

PLAY WITH PURPOSE

MENTALLY ATHLETICALLY SPIRITUALLY SOCIALLY



Mid-Practice Huddle – Devotion 1

COACH:

Gather the players together and get them to sit in a circle. Go around the circle and have each player share his/her name and his/her favorite food.

Once everyone has shared their name and favorite food, instruct players with the following:

We all have our favorite foods. But I wonder what you think about a few other foods. I want you to give each a “thumbs up” if you like it, or a “thumbs down” if you don’t. Ready?...

- Strawberries
- Brownies
- Popcorn
- Broccoli
- Squash
- Cotton Candy

That was fun! Getting to know each other better is something that we’ll do a lot of this season. As a team, we’ll work hard to encourage one another to do our best at practices and games!

As you play games during your Upward Baseball Season, you will be rewarded afterward with different cards that display colored stars each meaning something special. Your actions, attitudes, and words on game day will determine which star card you will get.

These are the game day stars and what they mean:

- The blue star represents **EFFORT**: What does it mean to show effort? It means working hard to try your best at all times.
- The gold star represents **SPORTSMANSHIP**: What does it mean to show sportsmanship? It means treating the people you play with and against the same way you want to be treated. You show respect for yourself, your teammates, opponents, the referees and the coach. You play fair and follow the rules.

- The gray star represents **OFFENSE**: What should you do when you play offense? The offense is responsible for scoring runs. This means doing your best not only in hitting the ball, but also being smart in your base running and decision making.
- The red star represents **DEFENSE**: What should you do when you play defense? The defense is responsible for preventing runs from being scored. This requires catching the ball correctly when it’s hit to you, throwing it accurately to get a player out, and, for the pitcher, throwing the ball correctly to hopefully strike the batter out.
- The orange star represents **LEADERSHIP**: What does it mean to be a good leader? Being a good leader means being a good example to others. You show others your leadership by the choices you make and how you treat others on and off the field.
- The white star represents **CHRISTLIKENESS**: What does it mean to be Christlike? Being Christlike means to do your best to imitate Jesus in every way – through words, attitude and actions. It means loving others and following God’s Word in the Bible; choosing God over the temptations in the world around you.

Our team is going to have a great season! Let’s pray and then get back to practice. (Lead the team in short prayer as you thank God for all the players and a great season ahead.)

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Mid-Practice Huddle - Devotion 2

Introduce:

- Virtue: **HONOR** - Letting someone know you see how valuable they really are .
- Scripture Verse: Love one another deeply. Honor others more than yourselves. *Romans 12:10 (NirV)*

Bottom Line: Honor those who are over you.

Introduction:

Let me ask you a question. Who are the people who are over you? Who in your life do you need to listen to and obey? (*Allow kids to answer.*)

Great answers, everybody. It's true that we need to obey our parents, our teachers, our grandparents—even me as your coach. But do you ever wonder why? I mean, if you're honest, do you ever wish you could make the rules sometimes? After all, it might seem like your rules would be more fun. Like maybe you would choose to eat ice cream for dinner or wear your favorite rain boots every day—even when it's not raining. Wouldn't it just be awesome if you could make your own rules instead of always having to obey what adults tell you?

The truth is, everyone has someone who is over them. Even adults. Even me. For example, I have a boss at my job. I'm responsible to listen to him/her and follow his/her leadership. I still honor my parents by respecting their opinion and listening to what they have to say. God has put people in our lives to be in authority over us. And he wants us to show honor to them. Honor is letting someone know you see how valuable they really are.

God wants us to honor the people who are over us because they want what's best for us. Your parents have rules in place, not because they don't want you to have any fun, but because they know those rules will protect you. For instance, you have a certain bedtime because your parents know that getting enough sleep is one big way to stay healthy. I ask you to run drills and practice them over and over because I know it will help you play a better game and it will help you work together as a team. When you choose to honor those who are over you, you show God that you trust him.

Discussion Questions (3rd Grade and Up Only):

1. What are some excuses we sometimes make when we don't want to show honor to the people who are over us?
2. How can we overcome those excuses and encourage each other to show honor to people in authority?

Let's pray and ask God to help us honor the people who are over us this week.

Prayer

- Thank God for reminding your team how important it is to honor others—especially those who are over us
- Tell him your team wants to listen to the people he's put in your lives who we need to follow—like parents, teachers, grandparents, and coaches
- Ask him to help your team to remember that he put these people in their lives to follow because they want what's best for all of them

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Mid-Practice Huddle - Devotion 3

Review:

- Virtue: **HONOR** - Letting someone know you see how valuable they really are .
- Scripture Verse: Love one another deeply. Honor others more than yourselves. *Romans 12:10 (NirV)*

Bottom Line: Honor those who are overlooked.

Introduction:

Have you guys ever heard of King David from the Bible? If you haven't, he was a pretty famous king—one of the first kings of Israel. But before he became King, did you know that he was just a regular kid like you? In fact, if you could go back in time and meet David as a young boy, he'd never believe you if you told him that *he* would one day be a king.

Guess who else didn't believe it? His family. See, David had brothers—a *lot* of brothers. In fact, David had *seven* older brothers. One day, while David was out taking care of his family's sheep, a man named Samuel came to see his father, Jesse. God had told Samuel that the next King would be one of Jesse's sons. So Jesse brought each of his sons to Samuel so that he could find the one God had chosen as King. But after looking at all seven of David's older brothers, Samuel said, "the Lord has not chosen any of these." You see, God's choice for a new king didn't have anything to do with how strong or handsome or popular he was. God wasn't looking at the outside. He was looking at what was on the inside—his character, the way he treated others, the condition of his heart.

Samuel asked Jesse if he had any more sons. When Jesse told him that he had one more, he went on to say, "He's out in the fields, tending the sheep." It was as if Jesse had completely overlooked David. But God hadn't overlooked him. David, while the youngest—maybe even the least likely choice in people's eyes—was *God's* choice to be King.

This is a great lesson for us too. God wants us to remember to honor those who are overlooked. He wants you to care about the kid in your class who everyone else ignores. He wants you to look out for someone who is constantly is picked on. Honor those who are overlooked.

Discussion Questions (3rd Grade and Up Only):

1. If you were in charge of picking the King, who do you think you would have chosen from the eight brothers, and why?
2. God honored someone who was overlooked by making him King. What can we do to honor those who are overlooked?

Let's pray and ask God to show us how to do that this week.

Prayer

- Thank God for reminding your team, through the story of David, that they need to look out for and honor people who are overlooked
- Ask him to help your team to remember to look at what's important—what's on the inside—instead of always paying attention to what's on the outside

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Mid-Practice Huddle - Devotion 4

Review:

- Virtue: **HONOR** - Letting someone know you see how valuable they really are .
- Scripture Verse: Love one another deeply. Honor others more than yourselves. *Romans 12:10 (NirV)*

Bottom Line: Honor others more than yourself.

Introduction:

Do you ever get a case of “me-itis?” What’s “me-itis,” you ask? Well, it sounds a little like this.

“Hey, I wanted to be picked first.”

“Give it back. That’s mine.”

“It’s my turn.”

Have you ever heard someone say that before? Have you ever said something like that? If we’re honest, I think we’d all admit that it’s pretty easy to only think about ourselves. After all, no one has to remind us to put ourselves first. We do that naturally. I mean, no one has to remind me to cut someone off in traffic so I won’t be late for work. No one has to remind you to cut in line when you don’t want to wait your turn, right? Putting ourselves first just comes naturally.

What’s harder is to think about others. Don’t believe me? Well, let’s talk about what this looks like on the baseball field for a minute. Are you a sore loser? A bad sport? If another team scores a run or gets a hit, are you happy for them? What about if the other team wins the whole game? Do you congratulate them on playing a good game? Or what if someone else on our team gets a hit instead of you? Would you choose to honor them for a great play or become frustrated because you wanted the chance to hit? Instead of being happy, do you think, “That should have been me”?

The truth is, it’s not easy to be others-focused. What’s easy is to be me-focused. But can you imagine what the world would be like if everyone only looked out for themselves? What would our team look like on the field if we didn’t work together and only cared about ourselves? God has a better plan. He wants us to think about others more than we think about what’s in it for us. In fact, in Romans 12:10 it says that we should “Love one another deeply. Honor others more than yourselves.”

Discussion Questions (3rd Grade and Up Only):

1. Where are some places or situations that you guys find it hard to put others first?
2. The next time you’re tempted to put yourself first, what’s something you can do to help yourself do the right thing and honor others more instead?

God wants you to honor others more than yourself. But we need his help. So why don’t we pray to ask God to help us honor others this week?

Prayer

- Thank God for reminding your team that instead of looking out for ourselves, they need to look out for others first
- Ask him to help you all to work together as a team, to be happy for our fellow teammates when they do well and even to be gracious losers if another team wins the game
- Thank him for reminding your team how important it is to put others first

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Mid-Practice Huddle - Devotion 5

Introduce:

- Virtue: **PERSEVERANCE** - Refusing to give up when life gets hard.
- Scripture Verse: But those who trust in the LORD will receive new strength. They will fly as high as eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not grow weak. *Isaiah 40:31 (NirV)*

Bottom Line: When life seems impossible, remember what God wants to do in you.

Introduction:

Have you ever heard the word “perseverance” before? Let’s all say it together—it’s a pretty long word! *(Pause as kids say “perseverance” with you.)*

Great job! Perseverance is refusing to give up when life gets hard. What are some examples of “when life gets hard?” Can you think of anything? How about on the baseball field? What if it’s the last inning of the game and the other team has been completely creaming us? Should we just give up and call it a day? Or should we keep trying our best, even when it gets hard?

That’s right. In order to persevere, you have to keep going. You can’t give up. But a baseball game is one thing. What about when your life gets hard? Like maybe you’re not doing so well in math. No matter how hard you try, you just can’t seem to understand it. Or what if there’s someone at school who keeps picking on you? Maybe you’ve tried to be nice, maybe you’ve even told your teacher, but he or she still won’t quit. What do you do then?

The first thing you need to do is remember that God is always with you. He is your perfect Heavenly Father and he loves you. He knows what you need and is always there to teach you what is right. Bad things happen to everyone—it’s just a part of life. No one enjoys the hard stuff. But it doesn’t mean that God doesn’t love you or that you should just give up on doing the right thing when life gets hard.

Because if you keep doing the right thing even when it’s hard, guess what? Your relationship with God will grow. God wants to teach you how to be like him. He wants to do something in you by changing your attitudes and thoughts and the way you treat others.

Discussion Questions (3rd Grade and Up Only):

1. What are some examples of God’s perseverance throughout history and also in your own life?
2. What are some of the changes you’ve seen in your life when you’ve persevered even when things get hard?

So when life is hard, when things seem impossible, remember what God wants to do in you. Let’s thank God for that reminder today.

Prayer

- Thank God for helping your team to understand what it means to trust him and to refuse to give up, even when things get hard
- Ask him to help your team remember that, when things don’t go their way, when they face a hard situation, he is with them and that he wants to change them from the inside out to become more and more like him
- Ask him to help your team to remember that they need to have perseverance this week—on and off the baseball field.

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Mid-Practice Huddle - Devotion 6

Review:

- Virtue: **PERSEVERANCE** - Refusing to give up when life gets hard.
- Scripture Verse: But those who trust in the LORD will receive new strength. They will fly as high as eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not grow weak. *Isaiah 40:31 (NirV)*

Bottom Line: When life seems impossible, remember what others did.

Introduction:

So we've been talking about perseverance—refusing to give up when life gets hard. And while it's really easy to decide just to give up when the going gets tough, God wants us to persevere. He doesn't want us to throw in the towel the minute the going gets tough.

And guess what? God has been helping people persevere for a *very* long time. People like Gideon. We can read about him in the Old Testament—that's the first section of the Bible. Gideon was a guy from the weakest tribe, and he was the youngest in his family when God told him to gather an army to fight the enemy. Gideon thought that God had to be kidding! But he chose to listen to God. And once Gideon had gathered the army, God told him to narrow it down to just a few hundred men. Gideon thought it was the craziest plan ever! If it were me, I might have given up. But Gideon didn't. Instead, he chose to persevere.

He knew God was with him. Though it might have seemed impossible, Gideon and many, many others that we read about in the Bible, kept praying. They kept doing the right thing. They persevered.

Hebrews 12:1 (NirV) says, "A huge cloud of witnesses is all around us"—meaning, since we've seen so many great examples of people who never gave up, like Gideon and David—"So let us throw off everything that stands in our way. Let us throw off any sin that holds on to us so tightly. Let us keep on running the race marked out for us."

Chances are, you and I will never lead an army into battle. But we *will* face situations that are hard. We need to remember that God will be there to help us. He wants us, just like Gideon, to trust him and to keep doing the right thing, even when things get hard. Because when life gets hard, we need to remember what others did.

Discussion Questions (3rd Grade and Up Only):

1. None of you will be headed off to war anytime soon, but what are some of the battles you face in your lives??
2. Can one or two of you share a story with us of someone you know who persevered through a seemingly impossible situation

Let's pray about what it would look like to persevere this week.

Prayer

- Acknowledge that, when things get hard—when it's not easy to do the right thing—we are tempted to give up
- Thank God for the example of Gideon who chose to follow him, even when things seemed really impossible
- Ask him to help your team to remember what others did when they're tempted this week to say, "I give up,"

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Mid-Practice Huddle - Devotion 7

Review:

- Virtue: **PERSEVERANCE** - Refusing to give up when life gets hard.
- Scripture Verse: But those who trust in the LORD will receive new strength. They will fly as high as eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not grow weak. *Isaiah 40:31 (NirV)*

Bottom Line: When life seems impossible, remember what you do can help someone else's faith.

Introduction:

Have you ever thrown a rock into a lake? What happens? Have you ever noticed how the rock creates a ripple effect that starts out small and moves outward? Pretty cool, right? That one small rock causes a ripple of circles that reaches far beyond where it initially landed in the water.

When it comes to facing challenges, did you ever stop to think about the fact that the way you and I choose to handle tough situations might have an impact on someone else? Let me show you what this would look like on the baseball field. Let's say at our next game, we play a team that is really beating us. Every time they are at bat, they score. It's bad. Really bad. How would you feel if I, your coach, just folded my arms and sat down in the dugout for the rest of the game? How would you feel if I put my clipboard down and just said, "You guys just finish up. We're gonna lose anyway"?

Crazy, right? I would never do that. I know that my words have the power to encourage you to keep going, to keep pushing, to keep playing hard until the very end. My actions have a ripple effect—just like when a rock is thrown into the water. My yelling "you can do it," "watch the ball," "hustle," "work together"—all of those words can really make a difference as to how you guys perform on the field.

The same is true off the field. The way you and I react to tough situations—to situations where we're tempted to give up—has the potential to affect someone else. When you and I keep going, when we keep treating others the way we want to be treated, when we keep making the wise choice—we encourage others around us to do the same. When you persevere, you have the potential to help someone else persevere as well! Your actions have a ripple effect. You can help someone else's faith to grow too!

Discussion Questions (3rd Grade and Up Only):

- Tell me about sometimes you guys have seen each other persevere during a game and it has encouraged you to keep going.
- Now tell me about a time you've seen someone on this team persevere in life and it has encouraged you in your own life.

Since we need God's help to keep persevering, why don't we pray and ask him for help?

Prayer

- Thank God for reminding your team that actions have the potential to encourage others!
- Tell him you want your team to be examples to friends and family of what it looks like to never give up and to keep doing the right thing—even when it's hard.
- Ask God to help your team to do that. Ask him to guide them this week so that they can show others what it looks like to trust him.

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Mid-Practice Huddle – Devotion 8

Introduce:

- Virtue: **CONVICTION** - Standing for what is right even when others don't.
- Scripture Verse: Brothers and sisters, don't ever get tired of doing what is good. *2 Thessalonians 3:13 (NIV)*

Bottom Line: You can stand for what's right, even when it's not popular.

Introduction:

Today I want to talk to you for a few minutes about what it means to have conviction. Have you guys ever heard that word before? Conviction is standing for what is right even when others don't.

Have you ever been in a situation where you were the only one choosing to do the right thing? Like, maybe your teacher had to step out of the classroom for a minute and everyone in the room went crazy, but you knew that the *right* thing was to sit quietly until she returned. Or what if there's a new kid in your class who doesn't speak English and everyone around you is laughing at his accent? You're tempted to laugh too but you know that's not kind. What happens when you're the *only* one willing to stand up and do the right thing?

You might think to yourself, "*Hey, if everyone else is goofing off instead of listening, won't they just think I'm a goody-goody?*" Or "*If I don't go along with everyone else, I won't have any friends.*"

I had a situation like this too.

Tell the kids about a time when you were a kid—or an example from adulthood that is age-appropriate for them to hear—when you were the only one willing to stand up and do the right thing.

Sometimes standing up for what's right might make you stand out. But here's the real truth. Doing the *right* thing is the *right* thing! Deep down, you know that making the right choice is always the best choice. Maybe other kids might think you're crazy. But guess what? God sees and knows *all*. He sees it when you make wise choices. And those wise choices will always be the best thing for you. And even if you feel alone, you're not. God is always with you. You can stand for what's right, even when it's not popular.

Discussion Questions (3rd Grade and Up Only):

1. Why is God's opinion of us so much more important than the opinions of the people around us?
2. What are some reasons being right is better than being popular?

But we'll need some help to stand for what's right even when it's not popular. Let's pray and ask God for his help.

Prayer

- Thank God for reminding your team that it's important to have conviction and to do the right thing.
- Tell him that you know that it might not always be easy and that sometimes your team may be the *only* ones doing the right thing.
- Ask him to help your team to remember that he's always with them, that he sees all that they do, and when they do the right thing, they make him proud.

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Mid-Practice Huddle - Devotion 9

Review:

- Virtue: **CONVICTION** - Discovering who you are meant to be so you can make a difference.
- Scripture Verse: Brothers and sisters, don't ever get tired of doing what is good. *2 Thessalonians 3:13 (NIRV)*

Bottom Line: When you stand for what's right, others can see God.

Introduction:

Have you guys ever heard the story about three guys named Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? Well, besides having some really cool-sounding names, these three guys were *really* brave. In fact, they showed conviction in a way that you and I will probably never have to.

King Nebuchadnezzar was the head guy in charge. And he didn't follow God. Instead, he thought it would be better to pray to a statue. So he had this 90-foot-tall gold statue built and he made a law that everyone had to bow down and worship it. And if you didn't, guess what? The king said you would be thrown into a fiery furnace.

Well, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had the conviction to say, "This is *not* right!" They knew that no one but the one, true God deserved their worship! As you can imagine, King Nebuchadnezzar was *furious*! He called them in to give them a chance to explain themselves. And they told him this: "*We might be thrown into the blazing furnace. But the God we serve is able to bring us out of it alive. He will save us from your power. But we want to know this, Your Majesty. Even if we knew that our God wouldn't save us, we still wouldn't serve your gods. We wouldn't worship the gold statue you set up.*" (Daniel 3:17-18 NIRV)

Can you believe that? Talk about conviction. Have you heard the rest of the story? They were thrown into the furnace. And God *did* save them. But even if he had not, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

still knew something really important. When you stand for what's right, others will see God. They knew that they had influence. They knew that their choice to follow God would be seen by others. And when they walked out of that furnace without any marks or burns, King Nebuchadnezzar realized that there really was only one true God!

The same is true for you and me. We have the opportunity every day to show conviction. And when we do, just like in this amazing story, we can show others who God is!

Discussion Questions (3rd Grade and Up Only):

1. How would Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's conviction have shown others who God was, even if God hadn't chosen to save them from the fire?
2. You likely will not have to risk your life to do the right thing, but what are some things you risk when you stand for what's right?

Let's thank God for the amazing example Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego gave us of conviction.

Prayer

- Thank God for the *awesome* true story of his power!
- Tell him your team wants to have faith like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and show conviction—even when the outcome is unknown.
- Ask him to help your team to trust and keep doing what's right so that they can influence others around them.

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Mid-Practice Huddle – Devotion 10

Review:

- Virtue: **CONVICTION** - Discovering who you are meant to be so you can make a difference.
- Scripture Verse: Brothers and sisters, don't ever get tired of doing what is good. *2 Thessalonians 3:13 (NIV)*

Bottom Line: When you know what God says, you can stand for what's right.

Introduction:

When it comes to conviction, it's not always easy to keep doing the right thing. In fact, sometimes it just seems easier to give up. There's an awesome verse that I would love for us to learn really quickly. Second Thessalonians 3:13 says, "*Brothers and sisters, don't ever get tired of doing what is good.*" Can you say that with me?

(Players and coach): "Brothers and sisters, don't ever get tired of doing what is good."

Ask the kids to repeat it three more times in different ways—say it to your neighbor, whisper it, stand up and say it, sit down and say it again, etc.

Guess what? God knows it's hard to stand up for what's right. He knows we will get tired. But this verse reminds us to never give up. Even when it's hard, even when we're tired. And one big way to keep us motivated to do the right thing is by knowing what God says. The Bible is *full* of examples of people who kept doing the right thing, even when it was hard. One example was Daniel. Daniel refused to eat the food from the King's table because he knew it went against God's law. And though he could have been in big trouble, Daniel chose to do what he knew was right according to God's Word. In the end, the leaders over him recognized that nothing would keep Daniel from following the one true God. Daniel was able to do what was right because he knew what God had said.

The same is true for us. Even when you're the only one, even when it's hard, even when you're tired—you need to keep doing the *right* thing. When we know what God's Word says, we can stand up for what's right.

Discussion Questions (3rd Grade and Up Only):

1. What are some of the things that we have to stand up for in our lives because we know what God's Word has to say?
2. Why do you think we sometimes get tired of standing up for what's right?

Let's pray and ask God to help us stand up for what is right.

Prayer

- Thank God for reminding your players how important it is to know what his Word says so that they can follow him.
- Tell him you want your team to be like Daniel who knew what his Word said and it gave him the courage to do the right thing.
- Ask him to help your team to never tire of doing what is right this week.

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Mid-Practice Huddle – Last Practice of the Season

Today we're going to talk about something that is very important and very special.

(Pass out Star Bracelet)

Let's all put our bracelet on. What do the stars on these bracelets remind you of? *(Listen for someone to mention the Upward Sports Stars)* We are going to use this bracelet to talk about how these stars can help us remember how we can have a relationship with Jesus.

Let's begin with the **BLUE STAR**. Who remembers what our blue star is for? *(Listen for 'effort')* That's right –the blue star is for *effort* and we receive it for giving our very best during practices and games. In our life, we try and give our very best effort, but we all say and do wrong things. Who remembers what this is called? *(Listen for 'sin')* That's right – sin. Now can someone tell me who has sinned? *(Listen for 'everyone has sinned')* That's right. The Bible says that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23).

The next star on our bracelet is **GOLD**. What does the gold star stand for? *(Listen for 'sportsmanship')* Yes, the gold star is for *sportsmanship*. God's grace is the perfect example of sportsmanship. God has shown us grace by sending Jesus, his son, to die on the cross for us, even though we don't deserve it. Because Jesus died for us, he has taken away our sins. The Bible says in John 3:16, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The Bible tells us that we have to believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. So what did Jesus do for us? *(Listen for 'Died on the cross for our sins')*

What's the next star's color on our bracelet? **GRAY**. We get the gray star for the great *offense* we play during our game. The best offense in our life is to ask Jesus into our heart. In Romans, the Bible tells us, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." What must we ask God to do? We must ask God to forgive us for the things we say and do and think that are wrong, and we must believe that Jesus is alive. *(Listen for something similar to 'Forgive us of our sins or all the things we've done wrong')*

The next star color is **RED**. The red star stands for *defense*. Because Jesus loved us enough to die for our sins, we need to repent. To repent means to turn away from our sin and run to God. The Bible says, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19). So, how do we repent of our sins? *(Listen for something like 'We turn away from our sins and live for God')*.

What does the **WHITE** star stand for? *(Listen for 'Christlikeness' or 'To be like Christ')* That's right, *Christlikeness*. We are like Christ when we try to live as Jesus lived and allow him to live through us. In Galatians, the Bible tells us, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." So, as others see our lives, they should be able to see Jesus in us.

The last star on our bracelet is **GREEN**. Each week during practice we receive a green star that stands for the *Scripture* we have been learning. By learning Scripture, we come to know more about God and he teaches us how to grow in our relationship with him.

So how do we begin this relationship with Jesus and become a part of God's family? To be in God's family, we need to understand that we have sinned. Then we must believe that Jesus took the punishment for our sins when he died on the cross and that God raised him from the dead. We need to ask his forgiveness and then turn away from our sin. Wear your bracelet so that every time you see it, you can remember what Jesus has done for you.

I want all us to bow our heads and close our eyes (*make sure everyone does this before proceeding*). I am going to say a prayer, but before I do, I want you to help me with something. If you listened to today's devotion and you feel that you want to talk to me more about beginning a relationship with Jesus, or if you have questions about anything I've talked about, I just want you to raise your hand on the count of three. I don't want anyone looking around, and I'm not going to call your name out if you raise your hand. If you want to talk to me later about this, simply raise your hand. One, two, three... (*If players raise their hand, remember who they are, but don't say anything. This process should only take a few seconds*). Say a prayer thanking God for this special time with your players.

Post Devotion Process

After the prayer, allow your players to continue practicing with your assistant coach while you stay off the field. As they resume practice, quietly call each player that raised their hand separately to talk to him/her about their decision or question. Here is an example of how to begin this conversation:

"Hey, Nicholas, I saw you raised your hand at the end of our mid-practice huddle time. What did you think about what I shared today? (*Wait for an answer*). What do you think it means to become a Christian?" (*This is important; let them explain it to you in their own terms. If they seem confused in their answer, ask these follow-up questions*):

- What is sin? (*Listen for: everything we say, do or think that is wrong*)
- What did Jesus do for us? (*Listen for: died on the cross for our sins*)
- What does God want us to do in order to become a Christian? (*Listen for: ask to forgive us of our sins, turn away from them and live for God*)

If a player does not know the answer to a question above, explain the answer in simplistic terms, and then confirm their understanding. Once they understand, encourage them to tell God in prayer the things they told you. If the child is uncomfortable praying, offer to lead the prayer with this example:

"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner and I need a Savior. I believe you took my place and died on the cross for my sins. I ask that you please forgive me and I ask forgiveness from my sins and turn away from them. Come into my life and help me to allow you to live through me. I love you, Jesus. Thank you for loving me first. Amen."