



A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO PROVIDING THE BEST LEAGUE EXPERIENCE!

DEVELOP SKILLS | STRENGTHEN CHARACTER | HAVE FUN



# VOLLEYBALL PLAYBOOK

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**SECTION 1** 

## COACHING ESSENTIALS

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### → GOALS FOR THE SEASON

The goal of our sports ministry is:			
Success looks like:			
Success in our sports ministry is measured by:			

### → What You Do Matters

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

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

### → Your Role in Sports Ministry

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

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

Hebrews 12:1-2 reads, Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer, and perfecter of our faith.

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

### → An Upward Sports Coach

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

### Five Keys To Coaching:

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

- A growth mindset focuses on growing and improving at each opportunity so that small improvements lead to more significant change as they compound over time.
   There is always growth potential.
- **5. Follow the Circle of Affirmation** Support game day officials by being their biggest fans and following the Circle of Affirmation on game days. Following the Circle of Affirmation will provide families with a positive experience and show we value people as God's creation.

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



### **GENESIS 1:27**

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

### **GENESIS 2:7**

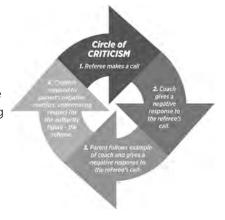
"Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person."

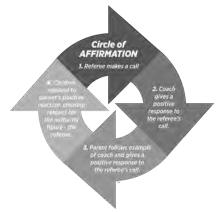
### **→** Circle of Affirmation

### **Game Day Attitude**

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

In Upward Soccer, coaches and referees work together as a unified team. Coaches have the opportunity and the responsibility to stop the Circle of Criticism by starting the Circle of Affirmation.





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

### → Three Layers of Coaching

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

THE PLAYER A coach will need to observe each player's skill level and teach accordingly. You may have a wide range of skill levels, with players who have experience and skill and some who have never played the sport. Work one-on-one with players and give them direction on individual skills to try at home. Celebrate success as they develop and be patient with their mistakes.

THE TEAM

As you coach each individual, you must also bring the team together. In a team sport, players must learn how to work well with each other. The team concept changes as players become more mature, advance in age, and can focus on others and not just themselves. Small-sided scrimmages and in-game scenarios at practices can aid in developing the team concept. Helping them communicate with each other by using participants' names and showing them how to encourage each other will help them come together as a team.

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

### → Interacting with Players, Parents, Coaches, and Referees

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

### Interacting with players

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

### Here are ten tips on interacting with your players.

- Greet each player by name as they arrive.
- Always be mindful of speaking on a level that the player can understand.
- Tell participants the details of what you are teaching, show them what you are teaching, have them do it, and then apply it in a game scenario.
- Focus on one skill at a time as you teach so that players can learn each one thoroughly.
- Recognize differences in skill levels so that you can help each player improve.
- Be familiar with the devotion and allow time for discussion.

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

### What about distracted and disruptive players?

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

- 1. Understand that players have short attention spans. Be patient.
- 2. Players come into practice and, like coaches, are influenced by things that have already occurred during the day. Greet them by name to welcome them into a new environment, so they know you see them.

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

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

### Interacting with parents

Start the season by getting to know your players' parents and families. Include parents in your first post-practice huddle. Here are a few tips for interacting with parents.

- Introduce yourself to parents, share expectations, and explain why you are coaching.
- ♦ Share your contact information.
- Each week take time to have a conversation with one family.
- Encourage parents to have fun working on skills at home with their players.
- Be ready to step into any spiritual conversation with parents and talk about what you teach during devotion time.

- Demonstrate care and concern for players, so parents know you are looking out for their players.
- Be organized and prepared for practice. Parents want to know you value their time by coaches being prepared and organized.
- Communicate one time per week through email, text, or both. Keep it short and simple.

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

### **Interacting with other Coaches and Referees**

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

### Here are some tips on how to interact with coaches and referees.

- Introduce yourself to the other coaches and referees on game day, and remember their names.
- Realize that you would not have a game day without the other team and referees. It's essential to work together.

- Review Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:7 and understand that we are all God's creation, which should be reflected in how we interact.
- Be the referee's biggest fan. If you want to have referees for your league, critical behavior does not help.
- Coaches work together for the experience of all participants.
- ♦ Love one another, John 13:34.
- ♦ Thank the coaches and referees after the game.
- ♦ Review the Circle of Affirmation and follow it.

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

### → Create a Positive Culture

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

- Set expectations of behavior and communicate them with players and parents.
- Start and end each practice on time.

- Encourage players to support each other by cheering for teammates.
- View mistakes as teaching opportunities, not a chance to be critical at the moment.

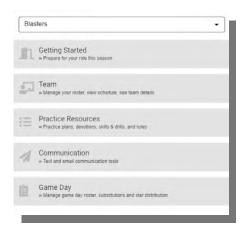
One practical way to create a positive team culture and teach communication is to establish a team huddle at the end of practice. Have players circle up and include the coach. The coach can talk about things done well in practice.

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

### → Coach Resources and Tools

Many resources are available to help you provide a great experience for your team, plan and efficiently use your time this season.

**MyUpward.org** - This is the primary tool for you as a coach. The league director will send you an invitation to access resources on MyUpward.org. After you accept the invitation and create a username and password, you can also create an icon on your home screen when accessing from a mobile device.



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

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

**Devotions** - Weekly devotion content for your practices is located on MyUpward.org under the "Practice Resources" and can also be found in the Coach Playbook.

**Game Day Stars** – Use these stars on game day to highlight each player's contributions during the game. The Star Distribution Form can be found in the Appendix of the Coach Playbook.

**Gospel Video** - Sent out from the league director to families to share a video version of the gospel message with them during the season.

**Green Practice Stars** – Use these stars at practice to encourage participation in the practice devotion, scripture learning, or the goals your league has outlined for the devotion content.

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

**Practice Plans** – Use the practice plans found on MyUpward.org under the "Practice Resources." These can be printed out before practice or used directly from your mobile device.

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

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

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

lome / Team		
Roster	Games	Practices
	Ocean Ramblers	
	1st-2nd Division 4y4	
	Team Page Z	

**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."



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.

Practice	Practice Focus	Team Meeting	Rules to Cover	Skills & Drills
1	Get to know each other     Evaluate skills     Teach serving and serve receive fundamentals	Get to know each other through introductions     Discuss practice ground rules     Introduce hitting basics	• Practice rules	Proper serving and serve receiving
2	Continue skill     evaluation     Teach serving and serve     receive fundamentals	Re-introduce players and coaches     Discuss court positions	Rules around boundary lines and number of hits allowed per possession	Proper serving and serve receiving
3 week of first game	Review serving and serve receive fundamentals     Teach passing fundamentals	• Discuss practice focus	Game format and substitutions	Proper passing and setting
4	Skill development     Teach passing fundamentals	Discuss practice focus     Discuss successes from first game	• Review questions about match format from first week	• Proper passing and setting
5	Skill development     Teach setting tactics	Discuss practice focus     Answer players' questions about the game     Discuss successes from first game	• Review all rules as a fun quiz	Continued improvements on serving, passing, and setting
6-11 through last practice	Continue skill development	Discuss practice focus     Answer players' questions about the game     Discuss successes from first game	Continue to     review rules     for clear     understanding	• 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

### TIP:

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

by whichever team has the fewest "dead fish" after 10 minutes.

**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.

## **PRACTICE DEVOTIONS**

# BIBLICAL VIRTUES

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

PRACTICE NUMBER	BIBLICAL VIRTUES	VERSE
Week 1	Character	No Key Verse This Week
Week 2	Honor	So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NLT)
Week 3	Honor	So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NLT)
Week 4	Honor	So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NLT)
Week 5	Self-Control	You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. James 1:19b (NLT)

PRACTICE NUMBER	BIBLICAL VIRTUES	VERSE
Week 6	Self-Control	You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. James 1:19b (NLT)
Week 7	Self-Control	You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. James 1:19b (NLT)
Week 8	Good News	For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.  John 3:16 (NLT)
Week 9	Responsibility	For we are each responsible for our own conduct. Galatians 6:5 (NLT)
Week 10	Responsibility	For we are each responsible for our own conduct. Galatians 6:5 (NLT)
Week 11	Responsibility	For we are each responsible for our own conduct. Galatians 6:5 (NLT)



 Background: This season, our devotions will focus on three virtues—honor, selfcontrol, and responsibility—with character as our overall theme. This first devotion will explain why good character is something worth pursuing.

If you have placed your faith in Jesus and resolved to follow Him with your life, you have a commitment to be a person of character, character clearly defined in the person of Jesus. Christians are called to follow Jesus' example, and the Holy Spirit works in our lives to produce fruit that Jesus exhibited during His time on earth—fruit like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Some athletes on your team might already believe in Jesus for salvation, while others might not. It is valuable for both groups to learn foundational elements of character and integrity. These principles help point all of us to what is good and true in life—and can help kids grasp the difference between good and evil, sin and righteousness. Later this season, in Practice 8, we'll zoom in on the gospel story and look specifically at how Jesus' death and resurrection address the consequences of sin and allow us to live a Spirit-filled life.

 Big Picture: For more insight, read Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:16-26. If you don't own a Bible, you can download the YouVersion Bible App for free.



- Encouragement: "True greatness is not measured by the headlines a person commands or the wealth he or she accumulates. The inner character of a person—the undergirding moral and spiritual values and commitments—is the true measure of lasting greatness." - Billy Graham
- Coach's Question for Reflection: What does being a person of character mean to me?

#### Bottom Line: I want to be a person of character.

This season, we will be talking about honor, self-control, and responsibility. All these things together help us to have good character. Can anyone tell me what *character* means? (Let athletes answer.)

You could all probably tell me about one of your favorite characters from a book, movie, TV show, or video game. But the kind of character I want to talk to you about today isn't someone from a story. Instead, it's something each of us has. *Character* means the decisions that make us who we are. It's the thoughts we think, the words we say, and the actions we take. Character is very important!

The Bible talks about several people who have good character: Ruth, who left her homeland to take care of her mother-in-law when the older woman had no one else; Job, who refused to say bad things about God even when he lost everything; Barnabas, who was so encouraging to others that they started calling him "son of encouragement." These are just a few examples. None of these people were perfect, but they loved God and did their best to trust and obey Him.

The Bible also tells us about people who didn't have good character, people who disobeyed God and hurt others for selfish reasons. We learn that there are consequences to the decisions we make. We can't go through life only caring about ourselves. That's a recipe for disaster.

But the Bible also teaches us about the character of God. We learn He is good, perfect, loving, powerful, faithful, and more. When God's Son, Jesus, came to the earth, He showed us even more of who God is. His character is summed up really well in this list of characteristics called the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. When we think about what good character looks like, that's a pretty great place to start!

The Bible also says, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." (Romans 12:2, NLT)

No matter who you are, God can help you become a person of character. This season, we're going to discover more about what that means.

When you have good character, you honor God. You show that you believe He is good and His way is best. When you have good character, other people know they can trust you. They want to be around you because you build them up. When you have good character, you can be really confident in who you are. You know you are doing your best to live the way you believe you should. You won't be perfect, but you can always make a positive impact on the world around you.



God, thank You for bringing us together as a team this season. Help each of us to learn a lot and grow closer to You. Teach us to have good character and to honor You with our lives. Amen.



- · Background: The first virtue we'll focus on this season is honor. For our first two devotions on this topic, we'll draw from stories in the Old Testament book of Daniel. Daniel is an excellent example of someone who faithfully honors God, even under challenging circumstances. Daniel and his friends, probably teenagers at the time, were brought from Judah to Babylon in the first of three deportations of noble and skilled Jews during the exile. Daniel and his friends were selected for a three-year training program, after which they would become wise men in Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar's court. While the young men were encouraged to leave their heritage behind, they were devoted to God and would not leave their faith behind, refusing to eat food and drink wine that would make them unclean in God's sight. Babylonians consumed several animals that were considered unclean under God's law, and the way the meat was prepared would have been unclean as well. There were probably multiple factors at play. "The food and drink could have come from a temple, having been offered to a pagan deity, but this would also be true of the vegetables. Whatever their reasoning, Daniel and his friends determined to avoid defilement if at all possible." (Daniel P. Caldwell, "Life in the Royal Court of Babylon," Holy Land Illustrated Bible) These teenagers took a risk to honor God, and God rewarded their obedience.
- · Big Picture: For more insight, read Daniel 1.
- Encouragement: "Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome." - 1 John 5:3 (NLT)
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Have I ever taken a risk in order to honor or obey God?

#### VIRTUE

HONOR is letting someone know you see how valuable they really are.

#### KEY VERSE

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Gorinthians 10:31 [NLT]

#### Bottom Line: I want to honor God with my obedience.

For the next few practices, we will be talking about honor. Honor is letting someone know you see how valuable they really are. Above everyone else, we want to honor God. He is holy and perfect. He created each one of us and loves us very much. He knows all things and has all power. We want to show Him how much we value Him. One way we do this is through our obedience. God knows what is best for us, and it's important for us to live our lives the way He says is right.

I want to tell you a story about someone in the Bible who honored God with his obedience. There's a guy named Daniel in the Old Testament. When Daniel was a young man, his homeland of Judah was conquered by Babylon. Daniel and some others were taken from their homes to live in Babylon. The king of Babylon did not believe in the God of the Bible, and he did not follow God's laws.

The king wanted the young men from Judah to become more like the Babylonians. They were given Babylonian names. They were supposed to study the language and teachings of Babylon and train to serve the king. They were also supposed to be fed from the king's own kitchens.

But there was a problem. Daniel knew it was against God's law to eat the foods the Babylonians served. He wanted to obey God, so he spoke to one of the king's officials about it. The official was worried about how the king would respond if Daniel didn't eat the food the king had ordered for him to eat. He was too scared to allow it.

Daniel kept trying. He went to the attendant who was assigned to him and a few of his other friends from Judah. 'Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water,' Daniel said. 'At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's food. Then make your decision in light of what you see.' The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others." (Daniel 1:12-16, NLT)

Daniel and his friends knew that obeying God would be better in the long run. Even in

a place where it was dangerous for them to be different, they stood up for what they believed was right. And God blessed their obedience. They were healthy, strong, and smart. When they completed their training, the king found them ten times wiser than all his other advisors.

Daniel honored God by choosing to obey Him even when it was difficult. When God blessed Daniel and his friends, it pointed back to the greatness of God Himself.

We don't need to follow the same commands about food that Daniel followed in the Old Testament, but we do need to follow God in other ways. God asks us to honor Him and love those around us as we love ourselves. When we read the Bible, we can learn about how we can live in a way that is obedient to Him.

#### **Discussion Questions**

#### (K-2nd Grade)

- · When is it the hardest for you to obey your parents?
- · When is it the hardest to obey God?

#### (3rd-6th Grade)

- · What comes to mind when you think about honor?
- · What is an example of a way you can honor God with your obedience?

#### (7th Grade and up)

- · Why do you think Daniel refused to compromise about this specific issue?
- · What is an example of a way you can honor God with your obedience?

## LET'S PRAY

Heavenly Father, we want to honor and obey You. Help us to know when we need to stand up for what is right and give us the courage to do it. Let our obedience point others to Your greatness. Amen.

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



- Background: While our previous devotion featured Daniel's commitment to honoring God near the beginning of his life, this devotion shows that this commitment remained strong to the end of Daniel's life. When he faced the lion's den, Daniel was likely in his eighties. He'd served three kings and seen Babylon fall to the Persian empire. Darius, the new ruler, saw Daniel's value as a leader and advisor and wanted to give him even more responsibility. Though this was a wise decision, Darius made a foolish and vain decision to let Daniel's secret opponents entrap him with an edict that, for 30 days, no one in the kingdom could pray to anyone but Darius. This was specifically targeted at Daniel, whose pattern of piety was known. Though Darius later tried to find a loophole to save Daniel, the law could not be unwritten. "This devotion to established laws was one of the special features of the Persian Empire. Eventually, the profusion of laws so swamped them in bureaucracy that they could not function efficiently." (Note on Daniel 5-6, Filament Bible App) Thankfully, God was able to save Daniel when Darius was not. Daniel had been praying to the true King.
- . Big Picture: For more insight, read Daniel 6.
- Encouragement: Daniel's commitment to honor God at risk of his own life and his testimony about God clearly affected King Darius. Even before Daniel's night in the lion's den, Darius appears to have had some faith that Daniel's God could indeed preserve his life. After Darius witnessed God's deliverance of Daniel from the lions, the man who had just wished everyone to worship him alone sent a decree to his whole kingdom praising God. This can be an inspirational reminder to us. What impression does our commitment to honor God have on those around us? How can we help them see God at work in our lives?
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Are there any obstacles that I let stand in the way of my commitment to worshiping God?

#### VIRTUE

HONOR is letting someone know you see how valuable they really are.

#### KEY VERSE

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NLT)

Bottom Line: I want to honor God with my worship.

Does anyone remember the story we talked about last practice? *(Let athletes answer.)* We talked about Daniel and how he obeyed God's law even when it was difficult. Daniel honored God with his obedience. Today, we're going to talk about another part of Daniel's story. This time, he honors God with his worship.

Daniel was older now. He had been in Babylon for many years and was now serving under a new king. He was one of the king's best advisors, and the king wanted to put him in charge of the whole empire. This made some of the other advisors jealous. They tried to find Daniel doing something wrong, but they couldn't. "He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy." (Daniel 6:4b, NLT) They decided that the one way they could make Daniel look bad was through his faith in God.

Remember, the people in Babylon didn't believe in the God of the Bible, but Daniel did. The jealous officials went to the king and convinced him to make a new law. For the next thirty days, no one in the kingdom was allowed to pray to anyone unless they were praying to the king himself.

The Bible says, "But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God." (Daniel 6:10, NLT)

Daniel had always done his best to serve the king, but he wouldn't compromise on this. He worshiped and prayed to God alone. He didn't change his routine. He kept praying to God and was faithful to him. The officials came to his house and found him praying to God, then returned to the king and told him about Daniel.

The punishment for breaking this law was pretty extreme. If you broke it, you were supposed to be thrown into a den of lions! The king liked Daniel and did not want this to happen to him. He tried to find a way to save Daniel, but the law could not be changed. The Bible says, "So at last the king gave orders for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to him, 'May your God, whom you serve so faithfully, rescue you."" (Daniel 6:16, NLT)

Daniel was shut in the cave with the lions. The king fasted all night and couldn't sleep. When he went back to the lions' den in the morning, he called out to Daniel, hoping God had saved him.

Amazingly, Daniel answered back! God had sent an angel to shut the lions' mouths so they would not hurt Daniel. He was alive and well. The king was overjoyed and had Daniel released.

Daniel continued worshiping God even when it could have cost him his life. He showed that God was more valuable to Him than anything else. He wouldn't give up praying to God, even when it went against a command from the king, even when it put his own life at risk. Daniel's faith in God even inspired the king to believe that Daniel's God might be able to save him from the lions—and God did save him!

We are fortunate to live in a time and place where we can worship God freely. But every day, we are tempted to give our attention and worship to other things. We can be so focused on our favorite sports team, or on being friends with a certain person, or on spending every moment we can on a tablet or video game system that we start putting that thing above everything else in our lives. When that happens, we're worshiping that thing rather than God, who truly deserves our worship. When we stop to think about how we're spending our time and what is most important to us, we'll see what we are really honoring the most.

#### **Discussion Questions**

#### (K-2nd Grade)

- · Why was praying to God every day so important to Daniel?
- · How can you spend time worshiping God?

#### (3rd-6th Grade)

- · What are some things that sometimes distract you from worshiping God?
- · What can we learn from Daniel's daily prayer routine?

#### (7th Grade and up)

- What do the king's actions tell us about his relationship with Daniel and Daniel's relationship with God?
- What is an example of something that people your age often idolize and worship rather than God?

## LET'S PRAY

God, You alone are worthy of our worship. You alone listen to our prayers. Help us to be faithful to You and not worship other things or people. We love You, Lord. Amen.



- Background: While honoring God should be our first priority, our love and respect for God should lead us to love, respect, and honor other people. In this devotion, we'll depart from Daniel and rewind in the Old Testament to the story of Ruth for an example of what it looks like to honor someone else. Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi emigrated to Moab from Israel with her husband and two sons, searching for a better life. Years later, Naomi prepares to return home as a widow and grieving mother, all alone. Yet her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, now widowed themselves, ask to accompany her. Naomi eventually talks Orpah out of it. "But Ruth is special. Despite Naomi's bitter tirade, she insists on staying. Orpah is a good person, but Ruth is beyond good—she possesses an extra measure of devotion and sacrificial love that is uncommon." (NET Bible Notes on Ruth 1:14) Ruth returns with Naomi to her hometown of Bethlehem, where she will continue to honor the older woman with her work ethic, provision, and courage. Ultimately, through Ruth, the whole family's honor will be restored as she marries Boaz, her kinsman redeemer, and bears a son to continue Naomi's husband's line.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read Ruth 1-2.
- Encouragement: While it might seem strange, not only does God want us to honor each other, but He Himself honors the humble and lifts them up. He is in the business of restoring people from shame to honor. When we humble ourselves and repent of our sins, we put ourselves in a position to be honored by God through His vast grace and mercy. "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor." (James 4:10, NLT)
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Do I see other people as valuable and worthy of honor? Is there anyone I need to show more honor toward in my life?

#### VIRTUE

HONOR is letting someone know you see how valuable they really are.

#### KEY VERSE

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 [NLT]

#### Bottom Line: I want to honor others.

We've been talking about honor and how we want to honor God by showing Him how valuable He is through our obedience and worship. But the Bible also talks about honoring other people, and I want to tell you about another person in the Old Testament who is a great example of this. Her name is Ruth, and her story took place hundreds of years before Daniel's story.

Ruth was from the land of Moab. During a famine, a family from Israel moved to Moab, and Ruth married one of the sons from this family. Another Moabite woman named Orpah married the other son. They became part of the Israelite family. Sadly, their husbands and their father-in-law died. Their mother-in-law, Naomi, decided to go back to Israel by herself. She told Ruth and Orpah they could leave her and return to their families. Orpah eventually agreed. But Ruth refused to leave Naomi, saying, "Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God." (Ruth 1:16b, NLT)

Ruth left her homeland and her friends and family to live in a place she didn't know, surrounded by strangers. But she did this for Naomi. She knew the older woman was all alone and needed someone to watch out for her. When they arrived in Naomi's hometown, Ruth had to work hard to make sure they both had everything they needed. She honored her mother-in-law and showed her how valuable she was to her. Ruth was loyal, faithful, and kind. She knew what it was to really honor someone else.

Listen to this verse from the very first chapter of the Bible. It says, "So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27, NLT) There are some people you should show special honor to—like Ruth did for Naomi and like you should do for your parents, grandparents, teachers, and coaches. But the Bible says that all people are valuable and important because all people are created in the image of God. We want to honor other people because God made them and loves them very much, just like He made you and me and loves us very much.

What does it look like to honor others? Honor is a lot like respect. It means letting someone know you see how valuable they really are. You treat them as you would want to be treated yourself. You treat them like they're important. Ruth didn't have to go with

Naomi, but because she believed Naomi was important, she sacrificed to stay with her and help her.

There's a passage in the New Testament that talks about honor. It says this: "Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other." (Romans 12:9-10, NLT)

Taking delight in honoring someone else means being excited about it or enjoying it. It should be fun to honor other people! Like when you sing to someone on their birthday or give a high five to a teammate after they do something well. Think about how you can have that attitude toward others, not just at special moments, but throughout each day. Be excited to honor others!

#### **Discussion Questions**

#### (K-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)

- · Why should we honor or respect others?
- · How do you think honoring someone else could be fun?

#### (3rd-6th Grade)

- · Why does God creating someone in His image make them valuable?
- · What are some ways you can honor others this week?

#### (7th Grade and up)

- · What does it feel like when someone honors you?
- · What are some ways you can honor others this week?

### LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for making us in Your image. Help us to honor the people around us as best we can. Teach us to get excited about showing honor to others. Help us to honor You with our honor for other people. Amen.



- Background: In this devotion, we'll introduce our second virtue of the season: self-control. The story of Esau giving up his birthright to his brother Jacob for a bowl of stew will show why self-control is important. Self-control keeps us from making rash decisions like Esau did! "The firstborn son enjoyed a place of honor and privilege in the family, but he also shouldered a number of responsibilities. As the eldest male, he would inherit a double portion of the estate and the leadership of the household." (Susan Booth, "Firstborn in the Old Testament," Holy Land Illustrated Bible) Of course, Esau and Jacob weren't part of just any family. It was through Abraham and then Isaac that God's promise of great blessing (see Genesis 15) passed. When Esau flippantly gave up his birthright, he also showed his disregard for God and His covenant. Though Jacob was imperfect and even deceptive, he would go on to inherit the birthright, his father's blessing (see Genesis 27), and God's promise to father a great nation that would bless the whole world.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read Genesis 25:19-34.
- Encouragement: It has become harder and harder to practice self-control in the era
  of instant gratification we live in today. Yet, we know that good things take time.
  If we can learn to curb our desires and choose the best thing rather than the easy
  thing, it will benefit us later on.
- Coach's Question for Reflection: How can I be an example of self-control for the athletes on my team?

#### VIRTUE

SELF-CONTROL is choosing to do what you should do, not what you want to do.

#### KEY VERSE

You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

James 1:19b (NLT)

#### Bottom Line: I can have self-control.

So far this season, we've talked about character and honor. Another important part of being a person of good character is having self-control. Self-control is exactly what it sounds like—having control over yourself. Self-control is choosing to do what you should do, not what you want to do. It means you don't do exactly what you want to do whenever you want to do it.

Let me tell you a story from the Bible about a guy named Esau who really needed to learn some self-control. Esau had a twin named Jacob, but Esau was the oldest—barely. In the ancient culture Esau lived in, the oldest son was heavily favored. He would become the head of the family when his father died and would receive double the inheritance of any other siblings.

The Bible tells us, "As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home." (Genesis 25:27, NLT) The two brothers were very different.

"One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. Esau said to Jacob, 'I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (Genesis 25:29-30a, NLT)

Jacob had an idea. He told Esau he could have some of the stew if Esau gave Jacob his rights as the firstborn son. Now, let's think about this for a second. Was this a very good trade? (*Let athletes answer.*) No! This would be a terrible trade. Esau would be giving up something that would benefit him for the rest of his life in exchange for something he could eat in five minutes! Surely Esau just laughed at his brother and turned him down, right?

Nope! Esau said, "Look, I'm dying of starvation! What good is my birthright to me now?" Jacob got Esau to swear that all his rights as firstborn would go to his younger brother Jacob instead. Esau ate the stew and some bread, then got up and left.

It might be hard to believe that someone could be as foolish as Esau was in this story. He had no self-control. At that moment, he wanted that stew more than he wanted anything

else. So he took it, basically giving up everything he had to fill his stomach.

The truth is, we all have moments where our self-control is tested. And we all have moments where we lose that battle. Red stew might not be something that tempts you, but there are many other reasons we might need self-control. You might need self-control to stop playing a game and do your homework. You might need self-control not to say something mean when someone else frustrates you. You might need self-control to keep practicing something difficult instead of just giving up. Here's the thing about self-control. Most of the time, it means doing something a little harder now in order to get something better in the future. Esau's decision led to a lot of family drama. Who knows what would have happened if he had shown self-control and waited to find food somewhere else.

#### **Discussion Ouestions**

#### (K-2nd Grade)

- · Why was Esau's decision a bad one?
- · What's a time when you needed to have self-control?

#### (3rd-6th Grade)

- · What consequences do you think Esau's decision might have had?
- · What's a time when you needed to have self-control?

#### (7th Grade and up)

- Esau's decision might seem like an extreme example of a lack of self-control, but can
  you think of any modern examples that might be just as extreme? What are they?
- · What are some areas of your life in which you wish you had more self-control?

## LET'S PRAY

God, please teach us to have self-control. We want to choose what is best instead of choosing what is easiest. Give us wisdom to stop and think about decisions before we make them. Amen.

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



- Background: This word self-control is translated from two Greek words, en, meaning "in," and kratos, meaning "strength, power, might, or dominion." When you have self-control, you have the strength to rule yourself and not give in to temptation. However, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit and an aspect of Christian character, it is less about avoiding sin by your own willpower and more about letting the Spirit guide you in the decisions you make. "Self-control is ultimately the ability to be controlled, not by the sinful self, but by the Holy Spirit." (A. Craig Troxel, With All Your Heart) Our words and actions are two areas of our lives where we desperately need this ability to lean into the Spirit's guidance and make the best choice rather than the easiest choice.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read James 3; Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:12-17; James 1:19-21.
- Encouragement: "If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure." 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 (NLT)
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Which is more challenging for me—controlling my words or controlling my actions?

#### VIRTUE

SELF-CONTROL is choosing to do what you should do, not what you want to do.

#### KEY VERSE

You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

James 1:19b (NLT)

#### Bottom Line: I can control my words and actions.

We're going to play a short game of Simon Says. But instead of "Simon says," I'm going to say, "Coach says." Okay? So, remember, when I say, "Coach says," and then give you an instruction, you do it. If I don't say, "Coach says," you don't follow that instruction. Got it? Let's play. (Feel free to use your own instructions if you wish.)

Coach says...clap your hands. Coach says...give a thumbs up. Raise your right hand. Coach says...start jumping. Stop jumping. Coach says...spin in a circle. Coach says...sit down.

Great job, everyone. When you play a game like Coach Says or Simon Says, you have to listen and pay attention. Even when I didn't say "Coach says," your first instinct was to do what I said, wasn't it? But you had to have the control *not* to do that thing, right? Selfcontrol is like that sometimes. We are often tempted to act or react in a certain way, and if we're not paying attention, we'll follow that instinct, even when it's a bad idea.

Self-control really comes down to two things: controlling your words and controlling your actions. It's easy just to say the first thing that pops into your mind. It's easy just to do whatever you feel like doing. But, often, the first thing you want to say or do isn't the best choice. Let's look at what the Bible has to say about controlling our words and actions.

The book of James says that just like a tiny spark can set a forest on fire, the things we say can set our lives on fire. Our words might seem small, but they have a lot of power that can be used to hurt people or help them. This is why it's important to have self-control when it comes to our words. We need to think before we speak and consider the consequences of what we want to say. Ephesians 4:29 (NLT) says, "Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them."

While we should watch our words and think before we speak, it's also important to

think before we act. Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father." We want to do our best to follow Jesus' example in the things we do. Our actions should back up what we say we believe. If we say we love others, we should act in a loving way. If we say we want to honor God, we should obey and worship Him. When we are tempted to do something wrong—like take something that isn't ours or cheat on a test—we need to remember that our actions show who we really are. Self-control isn't always easy, but if you ask God to help you. He will!

#### **Discussion Ouestions**

#### (K-2nd Grade)

- · Tell us about a time when you wish you had controlled your words better.
- · Tell us about a time when you wish you had controlled your actions better.

#### (3rd-6th Grade)

- Tell us about a time when you wish you'd had a little more self-control. Why do you
  wish that?
- What can you do to remember to have self-control when it comes to your words and actions?

#### (7th Grade and up)

- Which is more challenging for you, controlling your words or controlling your actions?
- Controlling your words and actions starts in the mind. How can you train your thoughts to help you practice self-control?

## LET'S PRAY

God, we know the things we say and do represent You to others. Teach us to have self-control in the things we say and the things we do. Help us to think first and do our best to do what is right instead of what is easiest. Amen.



- · Background: One important aspect of self-control is controlling your temper. It is a true testament of will when someone can be patient and maintain peace in the face of extreme frustration. We see an example of this in a story about Jacob and Esau's father, Isaac. Isaac had inherited God's promise for Abraham's family, and God blessed him with great prosperity during a famine (Genesis 26:1). The jealous Philistines took away Isaac's most valuable resource, water, multiple times as Isaac moved around the region. Isaac felt he had a right to the wells his father had dug in the past. "By using the names Abraham had used for these wells, Isaac was asserting his ownership of them." (Andrew E. Steinmann, Genesis) However, the Philistines did not recognize this claim. Water was scarce, and they did not want to share it. Isaac could have forced the issue, but it likely wouldn't have turned out well (no pun intended) for anyone. This must have been an exhausting time for Isaac and his family, but Isaac remained patient until he finally found a place where they would have water and not be bothered by the Philistines. He named this well Rehoboth. "The name Rehoboth... is derived from a verbal root meaning 'to make room.' The name was a reminder that God had made room for them. The story shows Isaac's patience with the opposition; it also shows how God's blessing outdistanced the men of Gerar. They could not stop it or seize it any longer." (NET Bible Notes on Genesis 26)
- Big Picture: For more insight, read Genesis 26:12-25.
- Encouragement: J.I. Packer wrote, "Patience is the Christlike reaction to all
  that is maddening." There are many maddening things in our daily lives, but we
  can choose to move on (as Isaac did in this situation) and have a big-picture
  perspective of things. It is more beneficial to be patient and trust in God than to
  let our worry or anger take over and make us react in frustration to challenging
  circumstances.
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Am I more likely to have patience in a frustrating situation or lose my temper? How can I improve my patience?

#### VIRTUE

SELF-CONTROL is choosing to do what you should do, not what you want to do.

#### KEY VERSE

You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

James 1:19b (NLT)

#### Bottom Line: I can control my temper.

For the past few weeks, we've been talking about self-control. It can be difficult for us to have self-control when we get frustrated and start to run out of patience with other people. But even when people aren't doing what we want them to do, it's still important to have self-control. Let's look at another story in the Old Testament that teaches us about this kind of self-control.

Isaac was a man who followed God. One year, he planted crops and had a great harvest. He became very rich, with many cows, sheep, and goats. Some other people who lived nearby were jealous of Isaac. They filled up his wells with dirt and kicked him out of the area.

Thankfully, Isaac and his family were nomads, which meant that they lived in big tents and traveled around to different places as their animals grazed the land. So they moved to a new valley and found a new well. Some shepherds came and claimed the well for themselves. Isaac's workers dug another well, but someone else claimed that one, too! Finally, Isaac's workers dug a well that no one else tried to take from them.

Isaac needed water for his family, workers, and animals. They couldn't survive without it. But other people kept taking it away! Isaac and his workers probably got pretty tired of all that moving and well-digging! But instead of fighting or going on arguing, Isaac kept the peace every time and just moved on. He didn't lose his patience or his temper. He had self-control. That protected his family and kept everyone he was responsible for out of trouble.

Do you ever get impatient with other people? Do you have trouble controlling your temper? The next time you find yourself ready to lose it, remember Isaac. If he could have self-control in his situation, so can you in whatever situation you are going through.

This doesn't mean controlling your temper is always easy, of course. But there are some good things you can do if you find yourself getting really angry. You can take a few deep breaths. You can count to five before you say anything. You can talk about the situation to your parents or another adult you trust. When you control your temper, you are much less likely to say or do something that hurts someone else. And you are a lot less likely to regret it later on.

#### **Discussion Questions**

#### (K-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)

- What was a time when you got really frustrated or impatient with someone else?
   What did you do?
- · Why is it better not to lose your temper?

#### (3rd-6th Grade)

- What was a time when you got really frustrated or impatient with someone else?
   What did you do?
- What is something you can do to help yourself have more self-control in a frustrating situation?

#### (7th Grade and up)

- What are some of your pet peeves that can easily make you lose patience with someone else?
- What are the benefits of controlling your temper? What negatives can come from not controlling your temper?

## LET'S PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You that You are so extremely patient with us. Help us to have self-control and to be patient with other people. Help us learn how to control our tempers when we get frustrated. Amen.



- Background: In Philippians 3, the apostle Paul lists out his impressive resume. Within Judaism, he was among the elite. He had the right background, belonged to the right groups, and lived strictly according to the law as best he could. Yet, Paul writes, "I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord . . . I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith." (Philippians 3:7-9, NLT) We can break our backs trying to be good and do good, but, like Paul, our attempts at righteousness will always fall short. Thankfully, it is not our righteousness that saves us but our faith in Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. In this devotion, you will share the good news about Jesus with your team and explain how what He has done makes us right with God
- Big Picture: For more insight, read John 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; John 19-20; Philippians 3:5-14.
- Encouragement: "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you
  can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the
  good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's
  masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things
  he planned for us long ago." Ephesians 2:8-10 (NLT)
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Have I accepted God's gift of salvation through faith in Jesus, or am I trying to earn God's favor through good works?

#### VIRTUE

The GOOD NEWS is that Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins.

#### KEY VERSE

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 (NLT)

#### Bottom Line: I can trust in Jesus to save me from sin and death.

This season, we've focused on what it means to be people of character—people who honor God and others, people who have self-control. These are certainly great things to be. But today, I want to talk about some bad news and some really good news.

The bad news is something called sin. Sin is anything we think, do, or say that disobeys God. Sin is doing things our way instead of God's way. No matter how hard we try to honor others and have self-control, none of us are perfect. We all have moments where we disobey God. We all lose our tempers, say mean things sometimes, or worship things other than God. The Bible says we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. You see, God is holy and perfect, and sin separates us from Him and keeps us from having a relationship with Him. The punishment for sin is death and separation from Him forever.

That's the bad news. But, remember, I said there was good news, too. And this isn't just any good news. This is the *best* news.

The Bible says, "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17, NLT)

The good news is that even though we are all sinners, God loves us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to earth to live among us and to save us from the consequences of our sin if we believe in Him. Jesus was born as a baby about 2,000 years ago. Eventually, Jesus grew up and started teaching people about God and what it really looks like to honor Him. He performed miracles that showed His power and proved that He was God Himself. He helped people, healed people, and cared about people. In all this time, Jesus never sinned. He was perfect.

But some religious leaders didn't like Jesus. They had Him arrested and sentenced to die. He was nailed to a cross and died a painful death. He was buried in a cave-like tomb and a giant stone was rolled in front of it. But, three days later, the stone was rolled away, and Jesus' body was not in the tomb. You see, Jesus had been raised from the dead! He was alive and appeared to many of His friends and followers and spoke to them. Then He

returned to heaven, where He is still alive today!

This is an amazing story, but how does Jesus' death and resurrection save us? Well, when Jesus died on the cross, He took the punishment for our sins on Himself. He died in our place. The Bible says, "For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ." (2 Corinthians 5:21, NLT)

Since Jesus didn't stay dead, He defeated sin and death forever. He made us right with God, so now we can have a relationship with Him. If we trust in what Jesus has done and ask God for forgiveness, He will forgive us of our sins and adopt us into His family. And after we die. we will live forever in heaven with Him!

This is the best news we can ever hear. Jesus did this all for us. But that's not all! Even though we still can't be perfect while we live in our earthly bodies, when we believe in Jesus, God sends His Holy Spirit to live in us and help us grow more and more like Jesus. The Spirit teaches us how to be people of character and how to live with things like love, peace, kindness, and self-control. We don't have to wear ourselves out trying to be these things so we can earn God's favor. Instead, God helps us to honor Him with our lives because He already loves us so much.

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

## **LET'S PRAY**

God, thank You for loving us so much that You sent Jesus to save us. Thank You that we can have a relationship with You through Him. Forgive us for our sins. Help each of us to trust in Jesus to save us. We love You, Lord, and are so grateful for all You have done for us. Amen.

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

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



- Background: Our final virtue for this season is responsibility. Someone with good character is someone who is responsible. They keep their commitments, make good decisions, and follow through on what is expected of them—and what they expect of themselves. As you introduce this virtue to your team, we'll use a short parable of Jesus in Matthew 21:28-31 as an illustration. Jesus tells this parable after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, marking the beginning of the week leading up to His death and resurrection. The religious leaders once again challenge His authority; this parable is part of His response. While it certainly speaks to responsibility and obedience, Jesus is specifically speaking in the context of the difference between sinners who realize their need for Jesus and gladly repent and follow Him, and the religious leaders who say they follow God but have hard hearts toward their own sin and won't repent and truly obey Him. The parable shows us that God doesn't want lip service; He wants genuine repentance and obedience.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read Colossians 3:17; Matthew 21:28-31;
   Galatians 6:2-9.
- Encouragement: "Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else." (Galatians 6:4, NLT) Our modern world of constant comparison often drags us down. But when you attend to your own responsibilities, you can be satisfied that you really have accomplished something. You don't need to compare yourself to others—or invite others to compare themselves to you.
- Coach's Question for Reflection: What comes to mind when I think about responsibility?

#### VIRTUE

RESPONSIBILITY is showing you can be trusted with what's expected of you.

#### KEY VERSE

For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

Galatians 6:5 (NLT)

#### Bottom Line: I can take responsibility for the things I'm expected to do.

This season, we've been talking about having good character. We've looked at how honor and self-control can help us be people of character. For our last few practices, I want to talk about responsibility. Responsibility is showing you can be trusted with what's expected of you. Being responsible shows that you know and care about what's important.

Think about your responsibilities. You might not have too many yet because we tend to get more responsibilities the older we get. But you're probably responsible for a few things, like doing your homework, cleaning your room, or feeding the dog. Sometimes, our responsibilities are not much fun, but do you know what? It's still important to do the things we're expected to do to the best of our ability. There's a Bible verse that says this: "And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father." (Colossians 3:17, NLT) We want to do everything, especially the things we're responsible for, as if we are doing them for God—because we are! We want to represent Jesus well by taking care of our responsibilities.

Jesus told a story once about a father with two sons. It goes like this. "A man with two sons told the older boy, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' The son answered, 'No, I won't go,' but later he changed his mind and went anyway. Then the father told the other son, 'You go,' and he said, 'Yes, sir, I will.' But he didn't go." (Matthew 21:28b-30, NLT)

Jesus then asked the people listening to him which of the two sons obeyed his father. Even though the older son refused to help his dad at first, he actually ended up going and doing what he was asked to do. He followed through on his responsibility. Meanwhile, the younger son said he would go to the vineyard but never did. He wasn't responsible after all.

This story reminds us that responsibility is about action. It's about following through and actually doing what's right. Sometimes, we don't want to take care of our responsibilities. But when it comes down to it, we can make the right decision and do what needs to be done. We can be responsible.

#### **Discussion Questions**

#### (K-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)

- · What are some of your responsibilities?
- · Why is it important to do our best at the things we're expected to do?

#### (3rd-6th Grade)

- · What are some of your responsibilities?
- · Why is it important to be responsible and follow through?

#### (7th Grade and up)

- · What are some of your responsibilities?
- · Why is being responsible a sign of good character?

## LET'S PRAY

God, please help us to do our best with our responsibilities. Help us remember that we are also working for You. Teach us to follow through and do our best to do what is expected of us. Amen.

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



- Background: The Israelites, or Hebrews, came to Egypt as honored guests during the time of Joseph. Their number grew so much over the generations that later Egyptians enslaved them and even started trying to disrupt their population growth with the terrible destruction of any newborn male children. Yet Hebrew women, the midwives, subverted this plan. And it was the mother and sister of a baby boy named Moses who would deliver him from this awful fate. To us, it might seem as if Moses' mother had given up when she placed him in the basket in the Nile, but that is not the case. "By itself, the idea of a mother putting a child by the river if she wants him to be found would have been fairly sensible, for that is where the women of the town would be washing their clothes or bathing." (NET Bible Notes on Exodus 2) She commissioned her daughter to watch out for the child, and Miriam did well to fulfill this role. Her quick thinking and courage allowed the family to spend more time with young Moses before later sending him off to gain valuable education and experience among the Egyptians. Due to the actions of Moses' mother and sister, this baby would live to become the future leader of Israel and the one whom God would use to help deliver the whole nation from the oppression of Egypt.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read Exodus 1:1-2:10.
- Encouragement: In Genesis 4:9, Cain utters the famous words, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (or "guardian" in the NLT). Unlike Cain, who takes his brother's life, Miriam helps preserve her brother's life. According to the Bible, the answer to Cain's question is a resounding yes. Our individualistic culture often tells us to only worry about ourselves, but the truth is, a person who wants to honor God will care about those around them. They will go out of their way to help their brothers, sisters, and neighbors. While this is not an excuse to insert ourselves into someone else's life unwanted, it is a call to look out for those around us and be there for them as best we can.
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Is there any area of my life in which I need to take more responsibility for the people around me? What would that look like?

#### VIRTUE

RESPONSIBILITY is showing you can be trusted with what's expected of you.

#### KEY VERSE

For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

Galatians 6:5 (NLT)

#### Bottom Line: I can show responsibility toward others.

Raise your hand if you have a little brother or sister or a friend who is younger than you. Do you look out for them and help them with things sometimes? Okay, now raise your hand if you have an older brother or sister or a friend a little older than you. Do they look out for you and help you sometimes? Our brothers and sisters and cousins and friends might annoy us sometimes, but when it comes down to it, we know that we should really be looking out for each other, right? We want to be there to help each other.

We're talking about responsibility again today, and I want to tell you a story from the Bible about a girl who took her responsibility as a big sister very seriously.

At this time, God's people, the Israelites, had been living in Egypt for many years. Though they had come to Egypt as guests, over time, the Egyptians had made them slaves. The Israelites continued to have many children. Their population grew so much that the king of Egypt, called a *pharaoh*, gave a terrible order. Any new male Israelite babies that were born must be killed. The Israelite midwives who helped deliver the babies did their best to protect the baby boys, but it was still very dangerous for them.

One Israelite mother gave birth to a baby boy. She kept him hidden for three months until she couldn't hide him any longer. She took a basket, fixed it to be waterproof, and placed the baby boy inside. Then she put the basket in the water among the reeds on the bank of the Nile River.

The baby's older sister, Miriam, stood at a distance, watching over her brother to see what would happen to him. Even though it was probably dangerous, she wasn't going to leave him alone.

Pharaoh's daughter, the princess, came down to the river and noticed the basket. When she looked inside, she found the baby there, crying. She knew it must be one of the Israelite children, and she felt sorry for him.

Miriam had an idea. She didn't let fear hold her back, and she went up to the princess. Miriam suggested that she could find one of the Israelite women to nurse the baby for the princess. The princess agreed, and Miriam went and got her mom and brought her to the princess. The princess paid the baby's own mom to take the baby home and nurse him. The Bible says, "Later, when the boy was older, his mother brought him back to

Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him as her own son. The princess named him Moses." (Exodus 2:10a, NLT) Moses later became a great leader that God used to help free the Israelites and bring them out of Egypt.

Miriam was responsible, brave, and thoughtful. She watched out for her baby brother and made sure he was taken care of. Because of her, her family was able to have more precious time with little Moses. He would be safe, and he would grow up like a prince. And, one day, Moses would lead the Israelites as God rescued all of them, just like Moses had been rescued from the river.

I want you to think about how you can be a responsible sibling and friend. You don't need to do everything for your siblings or friends, and you don't need to boss them around. But you can watch out for them and help make sure they're safe. You can notice when they need help with something and offer to help. You can be kind to them and encourage them. The Bible teaches that we should be responsible for others and take care of the people around us as best we can.

#### **Discussion Questions**

#### (K-2nd Grade)

- · Why do you think Miriam stayed at the river and watched out for her brother?
- · How can you be responsible when you are around someone younger than you?

#### (3rd-6th Grade)

- · How did Miriam show that she was responsible?
- · What are some ways you can be responsible for the people around you?

#### (7th Grade and up)

- What motivates a feeling of responsibility toward other people?
- What are some ways you can be responsible for the people around you?

## LET'S PRAY

God, thank You for caring about us. Thank You for the people in our lives who are responsible toward us. Help us to show responsibility in how we help take care of others. We love You, Lord. Amen.



- · Background: As we wrap up this season's devotions, we'll look at one of the most important responsibilities of those who believe in Jesus. We are called to tell people of all nations about the good news of Jesus and make disciples who follow Him. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus proclaims what is known as the Great Commission to His disciples on a mountain in Galilee. "All that [Jesus] had taught them for three years on the slopes of these same green Galilean hillsides, all the truth that he had lived out in their presence, he authorizes them to use to turn the world upside down." (Michael Card, Matthew: The Gospel of Identity) In both Matthew 28 and Acts 1, Jesus is clear that though He will no longer be physically present with His disciples, they will not be alone as they take on this great task. They will be reassured by His presence and empowered by His Holy Spirit—as are we. 2.000 years later. In that way, this responsibility is easier than we sometimes make it out to be. Yet, it is also more of an investment than we sometimes believe. "The verb 'make disciples' also commands a kind of evangelism that does not stop after someone makes a profession of faith." (Craig L. Blomberg, The New American Commentary: Matthew) We are also responsible for continuing to teach these disciples and help them grow.
- Big Picture: For more insight, read Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:1-11.
- Encouragement: "For 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, 'How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!" Romans 10:13-15 (NLT)
- Coach's Question for Reflection: Do I take the responsibility of making disciples for Jesus seriously?

#### VIRTUE

RESPONSIBILITY is showing you can be trusted with what's expected of you.

#### KEY VERSE

For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

Galatians 6:5 (NLT)

#### Bottom Line: I want to share in the responsibility of telling others about Jesus.

I can't believe it's the end of the season! We've learned so much about being people of character and being honorable, having self-control, and being responsible. Today, I want to talk about a responsibility that we all share.

Earlier this season, we talked about Jesus and what He did for us by dying on the cross and rising again. He made a way for us to be saved simply by believing in Him. That's amazing news! It's the best news anyone can get. And when we believe in Jesus and decide to follow Him, Jesus asks us to share that news with everyone we can.

After Jesus rose from the dead and had appeared to many of His followers, He told His disciples to go to a mountain in Galilee, where a lot of their ministry together had taken place. He appeared to them again and gave them an important mission. He said, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18b-20, NLT)

Not long after this, Jesus returned to heaven. Right before He went, He told His followers, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8, NLT)

Jesus told His followers to tell people everywhere, from all nations, about Him. He told them to teach others what He had taught them. He told His disciples to make more disciples. And they did! Jesus' followers understood their responsibility. For the rest of their lives, they would tell everyone who would listen about Jesus. They would travel far and wide. They would teach the next generation about Jesus, and that generation would teach the next generation, and so on. For 2,000 years, followers of Jesus have been responsible for spreading the good news about Jesus all across the world.

And guess what? You and I are part of that, too! We are witnesses to the story of Jesus from the Bible and to what He has done in our lives. And we are responsible for sharing that amazing story with everyone we can. It's a big responsibility, but Jesus told us that



 Background: This season, our devotions will focus on three virtues—honor, selfcontrol, and responsibility—with character as our overall theme. This first devotion will explain why good character is something worth pursuing.

If you have placed your faith in Jesus and resolved to follow Him with your life, you have a commitment to be a person of character, character clearly defined in the person of Jesus. Christians are called to follow Jesus' example, and the Holy Spirit works in our lives to produce fruit that Jesus exhibited during His time on earth—fruit like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Some athletes on your team might already believe in Jesus for salvation, while others might not. It is valuable for both groups to learn foundational elements of character and integrity. These principles help point all of us to what is good and true in life—and can help kids grasp the difference between good and evil, sin and righteousness. Later this season, in Practice 8, we'll zoom in on the gospel story and look specifically at how Jesus' death and resurrection address the consequences of sin and allow us to live a Spirit-filled life.

 Big Picture: For more insight, read Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:16-26. If you don't own a Bible, you can download the YouVersion Bible App for free.



- Encouragement: "True greatness is not measured by the headlines a person commands or the wealth he or she accumulates. The inner character of a person—the undergirding moral and spiritual values and commitments—is the true measure of lasting greatness." Billy Graham
- Coach's Question for Reflection: What does being a person of character mean to

# **SECTION 4**

# GAMES

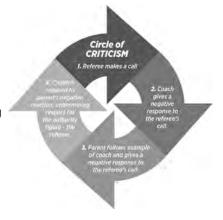
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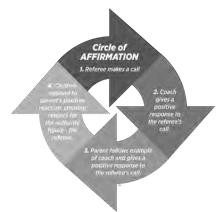
#### → Circle of Affirmation

#### **Game Day Attitude**

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

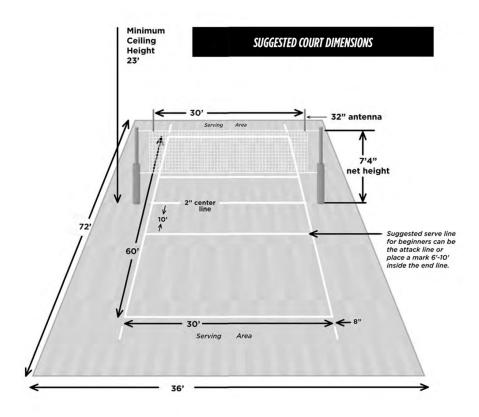
In Upward Soccer, coaches and referees work together as a unified team. Coaches have the opportunity and the responsibility to stop the Circle of Criticism by starting the Circle of Affirmation.





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	Game 3
Α	Gabrielle	Х	Х	
В	Rachel	X	X	
С	Emily	X		Х
D	Madison	X		Х
E	Samantha	X		X
F	Ashley	X		X
G	Grace		Х	Х
Н	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.

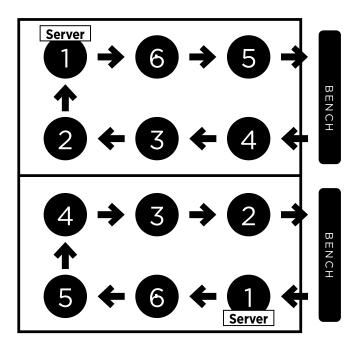
This also allows for all players to get a chance to "start" the first game of a match.

#### Week 2 Player Rank Game 3 Game 1 Game 2 Gabrielle Α X В Χ Rachel С Χ Χ **Emily** X D Madison Χ Χ Χ Ε Samantha F Χ Ashley X G Χ Χ Grace X н Jessica Χ Ī Eva Χ Х J Macy Χ

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.

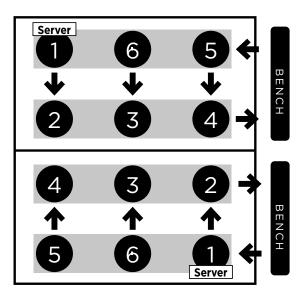


#### Substitution method #2

- 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.



# **SECTION 5**

# FORMS

Substitution	Form 8	7

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Week	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
A			
В			
С			
D			
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Week	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
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Week	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
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Week	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
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Week	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
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Week	Game 1 Starters	Game 2 Starters	Game 3 Starters
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# **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	NOTES FOR NEXT	PRACTICE:						
RED (R): HITTING								
GRAY (GR): SERVING								

(-): -:: -:::	
RED (R): HITTING	
GRAY (GR): SERVING	
GOLD (GO): SPORTSMANSHIP	
WHITE (W): CHRISTLIKENESS	
• •	

♦ NOTES

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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

