn't yet fully understand Jesus or His complete mission on the earth, they finally understood enough to truly worship Him as the Son of God (Matthew 14:33). Peter's part of this story is only recorded in Matthew. On the one hand. Peter shows great faith and initiative in requesting to participate in the miracle. On the other hand, he lets doubt overtake him. It is easy for us to see ourselves in Peter. Jesus wants us to be part of His work (as in the miracle of the loaves and fish, for instance), but we must keep our eyes on Him. If we do, we are sure to witness some unbelievable, beautiful things.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read Matthew 14:22-33; John 6:16-21; Mark 6:45-52.
- Encouragement: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith." Hebrews 12:1-2a (NLT)
- Coach's Question for Reflection: What about Jesus' miracles makes me want to worship Him?

KEY VERSE

But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!" Matthew 14:27 (NLT)

ottom Line: The miracles of Jesus should lead us to worship Him.

oday, we're going to talk about one of Jesus' most famous miracles. Like several others e've talked about, this miracle took place on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had sent His isciples off in a boat to return to the other side of the lake, while He took some time to ray alone.

ne disciples were in the middle of the lake, struggling to steer the boat with the oars ecause the wind was against them. Around three o'clock in the morning, the disciples aw a figure out on the lake, walking on the water! They were terrified. They thought it was ahost.

SK (All Ages): What would you think if you saw someone walking on water?

ut, of course, it wasn't a ghost. It was Jesus! He said to them, "Don't be afraid. Take burage. I am here."

SK (3rd Grade and up): The disciples saw Jesus do many miracles. Why do you think ley were still surprised whenever He did something impossible?

ut Jesus wasn't the only one who would get to walk on the water. Simon Peter called Him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." (Matthew I:28b, NLT) Jesus told him to come. Peter climbed over the side of the boat and started alking on the water toward Jesus!

eter's once-in-a-lifetime experience didn't last long, though. He looked around and saw ie wind and waves and got scared. He stopped trusting in Jesus and started giving in to s fear. Peter began to sink and shouted for Jesus to save him.

ne Bible says, "Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. 'You have so little ith,' Jesus said. 'Why did you doubt me?' When they climbed back into the boat, the ind stopped. Then the disciples worshiped him. 'You really are the Son of God!' they cclaimed." (Matthew 14:31-33, NLT)

SK (All Ages): What do you think made Peter stop trusting in Jesus at this moment?

esus was so close to Peter when Peter was sinking that Jesus could reach out and grab m. But Peter forgot Jesus was right there with him and that Jesus was in control. Peter this fear distract him and keep him from fully trusting Jesus.

ASK (3rd Grade and up): How can fear hold us back from fully trusting in God?

A verse later in the New Testament tells us that we should keep our eyes on Jesus. That's what Peter needed to do, and that's what we need to do. If we focus on Jesus instead of our fears, He will lead us through them. We can know that He is always right there with us.

The disciples' response to this incredible miracle was to worship Jesus. This was the first time that they seemed to really believe that He was the Son of God. All of Jesus' miracles point to this amazing truth. Like the disciples, when we read about Jesus' miracles and see the amazing ways He is working in our lives, we should also stop and worship Him. Remember, He did everything we've talked about this season because He loves us. He deserves our praise and our worship. He is worth it.

ASK (All Ages): What about Jesus' miracles makes you want to worship Him?

LET'S PRAY

God, You truly are miraculous. Thank You for all the amazing things Jesus did on the earth, and thank You for all the amazing things You do in our lives today. We believe You are always right there with us, ready to help us. Teach us to trust in You, even when we feel afraid. Help us to keep our eyes on You. We are amazed by You, and we want to worship You always. Amen.

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

SECTION 4

GAMES

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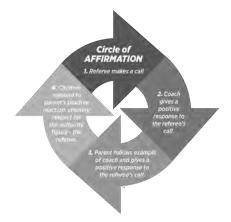
→ Circle of Affirmation

Game Day Attitude

Choosing the right game-day attitude is a key to being an effective Upward Basketball 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.

In Upward Basketball, 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.

→ The Levels of Upward Basketball

Upward Basketball suggests a four-level, age-appropriate format that progresses with each player. Each level of Upward Basketball is tailored to meet players where they are in their age development and ability, allowing them to reach their full potential.



→ Basic Rules for Levels 1-3

Note: These rules do NOT apply to Level 4.

Except where the following rules apply, play is governed by the National Federation of State High School Associations' (NFHS) Rules Book www.nfhs.org

Game Format

- Referees lead both teams in prayer at center court before every game. This sets the tone and focus for the game.
- A coin flip or other impartial method determines which team receives possession first. In jump ball situations, possessions will alternate. This promotes fairness for both teams while adhering to the NFHS rule for jump ball situations.
- Clock format: Running clock throughout the game, stopping only for pre-determined substitutions at the end of each segment and halftime.
- At the end of each segment, the team that receives the ball next is based upon the direction of the possession arrow.
 This avoids the offensive team that may have possession in the next segment from stalling at the end of a period.
- All coaches will adhere to the Upward substitution system.
 The substitution system allows for equal playing time for all players.
- ◆ There are no timeouts. This allows more playing time and keeps the games on time.
- Teams switch goals at halftime. This rule is in compliance with NFHS Rules. It also evens any advantage that may occur because of the court.
- Any game ending in a tie should remain in a tie. No overtimes are played so games stay on schedule.

Rules for Play

Defense

- Man-to-man defense will be played at all times in Levels 1-3. In a man-to-man defense, players are only guarding the opponent that closely matches their ability and height. This allows for a more competitive system for every player on the court while creating an equal opportunity for each player.
- Defensive players must stay within approximate arm's reach of the player they are guarding. This prevents defenders from sagging or crowding an area of the court to gain a defensive advantage. When a violation occurs, award the team in possession a throw-in from the spot nearest to the violation, or have the player step back and establish their dribble.
 - After a warning to the player, the player will be assessed a personal foul for subsequent violations.
- Double-teaming is not allowed and prevents players not guarding their correct player from stealing the ball off the dribble. However, help-and-recover defense is strongly encouraged in the instances below. Help-and-recover lets a player temporarily guard another player as outlined in the examples below, but must leave as the other player gets within arms reach as double teaming is not allowed.
 - > Lane Area: If a defender is in the lane and the player they are guarding is within arm's reach, the defender is allowed to provide help defense inside the lane. Since many goals are scored in the lane, it provides the defense more opportunity to properly defend this area.

- Picks and Screens: Defensive switching is allowed on offensive picks or screens. The non-screened defender can help his or her teammate by temporarily switching until the teammate recovers to defend their offensive player. This is commonly referred to as "help-and-recover." This prevents the offense from continually setting screens to gain an advantage.
- > Fast Breaks: When a transition begins in the backcourt and the offense quickly moves the ball up court, another defensive player may help-and-recover. Upon stopping the fast break, defenders should return to guarding their assigned players. This rule is meant to prevent the defenders from helplessly watching the offensive player score without being able to help.
- At the beginning of each segment, players will line up at half court and "match up" with whom they are guarding. This act is performed to promote equal player match-ups. Equal match-ups combined with man-to-man defense create five competitive pairings on the court.
- Full-court presses are not allowed. Defensive players may not guard their opponents in the backcourt. This will allow for more play to occur in the front court and create an equal opportunity for each player to participate both on offense and defense.
- When playing on a short court, backcourt violations will not be called. If playing on a regulation-size court (84 feet) as opposed to cross-court, backcourt violations should be called. 10 seconds should be called on short courts or regulation size courts.
- A player committing two fouls in one segment must sit out the remainder of that segment. The next player in the rotation comes in as the substitute and is rewarded some.

extra game time. This does not change the normal rotation as the fouled-out player does not re-enter the game until they are next scheduled to do so. This rule allows the offending player time to regroup during the remainder of the segment while realizing that there is a consequence for the violation.

Offense

- ◆ The offense must purposefully attack the defense in every situation - no stalling or throwing the ball into the backcourt to "reset" a play or "retreat" from the defense. After a warning from the referee, a violation will be called resulting in a turnover. This will prevent a team with the lead from running the clock out by staying in the backcourt where the opponent is unable to play defense.
- Isolation plays will not be a part of Levels 1-3 because they take away the opportunity for improvement for all players and contradict the spirit of the rules. For offense this prevents players being positioned at half-court to isolate defenders away from the play.
- Non-shooting fouls will result in the ball being inbounded from either the baseline or sideline. All shooting fouls will result in two free throws. By not administering "bonus" situation free throws, all players on the court can contribute to consistent game action.
- No score will be given for a basket in the wrong goal. It will be treated as a turnover and will be taken out along the baseline. This will prevent further embarrassing a player for making this mistake.

→ Level 1 (K5) Modifications

RULE	EXPLANATION / COMMENTS
Goal Height	7 feet
Ball Size	27.5"
Games consist of six, 6-minute segments and an 8 minute halftime. One minute is allotted for substitutions between segments.	This keeps games to approximately an hour time frame.
Score is not kept	The focus of this age is to learn fundamentals, not winning and losing.
3-second violation is not called	Referees should advise players of this potential violation but not penalize.
Coaches are allowed on the floor with players	The focus is for coaches to instruct and encourage players at all times.
Stealing the ball from the dribbler is not allowed	To encourage the offensive player to dribble with correct form without the pressure of having the ball stolen.
Stealing the ball off a pass is not allowed	To encourage the offensive player to pass with correct form without the pressure of having the ball stolen. A block should not be considered a steal.
Violation is not called for having two hands on the ball while dribbling	Due to limited hand-eye coordination, this allows a player to establish correct dribbling form through rhythm and pressure on the ball.
Violation for double dribbling is called but does not result in a turnover	Players should learn the concept of double dribble but should be allowed the opportunity to correct it without penalty.
Violation for traveling is called but does not result in a turnover	Players should learn the concept of traveling, but should be allowed the opportunity to correct it without penalty.
Violation for traveling is not called when a player shuffles feet when trying to set up for a shot	Because this age group is single skill focused, players will tend to shuffle their feet when focusing on setting up for a shot. This is corrected as the player develops in skill as he gets older.
Fast Breaks are allowed in any transition situation	Players at this age will learn proper transition offense.
Free throws are awarded on all shooting fouls	Two shots are attempted by the fouled player at the 8'-10' line. Offense may have up to 2 players on the lane, not including the shooter. Defense may have up to 3 players on the lane. After the last free throw attempt, the ball becomes live.

→ Level 2 (1st & 2nd Grade) Modifications

RULE	EXPLANATION / COMMENTS	
Goal Height	8 feet	
Ball Size	27.5"	
Games consist of six, 6-minute segments and an 8 minute halftime. One minute is allotted for substitutions between segments.	This keeps games to approximately an hour time frame.	
Score is Optional	Focus on teaching young athletes the proper skill development traits needed to handle winning and losing after a game. This will translate into life lessons.	
3-second violation is not called	Young athletes at this age should focus on offensive basics (dribbling, passing, shooting, and rebounding).	
One Coach per team is allowed to walk the sidelines to encourage and instruct players	Players will be able to focus their attention on the coach standing. Walking the sidelines allows the coach to instruct and encourage players at all times.	
Free throws are awarded on all shooting fouls	Two shots are attempted by the fouled player at the 10' line. Offense may have up to 2 players on the lane, not including the shooter. Defense may have up to 3 players on the lane. After the last free throw attempt, the ball becomes live.	
Stealing the ball off a dribble or pass is allowed		
Double dribble violation is called in all circumstances	Players at this age should be taught and held to these basic basketball rules.	
Traveling violation is called in all circumstances		
Fast breaks are allowed in any transition situation		

→ Level 3 (3rd & 4th Grade) Modifications

RULE	EXPLANATION/COMMENTS	
Goal Height	9 feet	
Ball Size	28.5"	
Games consist of six, 6-minute segments and an 8-minute halftime. One minute is allotted for substitutions between segments.	This keeps games to approximately an hour time frame.	
Score IS kept	Young athletes at this age should learn how to handle winning and losing after competition. This translates into life lessons.	
3-second violation is called and results in a turnover	At this age, young athletes should understand the concept of offensive movement by not allowing an offensive player to stay in the lane more than 3 seconds	
One coach per team is allowed to stand in their coach box area to encourage and instruct players.	Players will be able to focus their attention on the coach standing. Walking the sidelines allows the coach to instruct and encourage players at all times.	
Clock runs continuously with special rules in effect with fewer than two minutes remaining in the game: Non-shooting fouls result in the offensive team getting one point and the ball. Shooting fouls result in the offensive team scoring two points. The opposing team then takes possession. Players fouled in the act of shooting and making the basket are credited with the basket plus one point. The opposing team then takes possession.	Because the clock does not stop, this rule keeps the game moving without wasting the running game clock on lining up for free throw attempts	
Free throws are awarded on all shooting fouls.	Two shots are attempted by the fouled player at the 12' line. Offense may have up to 2 players on the lane, not including the shooter. Defense may have up to 3 players on the lane. After the last free throw attempt, the ball becomes live.	
Stealing the ball off a dribble or pass is allowed		
Double dribble violation is called in all circumstances	Players at this age should be taught and held to these basic basketball rules.	
Traveling violation is called in all circumstances		
Fast breaks are allowed in any transition situation		

→ Level 4 (5th Grade & Up) Rules

*The following rules are exclusive to Level 4. They follow a more traditional middle school format and game play. Except where the following rules apply, play is governed by the National Federation of State High School Associations' (NFHS) Rules Book www.nfhs.org

RULE	EXPLANATION / COMMENTS
Referees lead both team in prayer at center court before every game	This sets the tone and focus for the game
Goal Height	10 feet
Ball Size	28.5" (girls), 29.5' (boys)
Games consist of 4, six minute quarters	Follows middle school rules and allows game to begin and end within an hour timeframe
The clock stops at each whistle	Stoppage of play includes violations, fouls, out-of-bounds play, timeouts, and injury
Overtimes are 2 minutes in length (regulation clock)	Gives both teams the opportunity to win the game with reasonably extended time. If the game is still tied at the end of the first overtime period, you have two options: The game ends in a tie First team to score a basket wins the game (no extra time needed)
Teams are allowed one 30-second timeout per half (1 per team per half)	This allows a coach to meet with players and adjust strategy during a game
All games are played on a full-sized regulation court (no cross court)	This is appropriate floor size for players at this level
A jump ball is used to start the game and overtime period	Athletes at this age have the physical ability to jump for the ball to obtain possession. It also follows the NFHS rules for starting a game or overtime
Zone and man defenses are allowed (both may be used throughout the season)	Players at this level possess the ability to defend and attack both zone and man principles. Zone and man defenses are a part of the game of basketball and should be understood by players as they prepare for the next level.
Press defense is allowed in the backcourt at all times except if a team has a 15-point advantage	To promote fairness and integrity of the game, teams with a 15-point advantage should drop into a basic half-court defense.

(cont.)

→ Level 4 (5th Grade & Up) Rules Cont.

RULE	EXPLANATION / COMMENTS
All players are allowed five fouls each game. After the 5th foul is committed, the player is out for the remainder of the game Beginning with the fifth team foul in each quarter, bonus free throws are awarded to the fouled team (2 shots). The number of fouls counting towards	This rule follows traditional middle school rules format
the bonus resets at the end of each quarter, so the bonus free throws do not carry over from quarter to quarter.	
Three point shots are allowed only if the court features a three-point arc.	Courts without a 3-point line should not award 3 points no matter the shot distance
Playing time requirements for each player in Level 4 are: ◆ Each athlete plays a minimum of ¼ of each game ◆ Each athlete must play in both halves of each game	Level 4 does not use the substitution system found in Levels 1-3. This allows flexibility in managing playing time for each coach based on the game situation while promoting fair game participation for all players
End of season tournaments are encouraged for Level 4	End of season tournament play adds excitement to your league. (see Resources on MyUpward.org for tournament templates)

→ Upward Substitution Rotation

- The basic Upward substitution system applies to ONLY Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 divisions.
- Level 4 division does not use the basic Upward Substitution Rotations detailed in this training guide.
 Playing time for this division are:
 - Each player plays a minimum of 1/4 each game.
 - Each player must play in both halves of each game.
- ♦ In Level 1 games consist of six 6-minute segments with an 8-minute halftime. Levels 2 and 3 plays six 6-minute segments with an 8-minute halftime.

The Upward Substitution Rotation for Levels 1-3 is designed to provide every player equal opportunity for improvement. The substitution system ensures the following:

- Every player will play at least half of the game. This eliminates preferential treatment of players.
- No player will sit out more than six minutes at a time. This allows each player to be involved in consistent game action and assists in keeping players focused and engaged in the game.
- The starting lineup shifts down one player for the start of every game allowing every player to be in the starting lineup. This gives all players a time to be on the court first and no child feels as though they are used only as a reserve player.

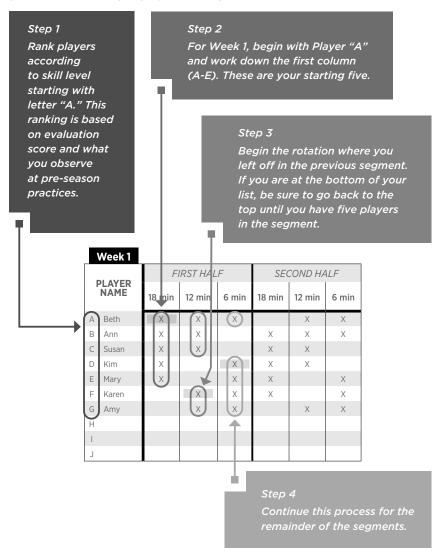
- Coaches are not open to making unfair substitutions.
 Following substitution rotation helps coaches manage who should be in the game.
- Coaches are free from monitoring playing time for each player. The substitution system allows coaches to focus more on instructing and encouraging players than awarding playing time.
- Playing time for all players is virtually even over the course of the season. This gives all players game experience and to allows them to be a contributing teammate.

When using MyUpward, mark the game complete to see a summary of the stars and notes you took during the game for easy post game star presentation.

MYUPWARD MAKES THE SUBSTITUTION SYSTEM
EASY TO MANAGE. IT SHOWS THE GAME BY GAME
PER PERIOD ROTATION WHERE YOU MAY ACTIVATE
PLAYERS, REMOVE PLAYERS FROM THE LINEUP, TAKE
NOTES AND TRACK GAME DAY STARS.

→ Filling Out the Substitution Form

Here is how to use substitution form in the back of the book if you are not using MyUpward.org.



For Week 2, begin with Player "B" and fill in five players for the starting lineup.

Using the previous method, you would then fill in the rest of the form accordingly for Week 2.

Ĺ,	OL AVED	FIRST HALF			SECOND HALF		
PLAYER NAME		18 min	12 min	6 min	18 min	12 min	6 min
Α	Beth	_					
В	Ann	X					
С	Susan	X					
D	Kim	X					
Е	Mary	X					
F	Karen	(x)					
G	Amy						
Н							
-							
J							

Substitution Scenario

It's Week 3 and, as game time approaches, Mary has not arrived (she is supposed to be in the starting lineup for Week Three). She did not call prior to the game and inform you that she will not be present.

How to fill out the form:

Since it's Week 3, you'll start with Susan followed by Kim. For the first segment only, draw a line through the box for Mary. Fill in the box for Karen and Amy (this now gives you four players). To occupy the fifth spot, fill in the next person in the rotation (Beth). This is your new starting lineup for Week Three.

PLAYER NAME		Fi	IRST HAL	F	SECOND HALF		
		18 min	12 min	6 min	18 min	12 min	6 min
А	Beth	X					
В	Ann						
C	Susan	Χ					
D	Kim	X					
Е	Mary						
F	Karen	Χ					
G	Amy	X					
Н							
- [
J							

For the second segment, start with the next person in the rotation (Ann) and work down the form to include Susan and Kim. Draw a line through Mary's box and continue down the form to include Karen and Amy.

If by the third segment Mary has yet to arrive, draw another line through her name and begin with the next person in the rotation (Beth) to begin this segment. Continue this lineup with Ann, Susan, Kim and Karen.

DI AVED	FIRST HALF			SECOND HALF		
PLAYER NAME	18 min	12 min	6 min	18 min	12 min	6 min
A Beth	Χ		X			
B Ann		X	X			
C Susan	X	X	X			
D Kim	X	X	X			
E Mary						
F Karen	X	X	X			
G Amy	X	X				
Н						
1						
J						

If Mary arrives during halftime, continue with the current cycle including Mary in the proper rotation. Then continue with the rest of the rotations through the end of the game. As you can see with the previous example, it is important to NOT fill out your form prior to the game. If a participant 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.

PLAYER NAME		Fi	IRST HAL	F	SECOND HALF		
		18 min	12 min	6 min	18 min	12 min	6 min
А	Beth	X		Χ	Χ	X	
В	Ann		X	X	X	X	
С	Susan	X	X	X	X		X
D	Kim	X	Χ	X	X		X
Е	Mary					X	X
F	Karen	X	X	X		X	X
G	Amy	X	Χ		X	X	X
Н							
-1							
J							

→ Game Day Stars

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 court and take your time with this activity after the game.

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

"During the game today Luke was in the right position on defense every time with his arms out and palms up and defending the other players strong hand. Luke made great decisions and made the defensive stop each time. Today Luke will get the red star for his defensive effort. Great defense today Luke!"

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

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

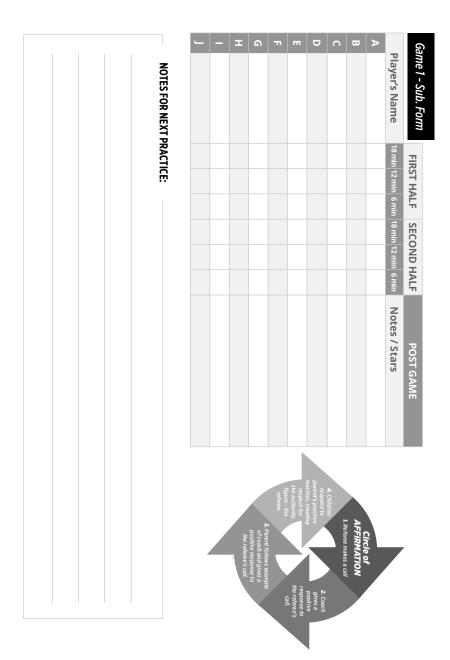


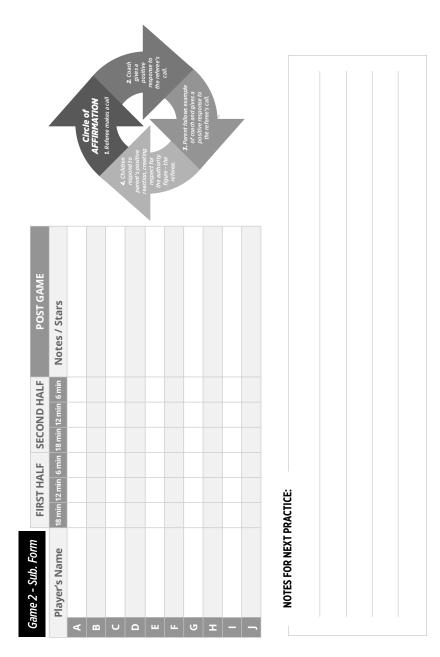
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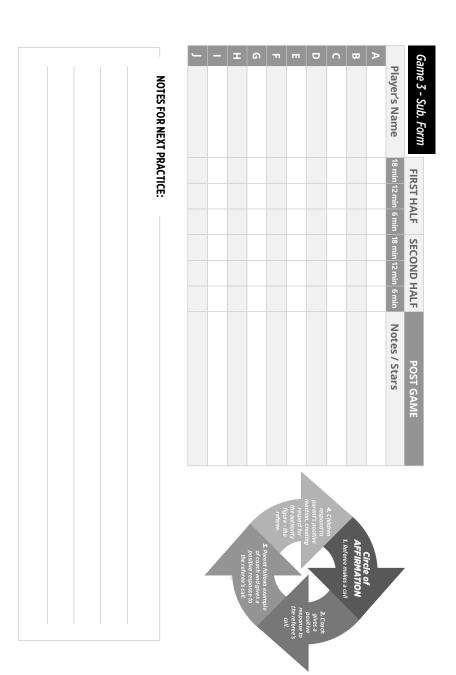
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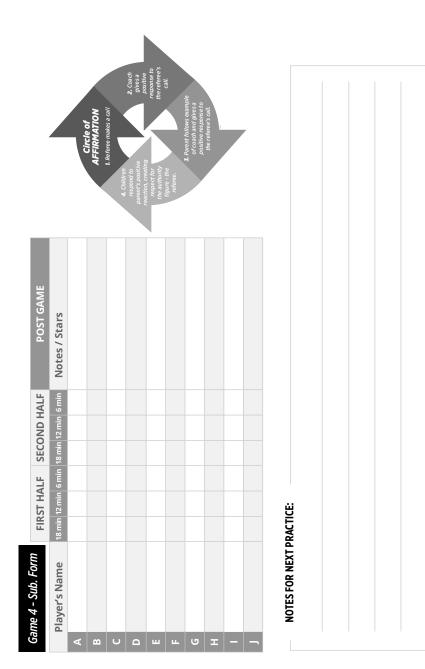
Substitution Forms	Levels	1-3	116

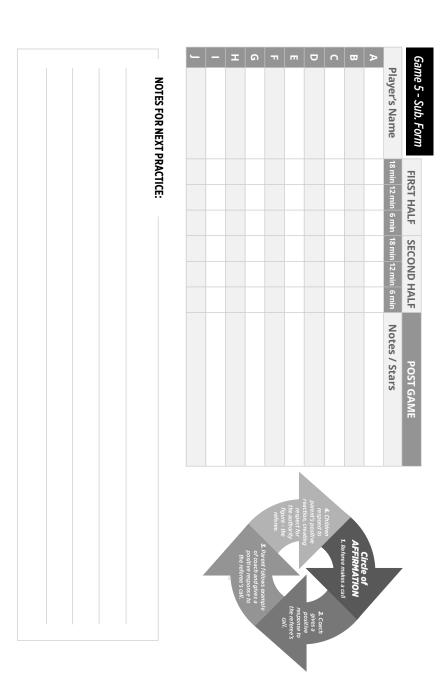
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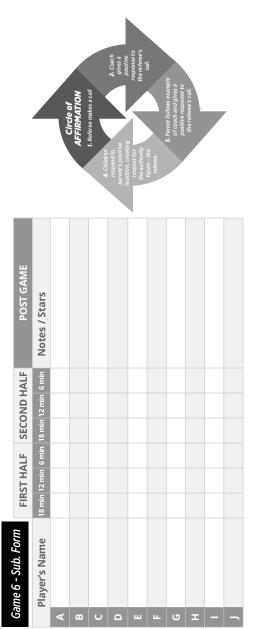




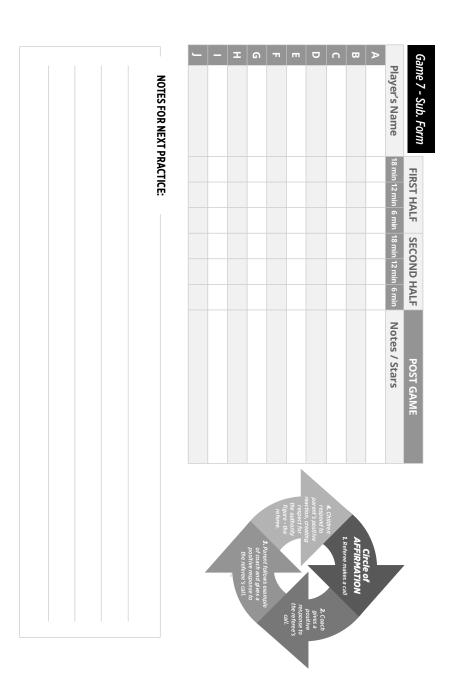


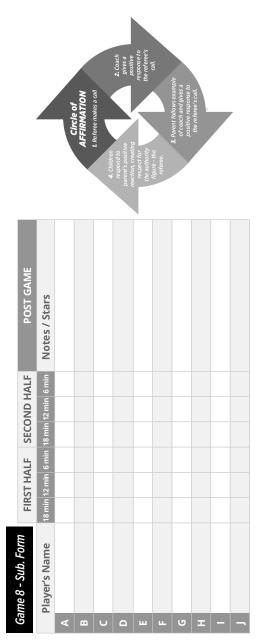


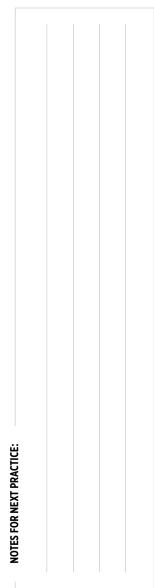


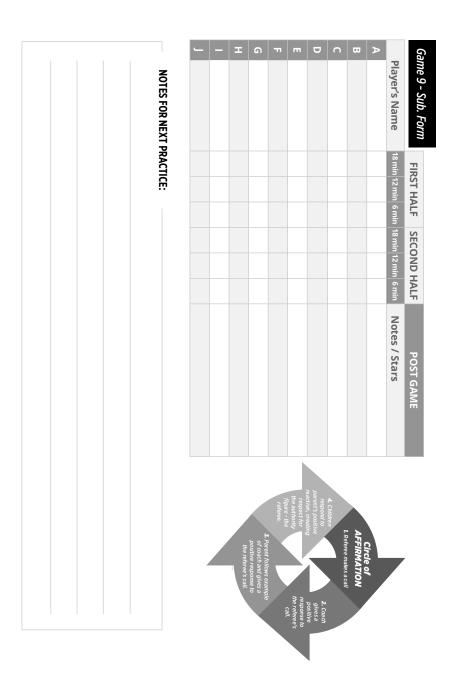


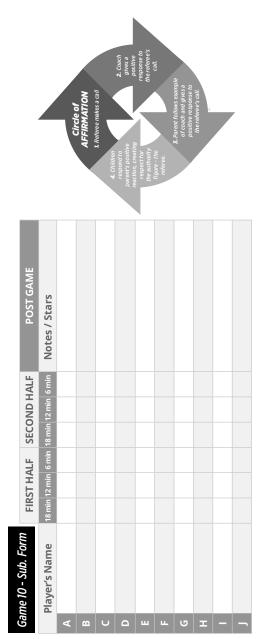
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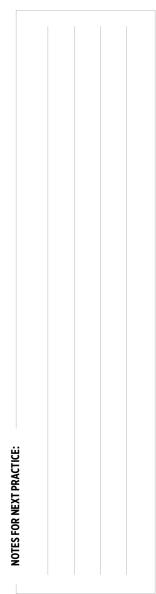


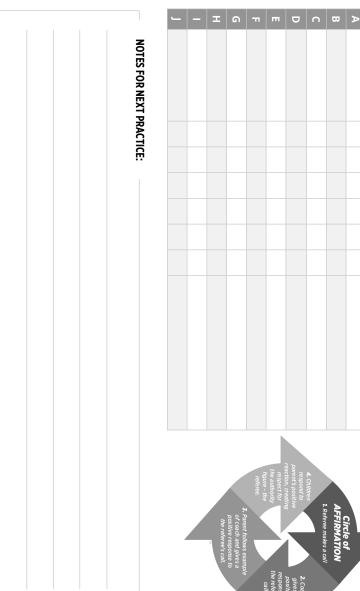








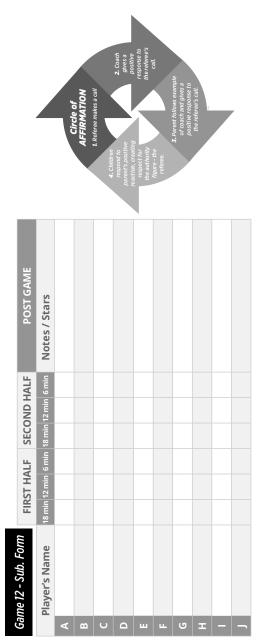






Game 11 - Sub. Form

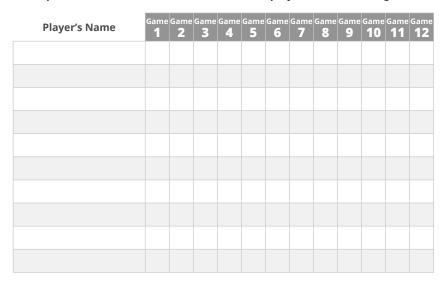
Player's Name



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Upward Basketball STAR DISTRIBUTION FORM

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



Award Stars help you to celebrate effort and place value in individual and team growth. Coaches should give sincere praise, which is specific to what participants have earned. Consider recruiting a "Star Coach" who can take notes and help with times where stars are presented.

BLUE STAR - The blue star represents EFFORT which means giving your best at all times regardless of the circumstances.

GOLD STAR - The gold star represents SPORTSMANSHIP which means treating your teammates and opponents the way you want to be treated. You show respect to yourself, teammates, opponents, referees, coaches, and the game by demonstrating sportsmanship.

RED STAR - The red star represents DEFENSE which means coordinating with your team to slow down or stop the opponent from making a play or scoring. Defense requires an awareness of being in the right position, hustle and hard work.

GRAY STAR - The gray star represents OFFENSE which means working with your team for a positive play or a score. Offense requires being aware of your teammates and their opportunities as well as using your skills to advance the goals of your team which leads to a score.

WHITE STAR - The white star represents CHRISTLIKENESS which means doing your best to imitate Jesus in every way through your words, attitudes, and actions.

•	NOTES	

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

