



Mid-Practice Huddle

Devotion 1

Instructions:

- » Gather the players together and have them to sit in a circle.
- » Toss a baseball to a player and have them share their name and the place they would go if they could go anywhere in the world for a week.
- » Be sure each player gets a turn to share.

Once everyone has shared their name and where they would like to go, instruct players with the following:

We all have our favorite places to go. But I wonder what you think about a few other places you'd like to go for a week. I want you to give each a "thumbs up" if you like it, or a "thumbs down" if you don't. Ready?...

- » The jungles of Brazil
- » The trash dump
- » The Swiss Alps
- » The Chocolate Factory
- » The Moon
- » The South Pole
- » The Caves of New Zealand

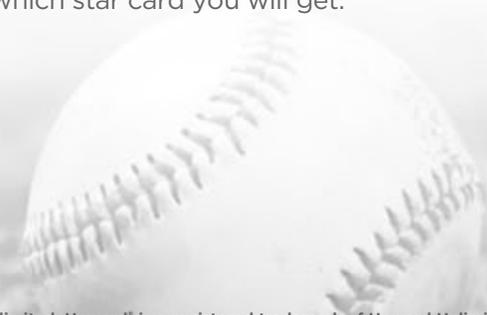
That was fun! Getting to know each other better is something that we'll do a lot of this season. As a team, we'll work hard to encourage one another to do our best at practices and games!

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 umpires 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.)*





Mid-Practice Huddle

Devotion 2

Introduce:

- » **Virtue:** COURAGE - Being brave enough to do what you should do, even when you are afraid.
- » **Scripture Verse:** When I'm afraid, I put my trust in you. Psalm 56:3 (NIRV)

Bottom Line:

I can be brave even when I don't feel ready.

My World Example

I want you to stop and think for a minute about a first in your life that seemed really hard. Maybe it was a first day of school. Do you remember your first day of kindergarten? Do you remember being excited but also nervous about what that day would be like?

Do you remember the first time you played in a baseball game? Even after hours of practice, did you feel ready? Were you scared? I can remember a time when I was really scared. *(Tell the kids about a time when you were scared as a kid—remember to choose an age-appropriate example like your first time up at bat or the first time you visited the dentist, etc.)*

Facing your fears is hard but there is a secret! Want to know what it is? The secret is courage! Courage is being brave enough to do what you should do, even when you are afraid. Having courage doesn't mean you're never afraid. It's not about sitting on the bench instead of playing or coming up with excuses to not go to your dentist appointment. Courage is taking that scary thing—the first day of school, being the last one up to bat, introducing yourself to a new friend—and facing it head on, whether you're ready or not!

When we play our first game, there will be some fear about what might happen. What if you strike out? What if you don't catch the ball? What if the other team totally creams us? Shouldn't we practice for a few months or years before we actually take on a team?

No way! You can be brave—you can show courage—even when you don't feel ready. You know why? Because you're not alone. You have the rest of the team to cheer you on. You have me on the sidelines, shouting to encourage you. And you have God right there with you—not just on the baseball field but everywhere you go, every single day. Psalm 56:3 says, "When I'm afraid, I put my trust in you." That means that even when there is real fear involved, we need to trust God.

Remember, you can be brave even when you don't feel ready. Sometimes courage means you just go for it, whether you feel ready or not. And when you do, when you ask God to help you and trust that he's right there, there's no reason to be scared.

3rd-6th Grade Only

Interaction Questions:

1. What is one thing you have done that took a lot of courage?
2. Is there anything you should do soon that you have been putting off because you don't feel ready?
3. How do you think it would feel to just jump in and have the courage to do what you should?

Let's pray and ask God to help us to have courage this week.

Prayer

Dear God, thanks so much for the reminder today that we can trust in you when we are afraid. When we don't feel ready, help us to remember to have courage knowing that you are right there with us. We are so thankful for that truth. We love you, God. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.



Mid-Practice Huddle

Devotion 3

Review:

- » **Virtue:** COURAGE - Being brave enough to do what you should do, even when you are afraid.
- » **Scripture Verse:** When I'm afraid, I put my trust in you. Psalm 56:3 (NIRV)

Bottom Line:

I can be brave because I know God keeps his promises.

Biblical Example

Has someone ever broken a promise to you? A promise to make your favorite pancakes, get extra recess time or even take you to the zoo? Have you ever made a promise to someone that you didn't keep? Maybe to clean your room, go to a birthday party or play with your little brother? When it comes to keeping a promise, every one of us has messed up!

Well, almost everyone. God always keeps his promises. And you better believe he has made some big promises!

Take this one for example . . .

How many of you have ever heard of the Bible? The Bible is also called God's Word. It was written a long time ago and it tells us everything we need to know about God. It is filled with true stories about how God is faithful and keeps his promises. The Bible is divided into two parts - Old Testament and New Testament. In the Old Testament, which is at the beginning of the Bible, God's people, the Israelites, weren't always good at showing courage. In fact, sometimes they flat-out refused to listen to God. But when it came to taking over a city called Jericho, courage was a necessity!

Jericho was a powerful city with a huge wall surrounding it. This super-strong wall meant that the city was heavily protected and would be really hard to conquer. But God promised the Israelites that one day, Jericho would be theirs. They would have to be brave and they would have to trust his plan. But God's plan didn't involve lining up for battle like they were used to doing. Instead, God told them to walk around the city wall once a day for six days in a row.

I'm sure if I'd been an Israelite back then, I would have thought this was a terrible plan. What good is walking around a wall going to do anyway? But despite those questions, the Israelites trusted God and trusted in his promise. For six days, they walked. Then on day seven, God told them to walk around the city seven times. Each lap, God had the priests blow their trumpets like crazy, and on the seventh lap, the army gave a huge shout! I'm sure the people inside of Jericho's walls thought those marching trumpet blowers and shouters were a bunch of crazy people. But the Israelites knew that God would keep his promise that Jericho would be theirs.

And sure enough, as they shouted, the city walls started to crumble. The Israelites took the city just as God had promised. They chose to trust to him and have the courage to follow his plan. And at the end of the day, the Israelites knew that no one but God could have caused those walls to come down!

Just like the Israelites, you can be brave because God keeps his promises. When you know the right thing to do but are afraid to be the only one, remember God promises to be with you. When you need to tell the truth about something you've done wrong, remember God promises that telling the truth is always best. Just remember, you can be brave because God keeps his promises and you'll be the most courageous person in the room.



3rd-6th Grade Only

Interaction Questions:

1. What promises do you know that God has made? (Help kids come up with promises if they are stumped: to be with us, to give us eternal life through Jesus, to always love us, to give us a way out of any temptation, etc.)
2. How does knowing these promises help you have courage?

Let's pray and ask God to help us be courageous this week.

Prayer

Dear God, thanks so much for this amazing story about a time You showed up in such a big way. Thanks for always keeping your promises to us. Help us to remember that truth when we need to trust you and show courage this week. We want to be brave! We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.



**Mid-Practice Huddle****Devotion 4****Review:**

- » **Virtue:** COURAGE - Being brave enough to do what you should do, even when you are afraid.
- » **Scripture Verse:** When I'm afraid, I put my trust in you. Psalm 56:3 (NIV)

Bottom Line:

I can be brave when others aren't.

Peer Example

Can anyone tell me what courage means again? (Pause and let kids respond.) Courage is being brave enough to do what you should do, even when you are afraid. So far we've talked about how we can be brave even when we don't feel ready and that we can be brave because we know that God keeps his promises. But what about showing courage when others around you aren't?

Let's say there's a spelling test. You studied but your friends on either side of you didn't. Should you let them copy your paper or should you show courage and tell them that you're not cool with that, even if it means possibly losing friends?

Or let's say you're on the playground and you notice a kid getting picked on. You start to head over to get the teacher but your friend grabs your arm and tells you to stay out of it. Would you show courage and get the teacher's help, knowing the bully might find out it was you that ratted him out?

Or let's say you're in the lunch line when someone trips and his lunch tray goes flying. All the other kids in line begin to laugh. Do you join in the laughter or do you show courage by helping him clean up the mess?

I think all of us would say that we want to show courage and stand up for what's right. But sometimes, in the moment, we're afraid of what other people might think. We're not so quick to do the courageous thing.

But I promise, even if other people don't stand up for the right thing, with God's help, you can. You can be brave when others aren't. And maybe when you stand up, someone else will join you. Maybe if you're the first one to start helping clean up that dropped lunch, someone else in the cafeteria line will help you, too. Maybe those friends will study their spelling words the next time. Maybe that big bully will think twice about picking on someone. And even if they don't—even if you're still the only one who shows courage—remember that God is right there with you, and he is proud of you.

3rd-6th Grade Only**Interaction Questions:**

1. Have you ever gone with the crowd even though you knew you weren't doing the right thing? What happened?
2. Have you ever been the first one to do the right thing? Did anyone else join you?
3. How does it feel to go along with others as they do the wrong thing?
4. How does it feel to stand up and be the only one to do the right thing?

That's my challenge to you this week. Be brave when others aren't. Let's pray and ask God to help us do that.

Prayer

Dear God, it's really hard to be the only one who stands up for what is right. It seems like it would just be easier sometimes to go along with the crowd. But we don't want to do the easy thing. We want to do the brave thing—the wise thing! Help us remember that we can show courage in any situation because you are with us. We love you and we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.



Mid-Practice Huddle

Devotion 5

Introduce:

- » **Virtue:** OBEDIENCE - Trusting those who lead you by doing what you're asked to do.
- » **Scripture Verse:** Trust in your leaders. Put yourselves under their authority. Hebrews 13:17a (NirV)

Bottom Line:

I should trust and obey even when I think my way is better.

My World Example

"You have to clean your room before you can head outside to play."

"No dessert until you finish your dinner."

"Wear your sunscreen."

"No more TV. You've watched too much of it today."

Rules. Do you ever wish you just didn't have them? Or do you ever wish you could make the rules? Your first rule might be: no rules! But what would it really be like to live in a world with no rules?

What would baseball be like if there were no rules? What if there were no umpires to call an "out"? Or what if there were no coaches to help you run the bases?

Even if you think you know better, the truth is, a world without rules would be a dangerous place. That's why there are people in your life who are there to protect you. Listening to your parents, teachers, coaches and others who lead you is pretty important. Following their rules is important, too. Otherwise, you might end up stepping on a Lego with bare feet in your seriously messy room or getting hurt by running the bases incorrectly.

There's a big word I'm sure you've heard a lot in your life that has to do with rules. It's obedience. And while obedience might not be the most exciting thing to talk about, that doesn't mean it's not important. Obedience is trusting those who lead you by doing what you're asked to do. And while you might think it's no big deal to leave a messy room before heading outside to play, or that you won't get hurt by forgetting your sunscreen, you'll soon learn that those rules might just end up protecting you.

When you remember that, it's much easier to trust and obey those who lead you— even when you think your way is better.

3rd-6th Grade Only

Interaction Questions:

1. Who leads you?
2. What are some of the rules you are expected to obey at home? At school? In public places?
3. If you could make one rule, what would it be?
4. Why is it important to trust those who lead you and obey the rules they give you?

Let's pray and ask God to help us obey our leaders.

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for putting people in our lives to show us the best way to live. Help us to trust and obey those leaders even when we think we know better. We want to trust you and your ability to put the right leaders in our lives. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Mid-Practice Huddle****Devotion 6****Review:**

- » **Virtue:** OBEDIENCE - Trusting those who lead you by doing what you're asked to do.
- » **Scripture Verse:** Trust in your leaders. Put yourselves under their authority. Hebrews 13:17a (NirV)

Bottom Line:

I should trust and obey even if I don't know how it will turn out.

Biblical Example

Before we jump in to our huddle today, let me ask you a question. Have any of you ever moved into a new home? Has anyone made a big move—like from another state? (Pause and let kids answer.) Let me tell you, as an adult, it's really no fun to move! You have to pack all your stuff. You have to make a plan for how you're going to get there. And once you're there, you have to unpack and put away all the stuff you just packed up!

But that's just the beginning. Once you've moved, you're in a totally new place and it feels like you have to start all over making friends and learning where things are. Moving can be very stressful.

What if you were told you had to move but weren't given any details about where you'd be going or what you'd do once you got there? That's what happened to a guy in the Old Testament of the Bible named Abraham. Have you ever heard of him? (*Pause as kids raise their hands.*)

Abraham was a follower of God. He trusted and obeyed even when others around him didn't. One day, God told Abraham to move away from his home. God told Abraham to leave everything behind—his home, his family and friends, his land . . . everything. But He didn't tell Abraham where to go!

Now, if you'd been Abraham, what would you have done? Would you have asked tons of questions? Would you have flat-out refused to obey God? Would you pack up all your stuff and move if you couldn't see how things would turn out?

That's exactly what Abraham did. He chose to obey even when he couldn't see how things would turn out. And guess what? Because of his obedience, Abraham saw God do some amazing things. Because he followed God, Abraham had a big family! In fact, the entire nation of Israel is related to him. Abraham chose to trust and obey even when he didn't know how it would turn out.

Now you and I might not be asked to move away from everything familiar, but we will be asked to obey. And sometimes we won't be sure of what will happen. But it's still important to trust and obey—even if you don't know how it will turn out.

3rd-6th Grade Only**Interaction Questions:**

1. Is there something going on in your life and you can't see how it will turn out?
2. When is it the hardest for you to obey?
3. Tell me about your leaders. What makes you want to obey them? What makes you not want to obey them?

Let's pray and ask God to help us to be obedient, always.

Prayer

God, thanks for Abraham's willingness to trust you even when he wasn't sure how things would turn out. We are so thankful that we can trust you no matter what. Help us to be obedient to you whether we know what will happen or not. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Mid-Practice Huddle****Devotion 7****Review:**

- » **Virtue:** OBEDIENCE - Trusting those who lead you by doing what you're asked to do.
- » **Scripture Verse:** Trust in your leaders. Put yourselves under their authority. Hebrews 13:17a (NirV)

Bottom Line:

I should trust and obey even when others don't.

Peer Example

You guys probably remember that we've been talking about obedience. Can anyone tell me what obedience means? (*Pause as kids respond.*) Obedience is trusting those who lead you by doing what you're asked to do. Is there ever a time when obedience is easy? Let me give you a scenario.

Let's say you're at school and your teacher suddenly gets called out in the hall to have a quick chat with the principal. Before she leaves the room, she tells you to start reading at your desks. The whole class follows her instructions and begins silently reading. Would you follow her instructions, too? My guess is yes. It's easy to obey when you look around and everyone else is obeying, too!

But what if you were to flip that around? What if no one did what the teacher asked? What if you looked around the room to find that most of the kids were talking and joking around? Would you pick up your book and quietly begin reading, or would you join in the fun? Would you obey your teacher's instructions even if you were the only one?

While it's completely normal to want to join the crowd and be like everyone else, obedience means that you trust the people who lead you and obey what they've asked—even if you're the only one. It's not the easy thing. But God doesn't ask us to do what's easy. He asks us to do what's right. He asks us to be wise.

So when you're tempted to follow the crowd or cave in to what you know is wrong just so everyone will think you're cool, remember what we've talked about when it comes to obedience. God asks us to obey because he is protecting us. God asks us to obey because it shows that we trust the people who are over us. And when you do, even if you're the only one—your obedience will show God that you trust him, too. Remember, you can trust and obey even when others don't. That's really easy to talk about but not easy to do.

3rd-6th Grade Only**Interaction Questions:**

1. Tell me about a time you knew the right thing to do but no one around you was obeying.
2. Have you ever been doing the wrong thing with everyone else when someone stood up and did the right thing? How did it make you feel?
3. What keeps you from being the only one to do the right thing?

Let's pray and ask God to help us obey, even if we are the only one?

Prayer

Dear God, we know that we can trust you when you ask us to do something. Help us to be obedient to you and to the leaders in our lives even if we might be the only one. And when we do show obedience, please remind us that you're always with us and that you're proud of us when we obey. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Mid-Practice Huddle****Devotion 8****Introduce:**

- » **Virtue:** TRUST - Putting your confidence in someone you can depend on.
- » **Scripture Verse:** “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Believe in me also.” John 14:1 (NirV)

Bottom Line:

I can depend on God because He has a plan for me.

My World Example

Let me ask you a question. What do you think you'll be doing when you grow up? Where will you live? Will you be married? Will you have a big family? Can anybody tell me for sure where they'll be living and what their life might look like fifteen years from now? I'll go ahead and answer this one for you: no way! The only way to know how to truthfully answer these questions is to wait fifteen years!

But guess what? There is someone who has the answers to these questions. There is someone who knows exactly where you'll be and what your life will look like down to the exact detail. I'm not talking about your mom or dad. I'm talking about God! The Bible tells us that God has a plan for each of our lives. He sees what will happen tomorrow as clearly as I see your faces right now.

The disciples who followed Jesus learned this in a big way. See, when Jesus first called them to follow him, they had no idea what was about to happen. They had no idea where they'd go, what they'd do once they got there, where they'd eat or sleep—nothing! But deep down, they trusted Jesus. What does the word “trust” mean to you? Trust is putting your confidence in someone you can depend on.

But what if the disciples had chosen not to trust Jesus? What if they'd chosen just to stay where they were, doing what they'd always done? They would have missed out on seeing the most amazing miracles and hearing the most incredible teaching. And they would have missed out on getting to live life with God Himself! God's plan for them was way bigger and way better than any plan they might have dreamt up for themselves.

So what does that mean for you and me? Why is it good to know that God holds the future and that he has a plan for us? It means—just like those disciples—we can trust God, too. Remember, you can trust God because He has a plan for you!

3rd-6th Grade Only**Interaction Questions:**

1. What do you hope God's plan for your life looks like?
2. How does it make you feel when you think about how God has a plan for your life, no matter what you do?
3. Is there something coming up that you are worried about? A test? A big game? A move? How can the truth of our Scripture verse help calm your fears?

Let's pray and thank God for his amazing plans for us.

Prayer

Dear God, thanks for reminding us today that we can trust you no matter what! Help us to trust that you have the best plan for us. And remind us when we start to doubt that your way is the best way to live. We want to follow you and your plan. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.



Mid-Practice Huddle

Devotion 9

Review:

- » **Virtue:** TRUST - Putting your confidence in someone you can depend on.
- » **Scripture Verse:** “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Believe in me also.” John 14:1 (NirV)

Bottom Line:

I can depend on God because He provides for me.

Biblical Example

Have you ever been super hungry? Like, stomach-growling, mouth-watering, feels-like-you’ll-pass-out-if-you-don’t-get-something-to-eat-soon, kind of hungry?

When Jesus was on earth, he did a lot of teaching and healing. And his teaching and healing made him pretty popular. One day, a huge crowd gathered to hear Jesus and it was getting close to dinnertime. The longer Jesus spoke, the hungrier the crowd became. Now this was a big problem because back then, they couldn’t run to the grocery store or zip around a drive-thru. The only food they could get their hands on was one boy’s lunch made up of just five loaves of bread and two small fish.

This surely wouldn’t be enough to feed thousands of hungry people, right? With what he had, Jesus took the bread, gave thanks and began to pass out the food. Before long, everyone had eaten all they wanted! One small lunch had somehow fed more than 5,000 people—and there were leftovers! It was a miracle! In one moment, Jesus provided for this huge crowd in an unbelievably amazing way!

Okay, cool story right? But maybe you’re thinking, That’s great for those hungry people back then, but what does it have to do with me today? Do you remember how we’ve been talking about trust? How you can put your confidence in someone you can depend on? Well, that story shows us just how much

we can depend on Jesus! If Jesus can feed over 5,000 people with one boy’s lunch, you can easily trust in Him to provide for you.

I’m not talking about one meal. I’m not even talking about just food. God promises to provide for all of your needs. Forever. Not your wants—like a new iPhone or a brand-new skateboard. I’m talking needs. Needs are food, shelter, and clothing. But I’m also talking about the needs that you can’t put a price tag on—like love, acceptance, and forgiveness. God has promised to provide for you when you choose to trust him. You can always depend on God because he provides for you. What an amazing promise!

3rd-6th Grade Only

Interaction Questions:

1. In what ways has God provided for you in your life?
2. God promises to provide for everyone’s needs. But He provides for everyone in very different ways. How might God use you to take care of someone else’s needs?

Let’s pray and thank God for providing for all of our needs today.

Prayer

God, thanks for loving us enough to care about what we need. Thanks for being a great big God who we can depend on, every day, all the time, in any situation. We want to trust you each day and know that we can depend on you. Thanks for loving us. We ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Mid-Practice Huddle****Devotion 10****Review:**

- » **Virtue:** TRUST - Putting your confidence in someone you can depend on.
- » **Scripture Verse:** “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Believe in me also.” John 14:1 (NirV)

Bottom Line:

I can depend on God because he’s bigger than my problems.

Peer Example

Have you ever had a big problem? Not like, “Oh man, we’re out of Frosted Flakes,” or a, “Should I ride my bike or shoot baskets outside?” problem. I’m talking about a big, no-idea-what-to-do, not-sure-how-it’s-gonna-turn-out kind of problem. I know I sure have.

We’ve been talking about what it means to trust. You might not think about this much, but you trust in stuff every day. You trust that the chair you sit in will hold you up. You trust that when you show up to practice, I’ll be here to coach you. You trust that your parents will wake you up for school in the morning (*with or without the Frosted Flakes for breakfast*).

But the kind of trust we’re talking about—the kind where you choose to depend on someone else—can be really hard. After all, what if you trust someone who hurts you? What if the person who was supposed to be your best friend uninvited you to his/her birthday party? Or what if a friend who asked you to join their team at recess is now mad because you scored a goal before he/she did? What if the friend you told a secret to has now shared it with everyone?

Trust can be pretty hard when someone has let you down. But you know who will never let you down, no matter what? Any ideas? That’s right, God. Your Heavenly Father can always, in every situation, no matter what happens, be completely trusted.

No matter what problems you might face, God is someone you can always count on. Remember, you can depend on God because he’s bigger than your problems.

3rd-6th Grade Only**Interaction Questions:**

1. Some people have an easier time depending on others and, for some people, it’s really hard. What about you? Hon a scale of 1 to 5, how easy or difficult is it for you to depend on someone else?
2. Who are some people you feel like you can trust? Why do you trust them?
3. What makes you able to trust God?

Before we pray, I want you to take a minute to think about a problem you’re facing right now. Maybe it’s a problem at home, or maybe it’s a problem at school. Think about that problem and, as we pray, I want you to pray on your own and ask God to help you with that big problem. As I pray, I’ll pause for you to fill in the blank and ask God to help you. You don’t need to pray out loud, you can pray silently to God on your own. He will hear you.

Let’s pray.

Prayer

Dear God, thanks for the reminder that you are bigger than my problems. Today I’m struggling with _____. (*Pause to let kids silently share their problem with God.*) I’m not sure what to do, but I’m trusting you to help me. Thanks for listening when I pray and caring enough about me to help. You are an awesome God. We ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.



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 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."

