



VOLLEYBALL **COACH** **PLAYBOOK**

UPWARD
SPORTS

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO PROVIDING THE **BEST LEAGUE EXPERIENCE!**
DEVELOP SKILLS | STRENGTHEN CHARACTER | HAVE FUN





VOLLEYBALL COACH PLAYBOOK

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A grayscale background image showing a volleyball team in action. A player in the foreground is jumping to hit a ball, while others are visible in the background. The image is slightly faded to allow text to be read clearly.

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

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➔ An Upward Sports Coach

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

Five Keys To Coaching:

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

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

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

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



GENESIS 1:27

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

GENESIS 2:7

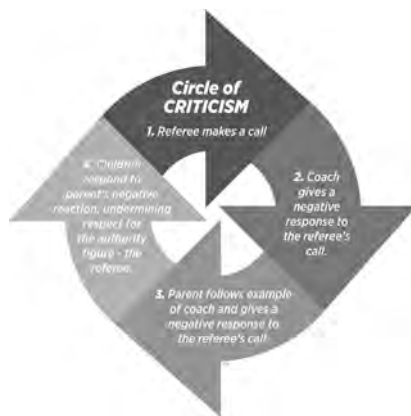
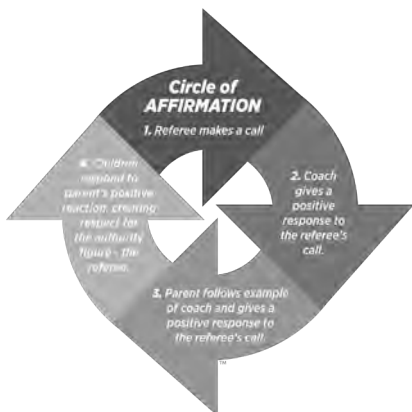
“Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person.”

→ Circle of Affirmation

Game Day Attitude

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

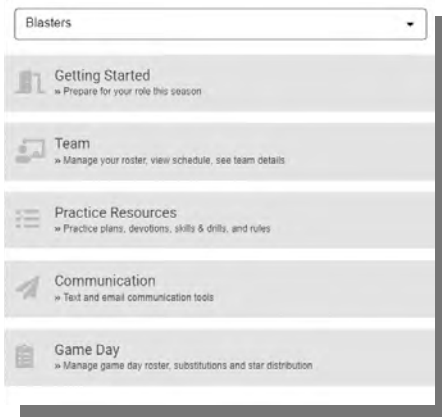
One practical way to create a positive team culture and teach communication is to establish a team huddle at the end of practice. Have players circle up and include the coach. The coach can talk about things done well in practice.

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 league-wide celebration.

Team Page – Share the team page with your team to give them access to the practice and game schedule. The team page also includes your contact information and a team roster. The team page link is available to send from the communication area of the mobile view of myupward.org.

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



Upward.org/coach – Helps you learn more about sharing the gospel using the 3 Circles.

➔ Play with Purpose

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

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

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

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



MENTALLY

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

Confidence and Courage - As players learn and improve their skills and confidence will increase. Players then gain the courage to attempt new skills and recognize that mistakes are a part of the game that they can overcome.

Decision-Making - The intricacies and complexities of sports, help train young athletes on making correct decisions quickly. When to pass a ball, when to attempt a move or make a defensive play are all part of building decision-making. Through observation and repetition, players improve their muscle memory and learn when and how to make individual and team decisions.

Cognitive self-regulation - Through intense games and drills, players learn to self-regulate emotions and gain focus. Through sports, they will enter various experiences (practices, scrimmages, games, etc.) where they will learn to narrow their focus from a broad range to a specific individual focus and team responsibilities in the pursuit of attaining particular goals.



ATHLETICALLY

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

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

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

Physical Development: Physical development has enormous benefits for children, including stronger bones and muscles, improved heart and brain health, and lowered risk of diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Participants may learn fundamental movements that allow them to run, jump, throw, catch, balance, and change direction. Basic moves will help participants enjoy a variety of sports and begin a path to physical literacy.

Fun: The key to getting kids interested in physical activity is by making it fun. Sports do just that, provided the coaches in charge are focused on the development of the athlete. Practices should teach the game using fun and safe methods.



SPIRITUALLY

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

Practice devotions - By guiding discussion around the practice devotions each week, you plant seeds of discovery within the minds and hearts of young athletes. Remember to guide every practice devotion conversation back to the Gospel and what Jesus has done for us.

Your relationship with players - You are a safe, trusted adult in the lives of young athletes. You hold a remarkable amount of influence. Listen intently, guide carefully, and be someone who continually points young athletes to Christ in your interactions.

Your relationship with parents - The top spiritual influence in a child's life is their parents. What they learn from their home life will speak more into their spiritual development than anything else. Your relationship with a child's parents must be strong. Share with them what their child is learning each week in practice. Discuss the devotions. Talk about how their child is developing in their skills. When parents know you care and are investing in their child's well-being, they'll trust you and your spiritual influence on their child.

Your example - Be ready to step into opportunities God provides during practices, games, and your communications to demonstrate and share the gospel message



SOCIALLY

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

Teamwork: Through team sports, children learn how to interact with peers and adults in positive ways. These include numerous opportunities for “selfless” behavior, focusing all mental and physical efforts towards the goals of the team. Participants learn how to navigate relationships, encourage others, and recover from mistakes.

Communication: Players learn how to communicate in complex social situations with teammates and competitors. This learning carries over to other areas of life, helping them communicate in school, at home, and in other environments.

Serving: Serving others becomes a critical component for social development in team sports. Children learn to share the ball, encourage teammates, and give their best effort to help the team and not just themselves.



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](https://myupward.org).

Practice	Practice Focus	Team Meeting	Rules to Cover	Skills & Drills
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know each other • Evaluate skills • Teach serving and serve receive fundamentals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know each other through introductions • Discuss practice ground rules • Introduce hitting basics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper serving and serve receiving
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue skill evaluation • Teach serving and serve receive fundamentals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-introduce players and coaches • Discuss court positions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules around boundary lines and number of hits allowed per possession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper serving and serve receiving
3 week of first game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review serving and serve receive fundamentals • Teach passing fundamentals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss practice focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Game format and substitutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper passing and setting
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill development • Teach passing fundamentals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss practice focus • Discuss successes from first game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review questions about match format from first week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper passing and setting
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill development • Teach setting tactics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss practice focus • Answer players' questions about the game • Discuss successes from first game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review all rules as a fun quiz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued improvements on serving, passing, and setting
6-11 through last practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue skill development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss practice focus • Answer players' questions about the game • Discuss successes from first game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to review rules for clear understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements from games

➔ Drills Dictionary

This is just a small sample of the drills that exist to reinforce volleyball skills. There are numerous online resources you may utilize as well. The goal of every drill is to get players as many ball touches as possible. The more touches a player gets, the better they'll become. Drills should also be fun! Make these high energy drills with the focus on skill development while having fun playing the game. You may utilize these drills for any practice.

Warmup Drills

Run Laps - This gets the players loose and gets their heart rate up and blood circulating.

Dynamic Stretching

- ◆ **20 Jumping Jacks** - Players jump in place, extending arms out to the side and kicking legs out to the side.
- ◆ **1 Round Walking Knee Hugs** - Players start at the serving line walking toward the net. With each step, they lift the alternate leg up to the chest, “hugging” their knee with both arms. Once they reach the net, they turn around at the net and walk back. Each trip to the net counts as one round.
- ◆ **20 Arm Circles** - Standing in place, players extend arms and rotate them forward in circles 10 times. Then, players alternate direction, rotating arms backward 10 times.
- ◆ **10 Lunges** - Starting in a standing position, players step forward, extending their right leg and bending down with their left leg. Players return to a standing position and alternate legs.

- ♦ **10 High Skips** - Starting in a standing position, players jump with left leg while bending and raising right knee. To add momentum, players should swing arms as they jump. Alternate legs.
- ♦ **Karaoke** (sideline to sideline) - Move across the court placing one foot behind the other as you shuffle across.
- ♦ **Shuffling** (sideline to sideline) - Move across the court shifting one foot beside the other quickly.

Conditioning Relay - Create two lines at the serving line. The coach stands in the middle of the two lines. At the whistle, the coach rolls the ball toward the net. The first player from each line runs to get the ball first. They then run back to the service line. This drill helps players warm up and helps them practice diving skills.

Back to Back - Split up players into pairs and give each pair a ball. Standing back to back, players will take the ball, turn to their right, and hand the ball to their partner. The partner will take the ball around to the front of their body, then back to their partner on the same side. Do this 25 times, then switch sides. This exercise is great for working out the core.

Hitting Drills

Hitting Lines Drill - Put the ball cart in the middle of the court so both sides can be utilized. Form two lines at the serving line. As you toss the ball up, players run up and hit the ball over the net. They then go retrieve the ball and put it back in the cart. This drill helps players get used to hitting the ball over the net. Over time you may choose to move the cart further back to help players learn to hit from deeper in the court.

Arm Warmup - Split up players into partners and have them stand 15-20 feet apart. Mimic the approach of hitting the ball

by moving forward a few steps then throwing the ball down to bounce toward partner. Then progress to hitting the ball downward to partner. This helps warm up players' arms before practices/games.

Serving and Passing Drills

Serving Drill - Players practice an overhead serve by tossing the ball with their opposite hand and hitting it firmly in the air with the palm of their serving hand. Start players serving midway toward the net, then back up after each serve. This helps them get an idea of how hard they need to hit the ball. Be sure to correct form as players need it (footwork, posture, etc.).

Dead Fish - Split the team into two groups on opposite ends of the court at the serving line. Take turns serving across the net. If your serve goes over the net, you're safe. If you miss the serve, you go to the opposite side of the court and lay on the floor like a dead fish. The way to get out of being a dead fish is to get hit by a serve from your teammates. Determine a winner by whichever team has the fewest "dead fish" after 10 minutes.

TIP:

Make this drill more challenging by only serving to the 10-foot line or requiring only overhand serves.

Basic Passing Game - In this game, players pair up to practice passing. Have players stand 3-5 feet apart with a volleyball for each pair. Players pass back and forth until their ball drops. If their ball drops, they sit down. The last pair standing is the winner. Then players should back up a few steps and play the game again. As players pass, go around and correct improper forms. This drill can be used in the future as a warmup drill as players are more comfortable passing.

Ping Pong - Start with one player on each side of the net. The coach tosses the ball to one player who then hits it over the net to the other player. After that second player hits the ball, another player comes in on the first player's side, making it 2 vs. 1. After each hit from either side, another player enters the court. You can make this drill more challenging by having every player hit the ball before it can be sent over the net. The winner is the team who gets all players on their side onto the court, every player touches the ball, and sends it over.

2 on 2 (use mid to late season) - Play a game using two players on each side. Teams must use three hits before sending the ball back over. If you miss it, you get off the court and another two-person team enters the court. If you hit the ball over in two hits instead of three, the team loses.

Pass-Set-Hit (use mid to late season) - There should be one player on the court. The coach tosses the ball to the player who then passes the ball high in the air to themselves, sets the ball to themselves, then hits the ball over the net. Do this with a player and coach on each side of the net to maximize touches. This drill teaches pass control.

3-Person Contact Drill (use mid-to-late season) - With three players on the court, the coach tosses the ball to player A who passes to player B. Player B passes to player C who then hits the ball over the net.

Diving Drills

Freeze Tag - A playground favorite! Assign one player to be "it," then as a player is tagged, they freeze in place. To "unfreeze" a player, another player must dive between their legs. This game is fun but also allows players to practice their diving skills.

Setting Drills

Set to Yourself - Give each player a ball. They will toss the ball up to themselves, then position themselves under to set it to themselves. Have players do this several times, teaching proper technique to individuals as needed.

Set to Partner - Split players into pairs and have them set to each other. Again, teach proper technique as needed.

Skill-building Games

Master of the Court - Also known as Queen of the Court, this can be played as 3 vs. 3 or 6 vs. 3. Play a game where one side has three players and the other has six. If the team with six players wins the point, the front row replaces the three players on the opposite side. The three losing players then join the back row of the opposite side, or they go to the back of the line, depending on the number of players you have. If the side with three players wins the point, the front row for the six-player team moves to the back row or goes to the back of the line, depending on the number of players.

Scrimmage - Play match-like games with another team or within your own team. These are meant to be teaching games, so stop games as needed to reinforce drills. You can also put restrictions on games (must hit three times before sending over, etc.) to increase ball touches.

Under the Net - Start with two lines facing the net with the coach in the middle beside a ball cart. When the coach slaps the ball, a player from each line runs to the net and goes under, immediately turning around. The coach throws the ball to any player. Those two players try to set up three hits, then send the ball back over the net.

Catching Drill - With the coach on one side of net, have players in rows of three coming from the back line of the other side of the net. With one player acting as the “target,” the coach will toss the ball over the net. As the row of three players move toward the ball, one player will call “Mine!” and catch it in a typical receiving position. They then toss the ball to the “target” and all three run under the net and back around as the sequence continues for the next three players. You should progress this drill to where players change from catching the ball to passing the ball to the “target.” This is a great drill to use for all ages.

Sequences - This is a ball control drill where players will split in pairs, each pair with one ball. Spread about 15-20 feet apart, the coach will yell out a certain sequence players must follow (Pass-Pass-Set, Pass-Set-Hit, etc.) Pairs must follow this sequence exactly. You can turn this drill into a game similar to the passing drill where as teams drop the ball, they sit down. This drill works great on developing ball control skills.

Three-Hit Theory

As players progress in the sport, consider implementing the three-hit theory during drills and scrimmages.

While beginners need to focus on getting the ball over the net, players that grow in their understanding of the game should work to set up the best possible return by passing to or setting the ball for teammates.

SECTION 3

PRACTICE DEVOTIONS

BIBLICAL THEME

WORSHIP

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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 theme. This season will focus on a theme which is taught in your practices and are highlighted by Bible verses. The chart below is designed to assist you as you organize and prepare for your devotions. It shows the theme and verses for each group of practices.

PRACTICE NUMBER	BIBLICAL THEME	VERSE
Week 1	<i>What is Worship?</i>	He alone is your God, the only one who is worthy of your praise. Deuteronomy 10:21a (NLT)
Week 2	<i>God the Creator</i>	In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1 (NLT)
Week 3	<i>Like No One Else</i>	I am God, and there is none like me. Isaiah 46:9b (NLT)
Week 4	<i>Worship With Your Life</i>	Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Romans 12:1b (NLT)
Week 5	<i>Worship Through Music</i>	Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. Ephesians 5:18b-19 (NLT)

PRACTICE NUMBER	BIBLICAL THEME	VERSE
Week 6	<i>Worship Through Prayer</i>	Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. Matthew 6:9 (NLT)
Week 7	<i>Worship Like It's Christmas</i>	The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them. Luke 2:20 (NLT)
Week 8	<i>Good News</i>	For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)
Week 9	<i>Worship Through Obedience</i>	If you love me, obey my commandments. John 14:15 (NLT)
Week 10	<i>Worship In All Circumstances</i>	Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Acts 16:25 (NLT)
Week 11	<i>Worship: Now & Forever</i>	And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. Mark 12:30 (NLT)

VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

UPWARD
SPORTS

PRACTICE 1

WORSHIP

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

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

- **Background:** The famous Westminster Catechism, a summary of the Christian faith, states that "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." To glorify God is to worship Him. That is our ultimate purpose as humans. Worship is essential, and our devotions this season will focus on helping the young athletes on your team understand what worship is, why we should worship God, and how the Bible says we should worship.

In this first devotion, we will introduce the idea of worship and explain what it means. One thing mentioned in this devotion is that we will all worship something, even if it's not God. The human heart is so predisposed to worship that we all seek objects of devotion, whether we realize it or not. The Old Testament, in particular, is full of moments where the people of God turn their affections to idols and false gods. Yet God says, in the first of the Ten Commandments, "You must not have any other god but me." (Exodus 20:3, NLT) Positioning God as the Lord of your life and staying devoted to Him above all else has been both the mandate and the great struggle of humanity since the Garden of Eden. However, as we will discover this season, worshiping God is not a burden but a joy unlike anything else.

- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Deuteronomy 10:12-22; Psalm 95:1-7; John 4:19-26. *If you don't own a Bible, you can download the YouVersion Bible App for free.*



- **Encouragement:** As you teach your team about worship this season, use this opportunity to examine your own ideas about worship. Do they line up with what the Bible teaches? Consider how you can prioritize worship in your life.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** What comes to mind when I think of the word "worship"?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

He alone is your God, the only one who is worthy of your praise.
Deuteronomy 10:21a (NLT)

Bottom Line: God is worthy of worship.

Note: Show a picture of the Mona Lisa on your phone, or print a copy on paper to show your team.

This is the Mona Lisa, one of the most famous paintings in the world. It was painted by Leonardo da Vinci, one of the most famous artists in history. It's now over 500 years old. The Mona Lisa is kept in a museum, but if it were ever sold, it would probably be the most expensive painting ever. It's estimated to be worth about one *billion* dollars!

ASK (All Ages): When we talk about what something is worth, what do we usually mean?

Worth describes the value of something. Things are usually worth money. But people can have worth, too. And worth isn't just about money. Worth is what someone or something means to the world or to just one person.

You might call someone *worthy* if you think they deserve something. An Olympic gymnast with a perfect performance is worthy of a gold medal. Getting every answer right on a test at school means you are worthy of an A.

There's another word that goes along with *worth* and *worthy* that we're going to be talking about all season. That word is *worship*. Worship is showing someone they are worthy of praise and honor.

ASK (All Ages): What do you know about worship? What does it mean to you?

When you worship something or someone, you prioritize it above everything else. You think about it all the time. You give it lots of time, money, and effort. You tell everyone we know about your love for whatever or whoever you're worshipping.

Maybe you worship a sports team, an actor, or a musical artist. Maybe you worship someone you know, and you want to be just like them. Maybe you worship being famous or making money. Maybe you worship good grades. There are plenty of things in life we can worship. This season, we'll learn that none of those things are worth as much as God. Nothing else even comes close. God's worth is so great that it makes the Mona Lisa's price tag look like pennies. He is worthy of worship above everything else.

There's a passage in the Bible that says this: "For the Lord your God is the God of gods

and Lord of lords. He is the great God, the mighty and awesome God.” (Deuteronomy 10:17a, NLT) It goes on to say, “You must fear the Lord your God and worship him and cling to him. Your oaths must be in his name alone. He alone is your God, the only one who is worthy of your praise, the one who has done these mighty miracles that you have seen with your own eyes.” (Deuteronomy 10:20-21, NLT)

This season, we’re going to learn that God is the only one who truly deserves our worship. We’ll talk about why He’s worthy of our worship! We’ll also look at how we can worship God. A lot of people think worship is just about singing songs at church, but we’ll learn that worship is so much more than that.

LET’S PRAY

God, thank You for our team. Please bless our season and help us grow together. Most of all, help us learn more about You. Teach us the true meaning of worship and give us hearts that want to worship You above everything else. We love You, Lord. Amen.

Note for Next Week: *To add an interactive element to the devotion, bring enough blank sheets of paper and colored pencils, crayons, or markers for every athlete on your team. Hand everything out before you start the devotion.*

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.

VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 2

WORSHIP

GOD THE CREATOR

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

- **Background:** When we look at worship in the Bible, the best place to start is at the very beginning. The creation story in Genesis 1 introduces the God of the Bible as the powerful, creative, good, and unmatched source of everything in existence. The opening statement alone, that God created the heavens and the earth, is certainly reason enough to worship Him. We *are*, because of Him. Everything *is*, because of Him. But as the chapter unfolds, we learn even more about God, and even more about worship. "[God] divided His creative work into days and time, thus providing structure. He crafted his artistic tapestry with care, color, and detail, providing wonder. He developed a framework for making Himself most clearly known by the *human* heart and mind and, in so doing, provided relationship. He gave example for worship by proclaiming approval of His own work. Then He provided time for repose, contemplation, restoration, and response, giving a model for worship." (Vernon M. Whaley, *Called to Worship*)
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Genesis 1; Psalm 104. You may also want to watch The Bible Project's Visual Commentary on Genesis 1 at bibleproject.com.
- **Encouragement:** This week, take some time to go for a walk, visit a park, or look at some photos of beautiful landscapes and incredible creatures. Spend time thinking about God as Creator and praising Him. When you are in awe of the God who created all things, it will help inspire that same awe in the athletes on your team.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** Does the beauty of creation point me to God? How often do I praise God as Creator?



Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
Genesis 1:1 (NLT)

Bottom Line: We worship God because He created everything.

Note: To add an interactive element to the devotion, bring enough blank sheets of paper and colored pencils, crayons, or markers for every athlete on your team. Hand everything out before you start the devotion.

ASK (All Ages): Why should we worship God?

As we learn about worship this season, this is one of the big questions we want to answer. The Bible tells us we should only worship God, but why? What's so great about God? Why does He deserve our praise, honor, and obedience? Why should we sing songs to Him and put Him first in our lives? Today, we're going to talk about one of the biggest reasons we should worship God. We should worship God because He is the Creator.

ASK (All Ages): What does it mean to create something?

To create something means you made it. As humans, we create all the time. We create buildings out of wood, brick, metal, and concrete. We create movies out of recorded images and sounds. We create sentences out of words and words out of letters. We create machines, medicines, art, and so much more. But we always create from resources that already exist. God is the original Creator, and He created everything out of nothing. That's amazing!

The very first chapter in the whole Bible tells us the story of creation. I'm going to tell you what it says now, and on your paper, I want you to draw the different things that God created. It's okay if you don't have time to draw all of them, but let's see how many you can get! Here we go.

(Speak slowly so athletes have time to draw.) "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1, NLT) God said, "Let there be light," and there was light! He separated the light from the darkness, creating day and night. Then, God created the sky, the land, and the sea. He created plants to grow on the land. *(Pause to give athletes more time.)*

The Bible says, "Then God said, 'Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.'" (Genesis 1:20, NLT) Then He created all the other animals that live on the land—every animal you could think of! *(Pause again.)*

Last but not least, God created humans. He said, "Let us make human beings in our

image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.” (Genesis 1:26, NLT) (*Pause.*)

Every time God created something, He said it was *good*. After He created humans, He looked at all He had made and said it was *very good*.

ASK (All Ages): Does anyone want to share your drawing with the group? Who thinks they were able to draw the most things?

Great job! Remember, the Bible says that God created humans in His image. That explains why we are creative like Him. We can’t create the whole universe, or even a tiny rock, out of nothing, but we can create things out of the many amazing resources God has given us—including things like your awesome drawings.

So, back to our first question. Why should we worship God? We should worship God because He is the reason we exist! He gave us life. He created the whole universe and everything in it! All the wonderful things in the world, including you and me, exist because He created us! That’s a pretty great reason to worship God, don’t you think?!

LET’S PRAY

God, thank You for all that You have made. For beautiful sunsets, good food, music, and all our favorite animals. Thank You for giving people amazing minds and the ability to create so many wonderful things we use every day. Thank You most of all for creating us. Help us learn to pause and worship You whenever we see Your creations and think about how amazing 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.

VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 3

WORSHIP

LIKE NO ONE ELSE

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

- **Background:** In this devotion, we will continue to discuss why God is worthy of our worship. Last practice, we focused on God's worthiness as Creator. Here, we'll look at some of God's unique attributes that set Him apart from everyone else. He is all-powerful, eternal, ever-present, all-knowing, holy, good, faithful, and loving. And He is perfect in all these attributes. There are no flaws in who He is. The more we get to know God, the more we will realize just how worthy and awe-inspiring He is. "When we fear God rightly, we recognize him for who he truly is: a God of no limits, and therefore, utterly unlike anyone or anything we know." (Jen Wilkin, *None Like Him*) We should worship Him alone because His greatness transcends everything else.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Isaiah 46:5-10; Jeremiah 32:27; Colossians 1:15-20; Psalm 139:1-12; Revelation 15:3-4; James 1:17-18; 1 Corinthians 1:7-9; 1 John 4:7-12.
- **Encouragement:** Studying the attributes of God and realizing just how great and perfect He is can make us feel small and unworthy. But when we humble ourselves before the majesty of who God is, it should make us even more grateful, even more bewildered, and even more joyful to know that God created us, loves us, and knows us on the most intimate level. Though He is who He is, He desires to be *with us*. That is incredible.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** Do I worship God more for who He is or for what He has done for me?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

I am God, and there is none like me.
Isaiah 46:9b (NLT)

Bottom Line: We worship God because He is unlike anyone else.

Last practice, we started talking about *why* we should worship God. We talked about how He created everything, including us. That's a pretty great reason to worship God, but the truth is, there are even more reasons to worship Him! Today, we're going to look at some of those other reasons.

We learned last practice that we as humans are created in God's image. He made us to be like Him in many ways. But there are other ways that we are *not* like God. He is unlike anyone else. Let's look at some of the things the Bible tells us about God that make Him special and worthy of our worship.

First of all, God is powerful. Jesus said that nothing is impossible with God. He can do all things. We've already learned that He created everything out of nothing just by speaking! That's some amazing power. In Jeremiah 32:27 (NLT), God says, "I am the Lord, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me?"

God is also present everywhere, all the time. There's nowhere He can't go, and there's no time when He hasn't existed. The Bible says, "He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together." (Colossians 1:17, NLT)

God also knows everything. He is full of all knowledge, truth, and wisdom. He knows everything about the way the whole universe works. But He also knows everything about you. He knows how many hairs are on your head. He knows the things that make you sad and the things that make you super happy. There's a Psalm in the Bible that says this: "O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me." (Psalm 139:1, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): Okay, let's stop and think about this for a second. God is all-powerful, all-present, eternal, and all-knowing. Why might these things make us want to worship Him?

So, we might worship someone who is all these things because they are really mind-blowing characteristics. We're not that powerful. We can't be in more than one place at a time. We certainly don't know everything. But guess what? There's more.

There's a Bible verse talking about God that says this: "For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous deeds have been revealed." (Revelation 15:4b, NLT) God is holy. That means He is perfectly perfect. Everything He does is right.

God is also good. He is kind. He cares about us. He gives us every good thing in our lives. James 1:17 (NLT) says, “Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens.”

Another important characteristic of God is that He is faithful. He always keeps His promises. He does what He says He will do. The Bible says, “God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says.” (1 Corinthians 1:9a, NLT) He never changes and is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

There are many more amazing characteristics of God, but the last one I want to tell you about today is that God is loving. He loves every one of us perfectly, unconditionally. The book of 1 John even tells us that “God is love.” (1 John 4:8b, NLT)

Imagine that. Think about all the amazing things God is. He is bigger and better than anyone at everything. He is absolutely perfect and absolutely special. He created everything. There is no one else like Him. He's *all* this! (*Spread arms out wide.*) And He loves you.

ASK (All Ages): How does that make you feel?

ASK (All Ages): Why should we worship God for being holy, good, faithful, and loving?

Did you know that when you want to pray and praise God for who He is, one of the best things you can do is talk to Him about who He is and why He is worthy of your worship. As we pray to close our devotion today, let's try this. I'm going to say, “God, You are...” and then I want you all to fill in the blank with something God is. It can be any of the things we talked about today or something else. After a few minutes, I'll finish the prayer. Okay? Let's try it.

LET'S PRAY

God, You are... (*Give athletes plenty of time to jump in. After a while, close the prayer with the following.*) God, You are so great. You amaze us just by being who You are. You are truly worthy of all our worship and all our praise. Thank You for being You and for loving us the way You do. 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.

VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS


UPWARD
SPORTS

PRACTICE 4

WORSHIP

WORSHIP WITH YOUR LIFE

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

- **Background:** In ancient Judaism, offerings and sacrifices were a prominent part of how the nation of Israel worshiped God. Nearly a third of the commands God relayed through Moses at Mount Sinai were related to sacrifices. "Sacrifice was at the heart of Hebrew worship. Sacrifices accompanied daily worship, holidays, dedications, purifications, expressions of thanksgiving, and requests for forgiveness." (Scott Hummel, "Sacrificial Animals in Hebrew Worship," *Holy Land Illustrated Bible*) God gave specific instructions for sacrificing animals, crops, incense, etc. In the New Testament, when Paul writes about being a living sacrifice, he certainly has in mind the sacrificial worship that had been integral to his life as a Jew. Though Jesus became the ultimate sacrifice for our sins once and for all, those who believe in Him are called to become a "sacrifice" by surrendering our lives to God and allowing Him to transform us to be more like Jesus (Romans 12:2). "Although New Testament believers are not obligated to keep [Old] Testament sacrificial laws, the sacrifice required of Christians equals or exceeds that demanded of [Old] Testament saints. The Lord calls us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices, and Jesus provides the model of self-sacrificing devotion to others." (Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God*) The idea of giving yourself completely to God means that true worship will permeate every area of your life. When you lay down your life as a sacrifice, you hold nothing back.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Romans 12:1-2; Mark 12:28-34.
- **Encouragement:** This devotion is structured around the classic hymn "Take My Life and Let It Be" by Frances Ridley Havergal, as it simply but brilliantly describes whole-life worship. Take some time to listen to a recording of this timeless song and meditate on the lyrics. We recommend the version by Nathan Drake/Reawaken Hymns. 
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** Is there anything holding me back from worshipping God with my whole life?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable.
This is truly the way to worship him.
Romans 12:1b (NLT)

Bottom Line: I can worship God with my whole life.

We've talked about *why* we should worship God. Now, I want to talk to you about *how* the Bible says we should worship God. There's a Bible verse that says this: "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him." (Romans 12:1, NLT)

This verse tells us that the way to worship God is to give our lives to Him as a living and holy sacrifice. That means that we can and should worship God in the way we live our lives. Worshiping God isn't just about singing songs and going to church. Worship is something you can do every moment of the day. It's about how we respond to God, knowing how great He is and how much He loves us. When we realize these things, they should change our lives.

There's an old hymn from the 1800s that breaks down many ways we can worship God with our lives. The first verse says, "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. Take my moments and my days; let them flow in endless praise." To be consecrated is to be set apart. This hymn is a prayer to let our lives be set apart for God so that every moment of our days is full of praise for Him.

ASK (All Ages): What would it look like for your life to be full of praise?

This same song goes on to say that our hands should move based on God's love. This means that the things we do each day should be motivated by the fact that God loves us, and we love Him.

ASK (3rd Grade and up): What are some actions you could do that would be motivated by God's love?

The third verse of this hymn says: "Take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King. Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee."

ASK (All Ages): How can we use our voices to worship God? Is it just about singing and praying to Him, or is there more we can do?

This hymn also talks about how we should give our money to God and use our minds for God.

ASK (All Ages): What are some gifts you have that you can use for God?

One more line of the hymn says this: “Take my heart it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.” This means that we should make God the king of our hearts. He should be in charge of our lives, and we should love Him like no one else.

There’s a Bible verse where Jesus talks about how we should love God. He says, “And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.” (Mark 12:30, NLT) This is the most important thing we can do with our lives. This is what it means to worship God with everything we’ve got.

What would we say if we were writing our own song to God today about how we want to worship Him with our lives? Let’s think about it. We might say, “Take my thoughts and let them be about God.” We might say, “Take my friendship and let me show someone else God’s love.” We might say, “Take my phone and let it be used only for good things.”

ASK (All Ages): Can you think of any other examples?**LET’S PRAY**

God, please take our lives and let them be set apart for You. We want You to be on the throne of our hearts. Let everything we do be for You. Show us the ways we need to give our lives to You. We love You, Lord. Amen.

Note for Next Week: *If you’re comfortable, choose a worship song with an easy chorus to play on your phone—you might also consider using a Bluetooth speaker. Depending on how long the song is, you might just play a portion of it. Example songs: How Great Is Our God; O How I Love Jesus; Great Are You Lord.*

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

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

VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 5

WORSHIP

WORSHIP THROUGH MUSIC



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

- **Background:** Our last devotion taught that worship is about whole-life devotion to God. It is not limited to worship music or worship services, and worship often takes place with no music involved at all. But music *can* and *should* be a part of how we worship God with our lives. The Bible is filled with songs and poems that beautifully and creatively glorify God. The entire book of Psalms testifies to the power and importance of songs and poems in how we express ourselves to God. One of the greatest benefits of incorporating music into our worship is that it helps us focus our attention on God in a unique way. Our key verse for this devotion tells us to “be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts.” (Ephesians 5:18b-19, NLT) In *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*, Daniel I. Block identifies the following principles about music from Ephesians 5:18-20: “(1) Music provides an outlet for demonstrating that one is filled with the Spirit. (2) Music is a means of promoting community in the body of Christ; we sing to one another. (3) Music is an expression of thanksgiving to God; believers need to be thankful in all circumstances. (4) Whether sung or played, music arising from a thankful heart brings great glory to God.”
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Ephesians 5:15-20; Colossians 3:16-17; Psalm 96; Psalm 150; 1 Chronicles 15:16.
- **Encouragement:** Sadly, something as beautiful and beneficial as music can sometimes be distracting to our worship today. This is a good opportunity to check in with yourself and think about two things: 1) Have you narrowed your definition of worship to just singing songs at church? If so, how can you expand that definition to match what the Bible says about worship? 2) Have you ever allowed your own musical preferences to negatively affect your worship of God or your relationship with other believers? If so, how can you remember to focus on God in worship rather than on your preferences?
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** How does music help me connect with God and express my worship to Him?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts.
Ephesians 5:18b-19 (NLT)

Bottom Line: I can worship God with music.

Note: For the end of this devotion, if you're comfortable, choose a worship song with an easy chorus to play on your phone—you might also consider using a Bluetooth speaker. Depending on how long the song is, you might just play a portion of it. Example songs: *How Great Is Our God*; *O How I Love Jesus*; *Great Are You Lord*.

ASK (All Ages): What is your favorite song about God? If you can't think of one, what's your favorite song? (Share about one of your own favorite songs and why you like it.)

Did you know that when some people use the word “worship,” they are just thinking about the songs we sing in church? That's because music is normally a big part of what we do when we come to a worship service at church. But let's think about what we've learned about worship so far this season.

ASK (All Ages): Does worship just mean singing songs to God? What does worship mean?

Worship means honoring and praising God. There's a lot more to that than just music! We've learned that we should worship God with our whole lives. But that doesn't mean music can't play a part in how we should worship God. In fact, the Bible tells us that we should sing songs and make music to honor God!

Psalms 96:1-2 (NLT) says, “Sing a new song to the Lord! Let the whole earth sing to the Lord! Sing to the Lord; praise his name. Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.”

In Ephesians 5:18-19 (NLT), it says that we should “be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts.”

The Bible is full of amazing songs that people have written for God. The book of Psalms is a book of 150 songs or poems that speak to God. But even outside of Psalms, there are many songs. The Israelites praised God with a song when God rescued them from slavery in Egypt and parted the Red Sea so they could all get across safely. King David wrote dozens of praise songs to God. Mary, Jesus' mom, sang a beautiful song of praise to God. The apostle Paul recorded several songs that early Christians probably sang.

ASK (3rd Grade and up): What is so special about music? Why do you think we are drawn to praise God with music?

God created music. Think about what a wonderful gift it is to us! Music has a special way of tying our thoughts and emotions together. It helps us feel, helps us understand, and helps us remember. When we sing to God, play an instrument for Him, or listen to a song that makes us think about God, it affects us on a deep level that we often remember for years. Music also gives us the opportunity to really express our thoughts to God in a unique way. Music is not the only way we can worship God, but it is a beautiful way to worship Him.

We can sing and listen to music to worship God on our own, but it's also really special when we join in to worship God together through music. This is why we sing songs in church. Singing worship songs with other Christians glorifies God and helps us encourage one another. *(End devotion here if you're not sharing a song.)*

Before we end our devotion today, I'm going to play a worship song for us. If you're brave enough and you know the song or pick it up quickly, feel free to sing along. If you don't think of yourself as a singer, that's okay! It's not about how you sound. It's about wanting to praise God from your heart. *(Play song.)*

LET'S PRAY

God, thank You so much for the gift of music. Let our hearts overflow with praise to You. You deserve all our songs and all our worship. Help us to glorify You in this special way. Amen.

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

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

VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 6

WORSHIP

WORSHIP THROUGH PRAYER

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

- **Background:** Prayer is integral to a relationship with God. We encounter prayers of adoration, supplication, lament, thanksgiving, confession, and joy throughout the Bible. In the Gospels, Jesus prays with others and alone with God. He instructs His followers on prayer, even giving them a specific example of how to pray. His model prayer "is similar in form to a common Jewish prayer (the *qaddish*). Jesus gave this prayer to his followers as a succinct expression of their new faith." (Notes on Matthew 5-6, *Filament Bible App*) Paul often refers to prayer in his letters to his fellow believers. He encouraged the Thessalonian church to "Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18, NLT).
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Matthew 6:7-13; Acts 4:16-31; Ephesians 3:14-21.
- **Encouragement:** The act of prayer itself is one of faith and worship. When you pray, you show you believe that God exists, that He hears you, that He cares about you, and that He has the power to respond to your prayer. It is a privilege to be able to communicate with the God who created and sustains the universe!
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** Are my prayers focused more on me or on God?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

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

Bottom Line: I can worship God through prayer.

ASK (All Ages): What is prayer? What kinds of things do you say when you pray?

Prayer is talking to God. The Bible tells us that God hears our prayers and wants us to talk to Him. Think about a good friend of yours. How did you get to know them better and get closer to them? By talking to them! That's how it works with us and God, too. When we talk to God, we get to know Him better.

A lot of times, when we pray, we are focused on asking God for things. You might ask Him for help on a test at school. You might ask Him to help someone who is sick feel better. You might ask Him to give you courage when you're scared. God definitely wants us to know we can come to Him and ask Him for help. He wants us to be able to talk to Him about anything.

But prayer isn't just about asking God for stuff. When Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray, He started the prayer like this: "Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy." (Matthew 6:9b, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): Why do you think Jesus started His prayer like that?

Jesus wanted to begin His prayer with worship! He wanted to show His disciples to praise God and honor Him as holy in their prayers. Jesus' prayer goes on to show that we should ask God for things like enough food to eat and for forgiveness. But the example He gave teaches us that worship is an important part of prayer.

In the apostle Paul's letter to the church in the city of Ephesus, He writes a beautiful prayer that begins, "When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth." (Ephesians 3:14-15, NLT) Paul asks God for the Ephesian believers to grow in their faith and to really know God's love. He finishes the prayer by saying, "Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): Why is it good to worship God when we pray?

If you want a good way to remember some important things to pray about, you can use the word *STAR* as a guide. *S* stands for *Share Your Sins with God*. When we pray, we

want to be honest with God about the ways we've disobeyed Him. We can ask for His forgiveness through Jesus. *T* stands for *Thank God*. We want to thank God for the good things He's done and praise Him for who He is. *A* stands for *Ask for Help*. God does want us to ask Him for help. *R* stands for *Remember Others*. We don't just want to ask for God's help for ourselves. We also want to ask God to help other people in our lives.

You can use something like *STAR* to help guide you as you pray, but you can also talk to God about whatever's on your mind, even if it's just a short prayer in the moment. When you get worried or scared, you might simply pray, "God, help me." When you get good news, you might simply pray, "God, thank You." Or when you see a beautiful sunset, you might simply pray, "God, you're awesome." Prayer can be a never-ending conversation with God, and we want to make sure worship is always part of that because the God who listens to us and answers our prayers is great and worthy of our praise.

LET'S PRAY

God, You are good and loving and holy. We want to praise You for who You are. Thank You for hearing us when we pray. Remind us that we can pray to You and praise You anytime, anywhere. Amen.

Note for Next Week: To go along with the Christmas theme of the next devotion, the clapping activity could be replaced by ringing jingle bells. These can be purchased cheaply at a craft store or online.

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

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

VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

UPWARD
SPORTS

PRACTICE 7

WORSHIP

WORSHIP LIKE IT'S CHRISTMAS

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

- **Background:** This devotion will focus on how Jesus coming down to the earth caused people to worship. The joy in the Christmas story is palpable at any time of year. It can encourage all of us to be excited about who Jesus is and what He came to do. It should be noted that all the instances of worship we'll look at in this devotion are directly or indirectly prompted by God Himself! Whether through the Holy Spirit, angelic messengers, or a celestial event, God Himself seems to be rejoicing and urging those humans willing to listen to rejoice in the advent of His Son. This was a divinely appointed and celebrated event! Zooming in on Jesus' birth story will help set the scene for next practice's devotion, when we'll unpack the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Luke 1:26-2:40; Matthew 1:18-2:12.
- **Encouragement:** Jesus came to the earth to be "God with us." In Practices 2 and 3, we talked about God as Creator and all His amazing attributes that make Him so great. The context of who God is makes the Christmas story all the more incredible and all the more something that ought to move us to excited, joy-filled worship. God came to be with us!
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** Have I considered what it means that Jesus came to the earth to be God with us? How might this encourage me to worship?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God
for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.
Luke 2:20 (NLT)

Bottom Line: I can be excited to worship.

Note: To go along with the Christmas theme of this devotion, the clapping could be replaced by ringing jingle bells. These can be purchased cheaply at a craft store or online.

ASK (All Ages): Every year, we spend pretty much a whole month celebrating one holiday. What is that holiday?

We celebrate Christmas for basically the whole month of December every year! While presents, food, and spending time with family are great, the reason we do all that celebrating is because of Jesus. Christmas is about celebrating the time when Jesus was born. It's a big deal!

The Bible tells us that Jesus was born in a small town called Bethlehem, where there was no place for His family to stay during the night. So Jesus was born in a stable and placed in an animal feeding trough. It was a pretty humble beginning. There's even a famous Christmas carol that calls it a Silent Night.

But guess what? Jesus' birth wasn't *really* that silent. There were some people back when Jesus was born who realized that His birth was a big deal like we do! Jesus wasn't just any cute little baby. Jesus was God coming to the earth to live with us! This would change everything, and it was definitely a great reason to worship God! I'm going to tell you about some of the reactions to Jesus' birth, and every time I say someone worshiped, I want you to clap your hands and give God a round of applause. (*If you brought jingle bells, instruct the athletes to ring their bells instead of clapping.*) Okay? Let's try it.

God sent an angel to Jesus' mother, Mary, to tell her that she was going to give birth to Jesus, God's Son. When she visited her cousin, Elizabeth, who was also pregnant, Elizabeth's baby jumped in her womb. Mary and Elizabeth both worshiped God with beautiful words of praise. (*Remind athletes to clap/ring bells.*)

Months later, when Jesus was born, there were shepherds out in a field near Bethlehem, watching their sheep. Suddenly, an angel appeared to them and said to them, "Don't be afraid . . . I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10b-12, NLT) Then, thousands more angels showed up and started

worshipping God. They were saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." (Luke 2:14, NLT)

When the angels left, the shepherds ran to Bethlehem to see Jesus for themselves. They told everyone what had happened and what the angels had said. After seeing Jesus, they returned to fields, praising and worshipping God as they went.

Not long after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph took Him to be presented in the Temple in Jerusalem. There were two older people there, Simeon and Anna, who had both looked forward to the day the Savior would be born for many, many years. When they saw Jesus, each of them realized that God had kept His promise to send a Savior. They both worshiped God.

A couple of years later, when Jesus was just a toddler, some travelers arrived in Bethlehem. They were wise men who had come from far away. They believed in a prophecy about Jesus and followed a star to His home. When they finally arrived and met little Jesus, they bowed down and worshiped Him. They also gave him special gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

ASK (All Ages): Did you ever realize that there was so much worshipping in the Christmas story? Name some of the different groups of people who worshiped God in this story.

ASK (All Ages): Why do you think everyone was so excited for this baby to be born?

Like I said, Jesus came to the earth to change everything. He came to show us more of who God is and what is important to Him. He came to show us how much God loves us. And He came to sacrifice Himself and win a huge victory so we could all be saved from sin and death. We'll talk more about that next practice.

ASK (All Ages): In the Christmas story, everyone was worshipping because they were excited about God and what He was doing through Jesus. Why do you think we should be excited to worship God?

LET'S PRAY

God, it's so cool to think about how excited everyone was when Jesus came to the earth. They were so full of joy that they couldn't help but worship you! Please fill us with Your joy and show us how the good news about Jesus is so exciting even today. We want to be excited to worship You! Amen.

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

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

VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

UPWARD
SPORTS

PRACTICE 8

GOOD NEWS

This week's devotion includes a gospel presentation.

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

- **Background:** Jesus didn't only come to be God with us by living among us; He also came to do something for us that would allow us to be with God for eternity. His death and resurrection would enable all of us to have a relationship with God and truly be able to worship Him unhindered by sin and death. While people in the New Testament certainly still address worship to God the Father, we also start seeing Jesus receiving worship. His sacrifice and subsequent victory make up the climax of the story of Scripture. The God the Bible calls us to worship loves us so much that He gave Himself for us. He proves His love, power, and divinity through the events of the cross and the empty grave. By all means, He is worthy of all the worship we could ever give—and more. In the Gospels, from the time of Jesus' resurrection to His ascension back to heaven, everyone who encounters Him worships Him. "True Christian worship focuses particularly on Christ, through whose sacrificial death and justifying work sinners are qualified for worship, and through whose resurrection they hope in eternal life and worship in the presence of God." (Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God*) We respond in faith and worship—believing in who Jesus said He was and trusting in His saving work while also proclaiming Him as Lord and surrendering our lives to Him.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read John 19-20; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Romans 10:9-13; Revelation 5:11-13.
- **Encouragement:** "Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." – Philippians 2:6-11 (NLT)
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** Does the gospel story make me want to worship God? Why or why not?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin,
so that we could be made right with God through Christ.
2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)

Bottom Line: Jesus came to rescue us from sin and death.

This season, we've been talking about worship. We've talked about what worship is and why we should worship God. Last practice, we talked about people in the Christmas story being so excited to worship God when Jesus was born. Today, I want to talk about more of Jesus' story and how it is the greatest, most exciting reason to worship God.

Jesus grew up and lived a pretty normal life. He trained in the family business, where he helped build things. But when He was 30 years old, He knew it was time to start His ministry. He began traveling around to different villages, teaching about God and inviting people to follow Him. It wasn't uncommon in ancient Israel for a teacher or *rabbi* to have students and teach them about the ways of God. But Jesus was different than any ordinary teacher.

Jesus was the Son of God. That means He was God Himself here on the earth. He never sinned and always followed God's ways. And He performed many amazing miracles—including healing lots of people who were sick. For centuries, people had been worshipping a God they could not see. When Jesus came, He showed us who God is in a human body. He came to be with us. He came so we could know God better. Because of Jesus, we know more about the God we worship.

ASK (3rd Grade and up): How does knowing about Jesus affect how we worship God?

Some people didn't like the things Jesus said and didn't believe the miracles He performed were really from God. Jesus was arrested and sentenced to die, even though He had done nothing wrong. He was nailed to a wooden cross and died a painful death.

But that wasn't the end. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead! He appeared to many of His friends before He returned to heaven. And guess what? He's still alive today! That's amazing!

ASK (All Ages): Jesus is God. He could have stopped His death at any point. Why do you think He went through all of this?

The truth is, Jesus did all this for us. Even though Jesus never sinned, every other person who has ever lived has sinned. We all do it. Sin is doing things our way instead of God's way. It's disobeying Him with our words, actions, and thoughts. When we worship things or people other than God, that's sin. When we choose the selfish thing instead of the right thing, that's sin. When we hurt other people on purpose, that's sin. And the Bible

tells us that the consequences of sin are death and separation from God.

God loves us and wants to have a relationship with us, but He's also perfect and holy. Our sin separates us from Him. But when Jesus died on the cross, He took our place and paid the price for our sin. He took the consequences on Himself. And because He was perfect, His sacrifice allows our sins to be forgiven. The Bible tells us that when we believe in Jesus and what He has done for us, His righteousness becomes ours. And now we are able to have a relationship with God. When we trust in Jesus to save us, we become part of God's family.

When Jesus rose from the grave, He defeated death forever! That means that after we die, we will get to live with Him in heaven forever, where we can worship Him face-to-face. In the meantime, God sends His Holy Spirit to live in us and help us live the way God wants us to live. Even though we won't be perfect while we still live on this earth, the Holy Spirit will help us grow more and more like Jesus.

ASK (All Ages): Wow! How does it make you feel to know Jesus did all this because He loves you?

ASK (All Ages): Does this awesome news about Jesus make you want to worship God? How could this news change your life?

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, we are amazed by Your love for us. Thank You so much for sending Jesus to rescue us from sin and death. Please forgive us for our sins and help us all to believe in Jesus and what He has done for us. We praise You, God, for making this incredible sacrifice for us. We praise You for the power You showed over death and the grave. We praise You for making a way for us to be with You forever. We love You, Lord. Amen.

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

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

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

VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

PRACTICE 9

WORSHIP

WORSHIP THROUGH OBEDIENCE



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

- **Background:** Earlier this season, we talked about worshiping God with our whole lives. For this devotion, we want to look specifically at obedience and how daily following God is an act of worship. It's also important to help kids understand that what Jesus has done for us means that obedience is not *how* we are able to be in right standing with God. Instead, obedience flows *out of* our relationship with God and is evidence of His work in our lives. When we obey, we show our love for God. We demonstrate that He really is Lord of our lives. He doesn't just deserve worship from our lips—that's easy. He deserves actions that prove we want to honor Him for who He is and what He has done. Throughout Scripture, God makes it clear that what He truly desires is for people to listen to Him and follow Him. "True worshipers find their inspiration, nourishment, and instruction in the whole counsel of God. Those who have been redeemed recognize that all of life is to be an expression of worship and that God delights in wholehearted and full-bodied holiness." (Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God*)
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read John 14:15-21; 1 Samuel 15:22-23; 1 John 5:1-5; Galatians 5:16-26.
- **Encouragement:** "Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome." – 1 John 5:3 (NLT)
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** Do I obey God out of obligation or devotion?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

If you love me, obey my commandments.
John 14:15 (NLT)

Bottom Line: I can worship God through obedience.

ASK (All Ages): If you want to show your parents, coach, or teacher that you respect them, how do you respond when they ask you to do something?

One of the ways you can show respect to the leaders in your life is to obey them when they ask you to do something. When you obey, you show that you believe that they know what is right. You trust them.

So, it makes sense that one of the ways that we can show honor and respect to God is by obeying Him. Doing things God's way instead of our way is one of the ways we can worship Him.

Last practice, we talked about what Jesus did for us and how we can be saved from sin and death and have a relationship with God through Him. One of the most amazing things about this is that it is a gift that God freely offers to us. We can't earn our place in heaven or a relationship with Him. We'd never be perfect enough on our own. Sin will always get in the way. But the good news about Jesus is that He did it all for us. He made a way for us to be with God forever. And all we have to do is trust in Him!

When you get a gift you don't deserve, that's called grace. And that's what God gives to us through Jesus.

ASK (All Ages): So, if we can't earn our relationship with God by obeying Him, why do you think obedience matters? Why should we obey God?

Remember, God is holy and perfect. His way is the best way. If we truly love Him, appreciate what Jesus has done for us, and trust that God's way is right, we should want to follow Him! We obey Him because we love and respect Him, and we want to honor Him with our whole lives. Obeying God is part of worshiping Him.

In John 14:15 (NLT), Jesus told His followers, "If you love me, obey my commandments." When we follow God's way, we show that we love and trust Him. Jesus went on to say that God would send His followers His Holy Spirit to guide them and help them live in a way that honors God. When you believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live in you and help you follow God, too!

So, what does it look like when the Spirit is helping us obey God? What does a life of worshipful obedience look like? The Bible says, "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of

fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23a, NLT) Jesus was a great example of all these things during His time on earth.

God wants you to grow to be more like Jesus. The Holy Spirit will help you with this. But it also helps to study the Bible and get to know the wisdom God gives us through His word. We can also learn from other people who believe in Jesus.

ASK (All Ages): What are some questions you have about following God?

Guess what! I have plenty of questions, too. Once you believe in Jesus, following Him is a lifelong journey. We will still sin while we’re on earth. We won’t be perfect. But, with God’s help, we will grow more and more like Jesus. We want to obey God because we love Him!

ASK (7th Grade and up): Have you ever thought of obedience as worship before? Why or why not?

LET’S PRAY

God, we know we are not perfect. We are so thankful for Your grace toward us. Help us obey You out of our love for You. Teach us to walk in Your ways through the help of Your Holy Spirit. Help us to grow to be more like Jesus. We love You, Lord. Amen.

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

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



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

- **Background:** "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." This verse, Philippians 4:13 (NLT), is frequently used out of context. It isn't about winning a sporting event. In context, the apostle Paul was talking about being strengthened by Christ to be content in all circumstances—as he sat in prison writing those words. His letter was addressed to the church in Philippi, who had been witnesses to the contentment Paul had in Christ when he (along with his friend Silas) had earlier been imprisoned in their city. This story, described in Acts 16, is the only instance of worship through music in the book of Acts. And it comes when two followers of Jesus are in jail. Instead of focusing on their suffering, Paul and Silas thrived on their faith in God. All the other prisoners took notice. God also took notice and sent an earthquake! Though they could have gone free, the two men—and their fellow inmates—stayed. As a result, the distraught jailer's life was saved, and he and all his family came to believe in Jesus! It's possible this family was part of the Philippian church when Paul wrote his letter to them years later.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Acts 16:11-40; Philippians 4:10-13.
- **Encouragement:** "The earthquake and the freeing of the prisoners showed that God's power was present. Such power could only be recognized. The open doors opened the jailer's heart." (*NET Bible Notes on Acts 16:29*) Worship is primarily intended for an audience of one—God. But as we testify about God in our worship, others may also recognize the worthiness of the one we are worshiping.
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** When is it the most difficult for me to worship God?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God,
and the other prisoners were listening.
Acts 16:25 (NLT)

Bottom Line: I can worship God in all circumstances.

Today, I want to tell you a story from the Bible about two guys who sang worship songs to God during a pretty sad and scary situation. Pay attention to how they reacted to the tough circumstances they found themselves in.

Paul and Silas were two missionaries. Just a few years after Jesus had died, risen back to life, and returned to heaven, Paul and Silas were traveling to different cities, telling people about Jesus. They came to the city of Philippi, where several people believed their message about Jesus. They started a church. One day, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul healed a slave girl who had an evil spirit. The evil spirit told the future, and the girl's masters used her fortune-telling abilities to make money. Even though she was now freed from the evil spirit, her masters were angry because they could no longer make money off of her fortune-telling. They started an angry mob to protest Paul and Silas.

The leaders of the city had Paul and Silas beaten and thrown into prison. The jailer was told not to let them escape. He locked them up in the inner part of the jail.

ASK (All Ages): How would you feel if you were in the situation that Paul and Silas were in? What would you do?

The Bible says, "Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening." (Acts 16:25, NLT)

ASK (All Ages): Why would Paul and Silas be singing worship songs at a time like this?

Paul and Silas were probably in pain and tired and scared. But they believed God was with them. They still trusted in Him even when things looked bad. Their faith in God didn't change just because of their circumstances. They still believed that God was good, that He cared about them, and that He deserved their worship. And, in the midst of this, the other prisoners were listening. They were fascinated by these guys who were praising God from a jail cell.

The story goes on. The Bible says, "Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!" (Acts 16:26, NLT)

God showed that He was listening to Paul and Silas. He was with them! Paul and Silas

could have escaped, but they stayed put. Somehow, the other prisoners followed their lead and stayed, too. When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he was terrified that all the prisoners had escaped. But Paul called out to him and told him all the prisoners were still there.

“The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.’” (Acts 16:29-31, NLT)

It was still the middle of the night, but Paul and Silas shared the good news about Jesus with the jailer and his whole family. They all believed and were baptized right away. The jailer washed Paul and Silas’ wounds from when they had been beaten and gave them food. His whole family was excited and rejoicing because they believed in God.

ASK (All Ages): Why do you think Paul and Silas didn’t try to escape when they had the chance?

ASK (All Ages): How did God bring something good out of this bad situation?

Paul and Silas’ worship influenced the prisoners around them so that they didn’t run away either. The jailer and his family saw all that had happened, and all believed in Jesus and were saved. That’s amazing!

When we worship in tough circumstances, it probably won’t lead to an earthquake, but it can shake things up. It can give us a different perspective and help us focus on the right things. It can help us trust God instead of getting carried away with worry or fear. It can help us be ready to make good decisions, like Paul, Silas, and the other prisoners did. Sometimes, it can even be a witness to the people around us who see that the joy we have in Jesus doesn’t go away when things get tough.

ASK (7th grade and up): Paul and Silas’ worship led to a whole family worshipping God. How can worshipping God be contagious?

LET’S PRAY

God, thank You for being with us even in the toughest circumstances. The next time we’re scared, sad, or worried, remind us that we can turn to You for help. Teach our hearts how to worship You in all circumstances, and give us songs that comfort us and help us focus on You. Let our worship be a witness to others. Amen.

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

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

VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE DEVOTIONS

UPWARD
SPORTS

PRACTICE 11

WORSHIP

WORSHIP: NOW AND FOREVER

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

- **Background:** We'll wrap up this season's devotions with a reminder of the true focus of worship: showing God how much He means to us. True worship is beautiful, but it's also simple—and found in the ordinary moments of life. It means loving God with our whole lives and following Him as best we can, with the help of His Spirit. We can find great joy in worshiping God here in our lives on this earth, but our worship and our joy will be made complete in eternity when we will finally see the one we worship and get to enjoy His presence forever.
- **Big Picture:** For more insight, read Mark 12:28-34; Matthew 6:1-6; Revelation 4:8-11.
- **Encouragement:** "Great things he has taught us, great things he has done, and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son, but purer and higher and greater will be our joy and our wonder, when Jesus we see." – Fanny Crosby, "To God Be the Glory"
- **Coach's Question for Reflection:** What has God been trying to teach me about worship this season?

Practice Devotion | Share This With Your Team

KEY VERSE

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

Bottom Line: God is worthy of my worship now and forever.

ASK (All Ages): What's one thing you've learned about worship this season?

Think about this. We've spent all season talking about what it means to worship God. It must be pretty important, don't you think? Worship is special. It's how we tell God how much He means to us.

Sometimes, people try to make worship seem more complicated than it needs to be. They try to make a bunch of rules around it that we don't find in the Bible. Or they want everyone else to worship God the exact same way they worship God. Sometimes adults even get into big arguments about the kind of music that should be sung in church when we are worshipping God together!

But the truth is, worship isn't as complicated as all that. Worship is living our lives in a way that shows God we love Him and are amazed at who He is. That's pretty simple, isn't it? There are many ways we can worship God, and we've talked about some of those ways this season.

One important thing Jesus taught about worship is that we should be focused on God when we worship. We shouldn't worry about what other people think about us. He said when you give to someone in need, or when you pray, or when you sacrifice for God, you shouldn't do it to be seen by others and look good to them. Your worship is for God and no one else!

ASK (3rd Grade and up): Why might it be tempting to focus on ourselves instead of God during worship?

Worship should be all about God. Remember, Jesus said the most important commandment was this: "And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength." The second is equally important: "Love your neighbor as yourself." No other commandment is greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31, NLT)

This is such an important reminder to us. We should worship God because we love Him with everything we are. We love Him with our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. And because we love Him, we are also supposed to love other people because God created them and loves them very much. When you remember to do these two things: love God with all you are and love others as you love yourself—you can't help but live a life that worships God.

ASK (All Ages): Why does our love for God drive us to want to worship Him?

One more thing that is special about worship is that we won't just worship God during our time here on earth. The Bible tells us that we will all worship God in heaven. We will get to see Him in all His glory and be with Him forever!

The Bible says that one of the songs that will be sung in heaven says this: "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased." (Revelation 4:11, NLT)

God is so worthy of our worship. Let's worship Him now in this life and forever in the next.

LET'S PRAY

God, You are worthy to receive glory and honor and power. We want to worship You now and forever. Help us to focus on You when we worship and to worship You out of our great love for You. You deserve all our praise. Thank You for bringing us together this season. Be with us as we live in a way that worships You. We love You, Lord. Amen.

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

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

The background of the page is a grayscale photograph of two young girls playing volleyball. One girl is in the foreground, looking up and reaching for the ball, while another girl is behind her, also looking up. They are wearing athletic clothing, including t-shirts and shorts. The image is slightly faded to allow the text to be legible.

SECTION 4

GAMES

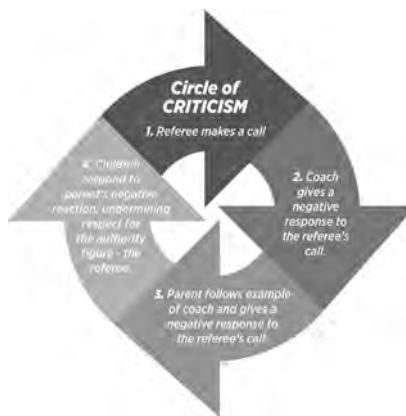
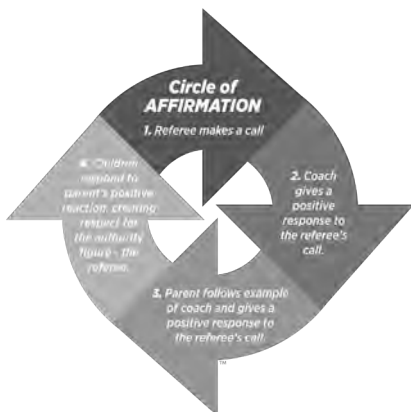
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Court Dimensions	75
Commonly Used Terms	78
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Game Day Stars	87

➔ Circle of Affirmation

Game Day Attitude

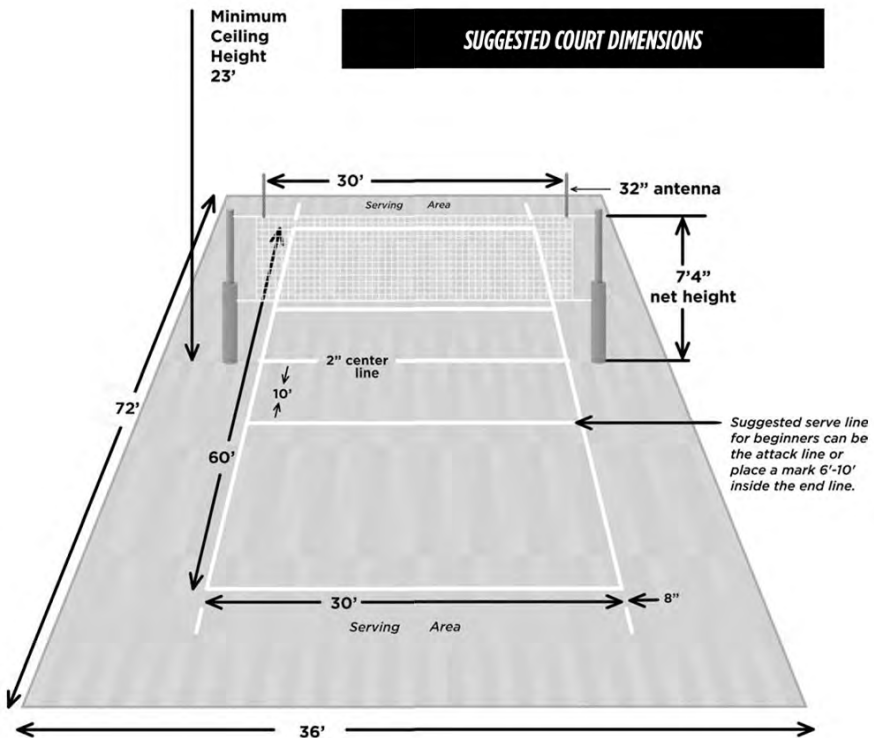
Choosing the right game-day attitude is a key to being an effective Upward Soccer Coach. Actions and reactions on the field can either open or close the door to ministry. The Circle of Criticism and the Circle of Affirmation are simple diagrams that illustrate the results of a coach giving a referee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

→ Suggested Court Dimensions



→ Commonly Used Terms

Ace: A serve that is not returned by the opposing team, resulting in a point for the serving team.

Block: A defensive play by one or more players meant to deflect a spiked ball back to the hitter's side of the court. It may be a combination of one, two or three players jumping in front of the opposing spiker and contacting the spiked ball with the hands.

Bump: Another term for a forearm pass

Centerline: The line running directly under the net dividing the court into two equal lines.

Double hit: Consecutive hits or contacts by the same player. This is illegal and results in a point for the opposing team.

Line judge: A person standing at opposite corners of the court with visibility to the backline and one sideline to call balls in or out.

Line: The marks that serve as the boundaries for the court.

Match: Contest between two teams played in a best-of-three format. If a team wins two of three sets, they win the match.

Overhand serve: Serving the ball and striking it with the hand above the shoulder.

Pass: Join your arms from the elbows to the wrists and strike the ball with the underpart of your forearms in an underhand motion, passing the ball to a teammate.

Scorekeeper: A person keeping score during each set.

Set (in-game action): A strategic move when a player hits the ball up in the air with their fingers to a teammate who then hits the ball forcefully over the net.

Set (as pertains to a match): One of the three games that comprise a match. When a team wins two of the three sets, they've won the match.

Shag: To retrieve the volleyball.

Spike: A ball contacted with force by a player on the offensive team who intends to terminate the ball on the opponent's floor or off the opponent's blocker.

Underhand serve: A serve in which the ball is given a slight under-hand toss from about waist high and then struck with the opposite closed fist in an "underhand pitching" motion.

➔ Rules to Upward Volleyball

Ball Size

- ◆ Ages 8-12 should use a lightweight regulation size ball.
- ◆ Ages 13+ should use a regulation size/weight ball.

Net Height

- ◆ Net height should be set somewhere between 7'3"-7'4".

Scoring

- ◆ A team scores a point when one of the following occurs:
 - ◆ *The ball is hit successfully over the net and not returned*
 - ◆ *The opposing team's serve does not come over the net*
 - ◆ *It takes the opposing team more than three hits to return the ball over the net*
 - ◆ *The opposing team's return hit lands out of bounds*
 - ◆ *The ball is considered in-bounds if it hits the actual boundary line*
 - ◆ *The opposing team commits a violation during play. This includes touching the net during play, catching the ball, throwing the ball, or holding the ball.*
 - *Depending on the age of players, use discretion with violations. You may want to just give a warning after the first violation rather than giving points to a team.*
- ◆ Teams may hit the ball no more than three times to return the ball over the net.

- ◆ If two players hit the ball at the same time, it is considered one hit.
- ◆ A player may not hit the ball two times consecutively. Doing so results in the opposing team scoring a point.

Winning a Match

- ◆ Matches are composed of three games. The first two games are scored as the first team to reach 25 points wins. The third and final game is scored to 15.
 - ◆ *Even if one team has won the first two games, play the third game to allow players to improve.*
 - ◆ *A team must win by two points to win a game, though games are capped at 27 regardless. The third game will be capped at 17.*

Serving

- ◆ Players may serve underhand or overhand depending on what they're comfortable with.
- ◆ Younger plays may move up to the attack line to serve. This is up to the League Director and Coach's discretion.
- ◆ A serve that does not cross the net and land in bounds gives a point to the opposing team who also takes over serving.
- ◆ A serve that hits the net and still goes over in bounds is legal.

- ◆ A serve where the player serving crosses the serve line before hitting the ball will not count and the serve then goes to the opposing team.
- ◆ A player continues serving until the opposing team scores a point.
- ◆ League Directors/Coaches may choose to allow players two chances to serve if the first serve does not go over the net in play.
- ◆ League Directors/Coaches may choose to rotate servers after a team scores five consecutive points. This prevents one player from dominating the game while serving.
- ◆ During scrimmages at practice, consider alternating serves between teams after a certain number of points. This allows both teams the opportunity to serve.

Boundaries

- ◆ If a ball bounces off the ceiling, it's only playable if NOT done on a serve.
 - ◆ *If the ball bounces off the ceiling on pass/set, it's playable on the same side unless it's the third hit*
 - ◆ *If the ball bounces off a wall, it's out of bounds*
 - ◆ *To play a ball from the stands or a chair, one foot must be on the floor. This rule exists for the player's safety.*
 - ◆ *Basketball goals are considered in bounds*
- ◆ Calling net violations and center-line violations is optional.

Sportsmanship

- ◆ No “trash talking” will be tolerated.
- ◆ First incident results in a warning, second may result in expulsion from the match.

Attire

- ◆ No jewelry allowed (rings, bracelets, earrings, necklaces, etc.)
- ◆ Players may wear shorts or pants. For uniformity you may want to encourage all players to wear black shorts/pants.
- ◆ Court shoes/tennis shoes are required.
- ◆ Knee pads are not required, but may be used if players choose.

Substitutions

- ◆ Substitutions are done on a rotation after a team wins a serve. This ensures all players have an equal opportunity to play.

Line Judges

- ◆ Line judges can be used in a match but are not required. These judges can be parents or teenagers.
- ◆ Line judges can use flags or hands to call “outs.”
 - ◇ *Flag/hand raised up means ball is OUT.*
 - ◇ *Flag/hand lowered means the ball is IN.*
 - ◇ *Line judges have the authority to make the final call on disputed plays during the season.*
 - ◇ *Line judges are required during tournament play.*
- ◆ A coach may be used as the game referee. He/she will call for the serve from possessing team and manage the overall match.

➔ Substitutions

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

- ◆ Every player will start at least one of the three games during a match. This eliminates preferential treatment of players.
- ◆ Substitutions and rotations should occur in such a way that each player has an opportunity to serve each match. No player should serve a second time until the other five players on the court have had a chance to serve.
- ◆ Because volleyball games are not timed, it can be difficult to ensure every player has equal playing time. You can make sure each player has equal opportunities to start a game, however. With these charts we provide examples on how to mark the starters for each game. This allows you to keep starters balanced throughout the course of the season. Ideally, no player goes more than one game without starting.
- ◆ There are two different substitution methods we recommend. Feel free to use whichever one you feel best fits your league.

Week 1				
Rank	Player	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3
A	Gabrielle	X	X	
B	Rachel	X	X	
C	Emily	X		X
D	Madison	X		X
E	Samantha	X		X
F	Ashley	X		X
G	Grace		X	X
H	Jessica		X	X
I	Eva		X	
J	Macy		X	

Starting rotation starts with the top 6 players, then rotates each set. Because Grace is the first player listed NOT to start set 1, she leads off the next 6 players starting set 2.

Following these rotation rules helps opposing teams have players with similar skill levels on the court at the same time.

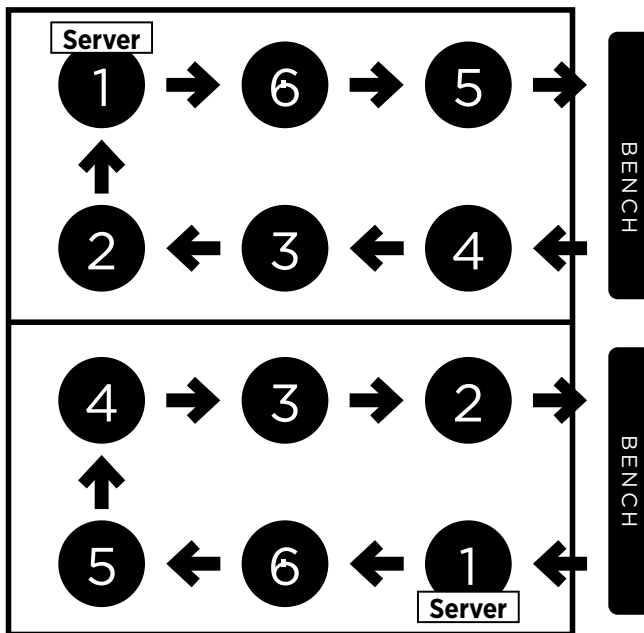
This also allows for all players to get a chance to "start" the first game of a match.

Week 2				
Rank	Player	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3
A	Gabrielle		X	
B	Rachel	X	X	
C	Emily	X	X	
D	Madison	X		X
E	Samantha	X		X
F	Ashley	X		X
G	Grace	X		X
H	Jessica		X	X
I	Eva		X	X
J	Macy		X	

Week 2 starts with your second player leading the rotation. Then set 2 opens with Jessica as the first player of the group.

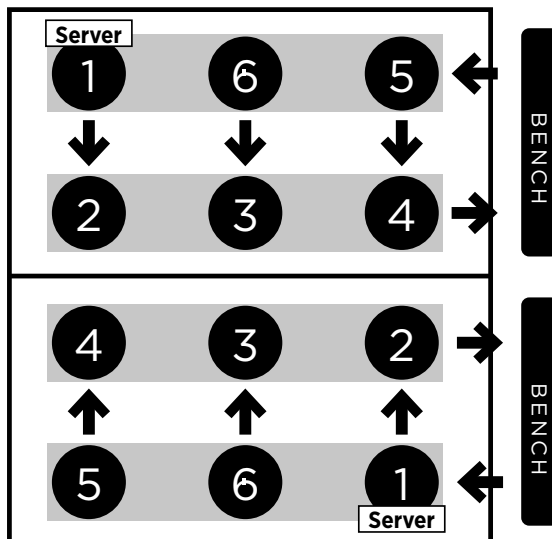
➔ Substitution method #1

- ◆ Players rotate after each possession won.
- ◆ Near side rotates out from front right position (2). Incoming sub comes in to serve (1).
- ◆ Opposite side rotates out from back left position (5). Incoming sub comes in to front left position (4).
- ◆ Coaches may choose to sub after every 5 points/serves regardless of possession.
- ◆ This is the standard sub method used by most recreation volleyball programs.



➔ Substitution method #2

- ◆ This unique method rotates multiple players at once after a change of possession.
- ◆ Once receiving possession, the near side would rotate its front row (4, 3, and 2) out and move the back row (5,6, and 1) up to the front row. 3 new players come off the bench to fill in the back row.
- ◆ The opposite side would do the same. The front row (2, 3, and 4) would rotate out and the back row (1, 6, and 5) would move to the front row. 3 new players come off the bench to fill in the back row.
- ◆ As you do these 3-player rotations, be sure their actual position within the row changes each time so every player is getting to serve and play every position on the court.
- ◆ As with Substitution Method #1, you may choose to rotate rows after every 5 points/ serves.



→ 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:

“Today, Kelley made a great attempt at every ball throughout the match. In the second game she returned several serves back over the net. Kelley was also great in encouraging her teammates as we finished up the match today. She will get a blue star for her effort today on the court. Let’s give Kelley a hand!”

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.



Blue is for Effort



Gold is for Sportsmanship



Gray is for Serving



Red is for Hitting



White is for Christlikeness

The background of the entire page is a grayscale photograph showing a person's hands holding a tablet. The tablet screen displays a form with various fields and a signature. Other papers and forms are scattered on a desk in the foreground, creating a professional, administrative atmosphere.

SECTION 5

FORMS

Substitution Form 87

Star Distribution Form 91

Upward Volleyball Substitution Form

Week ____	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			
I			
J			

Week ____	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			
I			
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Upward Volleyball Substitution Form

Week ____	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
A			
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D			
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J			

Week ____	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
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Upward Volleyball Substitution Form

Week ____	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
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Upward Volleyball Substitution Form

Week ____	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			
I			
J			

Week ____	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			
I			
J			

Upward Volleyball Star Distribution Form

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

Player's Name	Match 1	Match 2	Match 3	Match 4	Match 5	Match 6	Match 7	Match 8

BLUE (B): EFFORT

RED (R): HITTING

GRAY (GR): SERVING

GOLD (GO): SPORTSMANSHIP

WHITE (W): CHRISTLIKENESS

NOTES FOR NEXT PRACTICE: _____

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◆ NOTES

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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*

