

Devotion 1 WELCOME

INSTRUCTIONS:

- » *Gather the players together and get 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 visit and things you'd like to see or do. I want you to give each a "thumbs up" if you like it, or a "thumbs down" if you don't. Ready?...

- » *An art museum*
- » *The World Series*
- » *Concert of your favorite band*
- » *Video game store or toy store*
- » *Hiking in the mountains*
- » *Swimming in the ocean*
- » *Skydiving from a plane*
- » *Disney World*

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 this Upward Baseball Season, you will be rewarded after 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, trying 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 baserunning 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.)

Devotion 2

CONVICTION – STANDING FOR WHAT IS RIGHT EVEN WHEN OTHERS DON'T

PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

At the end of practice, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled "Practice 2."

INTRODUCE

Memory Verse:

*Brothers and sisters,
don't ever get tired of
doing the right thing.*

- 2 Thessalonians 3:13 (NIRV)

BOTTOM LINE

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

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? 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."

(If possible, 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

K5-2nd Grade Questions:

- » Have you ever been in a situation where someone was doing wrong? How did you react?
- » Is standing up for what's right easy? Why or why not?

3rd-5th Grade Questions:

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

6th Grade and Up Questions:

- » How do you know when to take a stand for something?
- » Having the courage to stand up and do what's right isn't always popular. How do you overcome the fear of risking "social status" for doing what's right?

PRAYER

God, thank you for reminding us that it's important to have conviction and to do the right thing. It's not always easy and sometimes we're the only ones doing the right thing. Help us remember that you are always with us, that you see all that we do, and when we do the right thing, we make you proud. Amen.

Devotion 3

CONVICTION – STANDING FOR WHAT IS RIGHT EVEN WHEN OTHERS DON'T

COACH:

Do NOT distribute practice cards at this practice

INTRODUCE**Memory Verse:**

*Brothers and sisters,
don't ever get tired of
doing the right thing.*

- 2 Thessalonians 3:13 (NirV)

BOTTOM LINE

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

Have you guys ever heard the story about three guys named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Well, besides having some cool names, these three guys were really brave. 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 only 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 can bring us out of it alive. He will save us from your powerful hand. But we want to know this. 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

K5-2nd Grade Questions:

- » Why did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego get put into a fiery furnace?
- » Would you say they were foolish or courageous? Why?

3rd-5th Grade Questions:

- » 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?
- » 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?

6th Grade and Up Questions:

- » True conviction typically requires action. Have you ever had to make a risky stand?
- » What convictions do you hold that you'd be willing to die for?

(Devotion 3 cont.)

Prayer

God, thank you for the awesome and true story of your power. We want to have faith like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! We want to show conviction, even when we don't know what the outcome will be. Help us to keep trusting you and doing what's right so we can influence those around us. Amen.



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Devotion 4

CONVICTION – STANDING FOR WHAT IS RIGHT EVEN WHEN OTHERS DON'T

COACH:

Do NOT distribute practice cards at this practice

INTRODUCE**Memory Verse:**

*Brothers and sisters,
don't ever get tired of
doing the right thing.*

- 2 Thessalonians 3:13 (NirV)

BOTTOM LINE

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

When it comes to conviction, it's not always easy to keep doing the right thing. 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 the right thing." Can you say that with me?

(KIDS and COACH): "Brothers and sisters, don't ever get tired of doing the right thing."

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**K5-2nd Grade Questions:**

- » Have you ever gotten tired of doing something?
- » How can we make sure we don't get tired of doing what's right?

3rd-5th Grade Questions:

- » 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?
- » Why do you think we sometimes get tired of standing up for what's right?

6th Grade and Up Questions:

- » Daniel refused to eat the king's food because it was against God's law. What are things you might be tempted to do that violate what's right?
- » What are you doing right now to make sure you don't get tired of doing what is right?

PRAYER

God, thank you for your Word. We want to follow you like Daniel. Help us to have his courage. Help us to never tire of doing what's right. We love you. Amen.

Devotion 5

PEACE – PROVING YOU CARE MORE ABOUT EACH OTHER THAN WINNING AN ARGUMENT

PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

At the end of practice, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 5.”

INTRODUCE

Memory Verse:

So let us do all we can to live in peace. And let us work hard to build up one another.

– Romans 14:19 (NirV)

BOTTOM LINE

Prove you care about others by being part of the solution.

Have you ever had a conflict with someone? Have you ever been so mad at someone else you were ready to fight them? Or ignore them? Or say you never want to be their friend again? Sometimes when someone hurts us, we just want to get even. Or worse, we want to hurt them more than they’ve hurt us.

For the next few practices, we’re going to talk about peace. Peace is proving you care more about each other than winning an argument. But peace isn’t easy. When you’ve been hurt or disappointed or wronged, peace is probably the last thing you care about. But here’s something to think about: In the moment when you find yourself mad or hurt or frustrated, instead of spending your energy getting even or winning the argument, why not turn it around and ask yourself how you can use it to solve the problem?

When you find yourself angry and upset, if you act on that emotion, I promise you’ll regret it. Peace means taking a deep breath and stopping to think about how to fix the problem so that the relationship

can be saved. Your relationship is way more important than winning the argument, right? I mean, if you win the argument but lose your friend, you haven’t really won, have you? So sometimes you have to trade being right or having your way so that you can protect your friendship.

I want you guys to talk about what this looks like in your world. Find a partner. Then take two minutes to tell your partner about the last disagreement you had with someone else. Now, talk about what you could have done to bring peace and protect the relationship in that situation. Then switch and let your partner share too.

(Give the players a few minutes to share, then close in prayer.)

Thanks for being willing to share your experience with someone else. Maybe the next time when someone hurts us, we will all stop to think about how we can be part of the solution rather than proving we’re “right.” We are definitely going to need God’s help though.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

K5-2nd Grade Questions:

- » Have you ever been in a fight or argument with a brother or sister? What about a friend or classmate?
- » How did you help bring peace?

3rd-5th Grade Questions:

- » In an argument, are you more likely to fix the problem or stay mad?
- » Is there an example you can think of when something bad happened because someone let their emotions control them?

6th Grade and Up Questions:

- » In an argument, are you more tempted to work things out or prove you’re right?
- » When emotions control us, we can damage relationships with those we care about. How can you work to prevent your emotions from controlling your thoughts and actions?

(Devotion 5 cont.)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your love for us. We know that it's only possible for us to love others because You love us. We want to be friends that are always peacemakers. The next time we get into a disagreement with a friend, help us to be part of the solution. Help us to remember that our relationships with others are way more important than being right. We love You and we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.



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Devotion 6

PEACE – PROVING YOU CARE MORE ABOUT EACH OTHER THAN WINNING AN ARGUMENT

COACH:

Do NOT distribute practice cards at this practice

INTRODUCE

Memory Verse:

So let us do all we can to live in peace. And let us work hard to build up one another.

- Romans 14:19 (NirV)

BOTTOM LINE

Prove you care about others by letting go of what's "fair."

Do you know what's behind so many of our disagreements? Three words: "That's not fair." How many of you have ever said those words to somebody? (Pause for responses.) Well, here's the thing about fairness. We all want things to be fair—especially when someone else has hurt us. But when we're the ones who have the bigger piece of pizza, or the first turn with a new game, we'd rather not bring fairness into the picture.

Take the story of Jacob and Esau. Have you heard of them before? Jacob and Esau were brothers—twin brothers. Do you know any twins? Is anyone on our team a twin? Well, these guys were just like us. They had plenty of disagreements and plenty of "that's not fair" arguments as kids. But there was one really bad "that's not fair" moment I want to tell you about. See Jacob, the younger twin, actually tricked their dad into giving him the blessing that really belonged to Esau. The blessing was that all of their dad's wealth would one day go to Esau because he was the oldest son. But in one terrible act, Jacob stole everything that was rightfully his brother's right out from under him. Esau was so mad that he wanted to kill his brother. Jacob knew he was in big trouble, so he took off and went to live with his uncle.

Jacob was gone from home for over twenty years. During that time, Jacob got married and had lots and lots of kids and got really rich. And one day, God told him to go back home. But who would be there when he returned? That's right, his brother Esau. Would Esau still be angry? Would he make Jacob pay for what he'd done? Nope. He didn't. Because Esau knew that even though Jacob had hurt him, his relationship with his brother was still more important. Esau was willing to let go of "what's fair." When Esau saw his brother Jacob after all those years, the Bible says he ran to him, hugged him, and forgave him. Wow.

So the next time you're in a situation when you think something is unfair, I want you to think about Jacob and Esau. Sometimes you'll be the one in the wrong and you'll hope that the other person lets go of what's fair too, just like Esau did. Prove you care about others by letting go of what's fair. I don't know about you, but I'm definitely going to need some help with that.

Thanks for being willing to share your experience with someone else. Maybe the next time when someone hurts us, we will all stop to think about how we can be part of the solution rather than proving we're "right." We are definitely going to need God's help though.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

K5-2nd Grade Questions:

- » When have you been treated unfairly? How did you react?
- » Are you willing to forgive anyone that has been unfair to you?

3rd-5th Grade Questions:

- » When someone is unfair to you, are you more likely to stay mad at them and seek revenge or forgive them?
- » Is there someone you've been unfair to that you need to seek forgiveness from?

(Devotion 6 cont.)

6th Grade and Up Questions:

- » The world tells us to get revenge when we've been wronged. What did Esau do that seems counter to what the world tells us to do?
- » Being hurt by someone close to us can impact us for a long time. How does forgiving that person help us? How does it please God?

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for reminding us through the life of Jacob and Esau that we need to let go of what we think is fair. When someone hurts us or when we think we deserve what's "fair," help us to remember that our relationships have to come first. We love You, God. Thanks for loving us. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.



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Devotion 7

PEACE – PROVING YOU CARE MORE ABOUT EACH OTHER THAN WINNING AN ARGUMENT

COACH:

Do NOT distribute practice cards at this practice

INTRODUCE

Memory Verse:

So let us do all we can to live in peace. And let us work hard to build up one another.

- Romans 14:19 (NirV)

BOTTOM LINE

Prove you care about others by walking away from a fight.

Have you ever been so mad you just wanted to hit somebody or something? Has someone ever hurt you so much that you just wanted to hurt them back? Peace is not easy. Especially when someone hurts us.

Check this out. The Bible tells us in Romans 14:19, “So let us do all we can to live in peace. And let us work hard to build up one another.” Now, I know what you’re thinking. Living in peace is easy when people are nice to us, or when we get what we want or what we think we deserve. But what about when the opposite is true? How in the world are we supposed to “live in peace” when someone starts a fight?

In those moments, we have a choice to make. We can fight back and try to get even. We can say something mean that we can’t take back. Or we can choose to step back, remember that our relationships are way more important than whatever it is we’re fighting about, and walk away. Sometimes the best thing we can do when there’s a conflict is to simply walk away.

(Take a few minutes to share a story from your own life about how you walked away from conflict. Think through what you will say beforehand and remember to keep your examples age-appropriate.)

I’m sure you can think of some examples when you walked away or maybe wished that you had. Remember, God wants us to do all we can to live in peace with others. And because He loves us and always forgives, we should do the same. The next time you find yourself in the middle of conflict, I want you to prove you care about others by walking away from a fight.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

K5-2nd Grade Questions:

- » When is the last time you were in a fight or an argument? How did it end?
- » Why can it be hard to simply walk away from a fight?

3rd-5th Grade Questions:

- » How do you tend to react when someone says or does something that hurts you?
- » What ways can you live in peace and build up one another?

6th Grade and Up Questions:

- » Why is it hard to walk away from a fight or argument? What might make it easier?
- » Walking away from a fight is one thing, but how can “building one another up” help you live in peace?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, sometimes it’s so hard to not fight back when we’ve been hurt. But we know that fighting back won’t bring real peace. So even when we’ve been hurt or we want to get even, help us to remember to walk away from a fight. Thank You, God. We ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Devotion 8

OBEDIENCE – TRUSTING THOSE WHO LEAD YOU BY DOING WHAT YOU’RE ASKED TO DO.

PRACTICE CARD REMINDER

At the end of practice, remember to distribute the practice cards entitled “Practice 8.”

INTRODUCE

Memory Verse:

Obey your leaders. Put yourselves under their authority.

- Hebrews 13:17a (NirV)

BOTTOM LINE

It’s right to listen to God because he’s God.

How many of you like to create things? Maybe you love to draw or paint. Maybe you play an instrument and you’ve written a song or two. Maybe you love to build cool structures out of Legos. Or maybe you can sculpt some pretty cool stuff out of Play Dough. Maybe you haven’t quite figured out how you’re creative. But do you know who’s infinitely creative? GOD.

Okay, another question. How strong are you? Can you lift your little brother? What about that jumbo bag of dog food your mom just bought at the grocery store? Think you could pick up a car or a refrigerator? Okay, maybe that’s a little too heavy for you guys. But you know who’s incredibly strong and powerful? GOD.

Okay, let’s switch gears a bit. How many of you are perfect? Anyone here who’s never made a mistake? You’ve never lied. You’ve never cheated. You’ve never thought a mean thing about anyone. Anyone? No? Do you know who is perfect? GOD.

What are some other things that are true about God? Let’s take a few minutes to list a few.

(Pause while players name a few truths about God, i.e. he is faithful, loving, kind, just, etc.)

This is a great list. All these things are true about God. We have a lot in

common with God because the Bible says that he made us in his image, but we can’t do all of the things he can do because we are not God.

You see, no matter how creative we might be, no one here is as creative as God is. We didn’t carve out the Grand Canyon and we can’t paint a sunset. And no matter how much we might workout, lift weights, or train like crazy, we’ll never be powerful enough to control the waves in the ocean or calm a storm. And perfect? Forget it. You and I both know that we’re far from perfect. We make mistakes all the time. And even if we tried hard to NOT mess up, we still would. Guaranteed.

So what does all this mean? Well, because all these things are true of God, I think it means we should listen to him. I think it means we should obey him. You guys know what obedience means right? Obedience is trusting those who lead you by doing what you’re asked to do. That’s what we’ll be talking about for the next few practices. When we obey God, we show him that we believe he is who he says he is. When we obey God, we show him that we believe that he loves us. When we obey God, we show him that we believe he is God. It’s right to listen to God and to obey him because he’s GOD.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

K5-2nd Grade Questions:

- » What is the most amazing thing you’ve seen that God created?
- » Why do you think we should obey God?

3rd-5th Grade Questions:

- » How do we obey God?
- » Is it hard for you to obey God sometimes? When? Why?

(Devotion 8 cont.)

6th Grade and Up Questions:

- » What are some things God can do that you can't?
- » What does it look like to obey God? When you realize God is perfect, does it make it easier to obey him?

Prayer

God, you are powerful. You are creative. You are perfect. You are gracious. Thank you for loving us! Help us to obey you. We know you want what's best for us. Amen.



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Devotion 9

OBEDIENCE – TRUSTING THOSE WHO LEAD YOU BY DOING WHAT YOU'RE ASKED TO DO.**COACH:**

Do NOT distribute practice cards at this practice

INTRODUCE**Memory Verse:**

Obey your leaders. Put yourselves under their authority.

- Hebrews 13:17a (NirV)

BOTTOM LINE

It's always better to do what God says—the first time.

Last practice we started talking about obedience—trusting those who lead you by doing what you're asked to do. Let me start today by asking you a question. Do you ever get in trouble for not doing something the FIRST time you were asked? My guess is that not one of you can say you always follow directions the first time. It's probably one of the things you get in trouble for—especially when someone has to ask you to do something over and over again.

Sometimes we really HAVE to obey the first time or we could get in serious trouble. Let's say a little boy is heading straight for the street and his mom yells, "STOP!" If he doesn't stop immediately, he could get hurt. Or what if you're not listening when I tell the team to run a certain play and you do your own thing? We could lose the ball and the other team could score. In both situations, it's important to do what you're told the FIRST time.

But what about when it comes to following God? Should we listen to Him the first time? Why? Have you guys heard about a guy named

Jonah from the Bible? In the book of Jonah in the Bible, we see God asked him to go to Nineveh and tell the people there to follow Him. But Jonah didn't listen. In fact, instead of heading to Nineveh, he got on a boat and headed in a completely different direction. And I'll bet you guys have heard about what happened. Does anybody know? That's right, Jonah was swallowed by a HUGE fish. He stayed inside the stinky fish's belly for three days. Three days to think about what he SHOULD have done in the first place. And when that fish finally spit him out, where do you think Jonah went? That's right! To Nineveh!

It is important to listen to God the first time, just like it is important to obey our authority and follow instructions. If Jonah had done that to begin with, instead of trying to run from God, he could have saved himself from a pretty terrible situation. Remember, God created you and has a plan for your life that you can follow the easy way . . . or the hard way, like Jonah. So when it comes to following God, it's always better to do what God says—the first time!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**K5-2nd Grade Questions:**

- » What happened to Jonah when he didn't listen to God?
- » How did Jonah show he was listening to God after the fish spit him out?

3rd-5th Grade Questions:

- » What makes it difficult to obey the first time?
- » What might be the consequences of not obeying God in your life?

6th Grade and Up Questions:

- » What might happen if you disobey God?
- » How did God use Jonah even after he disobeyed him? What might God have planned for your life?

(Devotion 9 cont.)

Prayer

Thank you for reminding us through the life of Jonah the importance of listening to you. We want to honor you by obeying you. We know you have a plan for our lives. Help us to follow you. Amen.



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Devotion 10

OBEDIENCE – TRUSTING THOSE WHO LEAD YOU BY DOING WHAT YOU’RE ASKED TO DO.

COACH:

Do NOT distribute practice cards at this practice

INTRODUCE

Memory Verse:

Obey your leaders. Put yourselves under their authority.

- Hebrews 13:17a (NirV)

BOTTOM LINE

How I obey my parents shows what I think about God.

“Eat your veggies.”

“Brush your teeth.”

“Turn off the TV and go outside to play.”

“Don’t hit your brother.”

“Finish your homework.”

Ever heard any of these from your mom or dad? Does it feel like they’re always telling you what to do? Why is that? Do you just sometimes wish you could do whatever you want? I mean, so what if you miss brushing your teeth a couple of nights in a row? And sure, you might get in trouble for not finishing your homework, but there’s always extra credit, right?

Not so fast. The Bible has something to say about obeying your parents. Check out our memory verse—Hebrews 13:17. It says, “Obey your leaders. Put yourselves under their authority.” Let’s break this verse down a little bit.

First question: Who are your leaders? Shout out your answers. *(Wait for responses.)*

So your parents, your teachers, your coaches—yes, even me. We are the “authority” the passage mentions when it says, “Put yourselves under their authority.” Why? *(Wait for responses.)*

But the people you obey aren’t off the hook. Your parents, teachers, and coaches are responsible for you because he put them in that position of authority to do his works. So when you obey them, you’re also obeying God. And when you refuse to obey them, you’re saying that you don’t trust God to put the right leaders in your life. Because how you obey your parents shows what you think about God.

Do you see how it’s all connected? It says in the Bible that God put your parents in your life to lead you—to keep watch over you. It’s like when your teacher is out sick and puts a substitute in charge of the classroom. If you treat that substitute with respect, you’re also showing your teacher that you respect her decision. But if you disobey and misbehave for the substitute, you’re showing your teacher that you really don’t think very highly of her or trust her enough to put a capable leader in charge. That’s how it is when you disobey your parents. It tells God that you don’t trust Him. Remember, how you obey your parents show what you think about God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

K5-2nd Grade Questions:

- » Why should we obey people in authority?
- » When are you tempted to be disobedient? How can you improve?

3rd-5th Grade Questions:

- » Why should we obey people in authority?
- » When are you tempted to be disobedient? How can you improve?

(Devotion 10 cont.)

6th Grade and Up Questions:

- » What authority exists in your life? How obedient are you to them?
- » Have you been a leader in any area of life? How do you want people to treat you when you are in authority?

Prayer

God, help us to obey, even when it is hard. We are thankful for parents that love us. Help us to honor you by obeying them! You want what's best for us. We love you, Lord. Amen.



UPWARD SPORTS
BASEBALL DEVOTIONS

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Devotion 11

THE GOSPEL

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

(Pass out Star Bracelet)

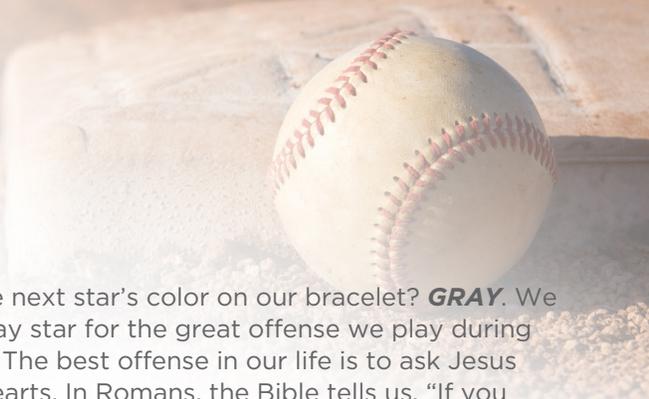
Let's all put our bracelet on. What do the stars on these bracelets remind you of? *(Listen for someone to mention the Upward Sports Stars)* We are going to use this bracelet to talk about how these stars can help us remember how we can have a relationship with Jesus.

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, "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')*

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 sins. Wear your bracelet so that every time you see it, you can remember what Jesus has done for you.

I want us all 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.



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 hearts. 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.

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 devotion 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.”