

YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL



Idlewild
SPORTS

Idlewild Recreation Ministry Team

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IBCREC Mission, Values & Culture

Our **PURPOSE** is to help people take their first or next step with Christ. IBCREC Ministry has a unique opportunity to use the resources God has given us to reach our community for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sports and extracurricular activities have opened a door to bring thousands of people onto our campus. Our goal is to disciple the saved and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the lost. We aim to help them grow closer to Christ and allow them to see the work God is doing through our children and family ministries. Jesus has commanded us -

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age. - Matthew 28:19-20

Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him. - Matthew 4:19-20

This is the Great Commission that God calls us to through this ministry. (**Evangelism & Discipleship**)

IBC Recreation Ministry exists with the following mission:

1. Sharing the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ.
Luke 2:10-11; Acts 20:24.
2. Supporting the spiritual growth and discipleship of families through weekly devotionals
3. Connecting the surrounding communities to **Christ** and church life at Idlewild
4. Our focus is caring spiritually for the people God has entrusted to us. (NOT on winning and losing games)

Devotions

Devotions are the cornerstone of the recreation ministry. IBC REC was created to provide a wholesome, Christ-centered environment where youth and adults will have the opportunity to develop spiritual growth through the Word of God. Our hope is the time you spend with your team in God's Word will have a spiritual impact on their lives.

In obedience to God's word and led by the Holy Spirit, we ask our coaches to be intentional with their team devotions. Take time each practice and game to sit down, away from drills, training, and other distractions to share a devotion and Gospel message with their players. These devotional moments are not secondary to our practices and games but rather the very heart of why we gather weekly. Devotional times are moments in which we can pour into our players who may or may not know Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to continue the work of sanctification through His word.

Devotion Details

1. Devotions are given at all practices and before or after your games.
 - a. **Double-loop learning** – people are more likely to remember if they review
2. Devotions should only take 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Devotions are usually **story based**.
4. We have provided devotion booklets for you. Please use the booklets provided.
5. Devotions are given only by the head coach, assistant coach or an IBC member (parent).
6. Please plan ahead to make time for your devotion. Practices and games are secondary.

6 Elements of Giving a Devotional

1. **THEME**: Each week there will be a theme based on a Biblical value or principle.
2. **SCRIPTURE**: Read the scripture and summarize it for the players. (**Note**: Spend 15 to 20 minutes before practicing reading and understanding the context of the scriptures).
3. **QUESTION**: Questions are provided; feel free to ask your own question. Jesus used questions.
4. **EXPLANATION**: The devotional begins with a short explanation of the verse or the theme.
5. **ILLUSTRATIONS**: 9 Kinds of Illustrations for Devotionals-One is provided for you.
 1. **Biblical story**: You can use a story from the Bible that illustrates the Biblical value.
 2. **Personal Story**: Tell them your story
 3. **Anecdote**: Tell them somebody else's story
 4. **Conversation**: A conversation you heard or one in the bible
 5. **Numbers**: Use statistics (Jesus referenced the number of hairs on our heads)
 6. **Object Lesson**: One item as a visual or physical example of a truth
 7. **Interesting Fact**: A news story, interesting fact, or intriguing how-to that makes a connection to a spiritual truth in a way that captures their imagination
 8. **Pithy Quote**: A quotation can provide a powerful illustration of a scriptural truth.

9. **Question:** Questions make readers think, helping them see different facets of a situation and go beyond simply looking at life in black and white.
6. **TAKEAWAYS** – What you want your players to learn

What is the Takeaway: Keep It Simple

The action can be big or small. It can be obvious or subtle. Regardless, the overarching guideline to follow is this: give a simple takeaway, and the takeaway points to “THE” spiritual principle and application. This element challenges you to apply the devotional’s lesson – the point – and live it out. **Ask your athletes how they can live out this principle with their family, friends, etc.** A good takeaway gives you a way to live differently as a result of reading the devotional.

God Stories - Next Steps

Please share your opportunities by filling out the **Gospel Conversation Form**. This includes salvation decisions, stories of spiritual growth, prayer requests, and intentional devotions. This QR code will take you to the form:



Helpful Tips

1. Identify your mission field.

As coaches, we have a captive audience for few hours a week. This is a great opportunity to make the most of our circumstances and reflect His love to everyone around us. You don't have to be a pastor or missionary to tell people about Jesus and help them grow spiritually, either; just think of all the people around you in need of hope. Your involvement in Idlewild Recreation Ministry is a divine appointment that God has orchestrated for His honor and glory.

Keep your eyes open for people you can talk to and ways you can connect the conversation with Christ. Catch up with your players' families by phone or text message, before or after the practices and games. Let your players know you are praying for them. Be intentional about forming relationships with your players and their families.

Billy Graham once said, "It takes 40 positive contacts with a Christian for an unbeliever to come to faith in Christ."

2. Focus on the Gospel.

Billy Graham also said, "*I do not have to make the Gospel relevant; it is always relevant in any part of the world ... [and] I must get the whole Gospel in [every] sermon.*"

The Gospel has the power to transform lives. If you're short on time and want to explain the Good News in a nutshell, share John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

3. Be an example.

- Live a consistent, Christ-centered life. (You are being watched by every player, family, and referee)
- Be a friend and a good listener.
- The Holy Spirit gives us the power to share the Gospel (Acts 1:8). Ask Him to give you opportunities to share your faith.
- Avoid arrogance and preachiness.

Remember, we're all sinners in need of a Savior. Try to see people as God sees them—as treasured creations made in His image and loved unconditionally. When we see others that way, we will want to follow God's command to share the hope of the Gospel (Matthew 28:19-20).

4. Share true stories of God's power.

No matter how “ordinary” yours may seem, **we've all got a story to tell**, and you never know what it can mean to someone until you share it. Jesus often talked in parables so people could better grasp God's plans, instructions, and power. In the same way, you can use personal experiences, personal stories, and stories of Bible heroes to relate to others and tell them about Christ.

Keep in mind, though, you will only have a few minutes to get your point across. So, you don't ramble on and on, try writing down bullet points —focusing on a few key points. Ask God to guide you as you write (James 1:5-6).

Above all, remember that it's God's business to turn a person's heart towards Christ. Though we are to be obedient in sharing our faith, our persuasion alone is not enough. As 1 Corinthians 3:6 says, some plant, some water, but it is God who makes the seed grow. The gospel story is not about us; it's about the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Before the Season

*You will be receiving a preliminary roster and schedule. **Please DO NOT** let families know what team they are on, or what the schedule will be. We will be making changes before we post on the website the final rosters and schedules. PLEASE DO NOT tell any child or parent they can be placed on your team.*

- *Once rosters are POSTED, please call your players' parents.*
 - Please call and email all parents on your roster after the rosters have been released. Jan. 5th
- ***Please do not:***
 - **Tell any child or parent they can play on your team. They must contact the Rec staff.**
 - **Let any child participate without having their registration and release form.**
- *Late registrations:*
 - MUST go on the team with the least number of players. This may not be your team.
 - We may be adding players to your team even after the first practice or game, please check your rosters for changes.
- *Uniforms and equipment:*
 - Check in with us before your first practice at the information tent for your equipment.

During the Season

- Connect well with kids and parents
- Recruit help
- Do the Devotionals and follow-up with kids

Communication Procedures

- We will use TeamLinkt for our communication with you. You will need to connect with your team via the TeamLinkt app. You will receive notices if there are changes to practices/games, cancelations, and other important information.
- All IBC REC formal communication to parents will come via the TeamLinkt app, email, website, Facebook, and Instagram.

Storm and Lightning Policy

We have a ThorGuard Lightning Prediction System that gives us an 8–20-minute warning BEFORE lightning could strike our property.

- **ALERT**

- If lightning is predicted, the ThorGuard will sound **ONE HORN BLAST** indicating that all activities are **ON HOLD**. A strobe light located on top of the Fieldhouse will begin to flash and continue to flash until the threat has cleared. Please go directly to your car when the **HORN SOUNDS**. **Lightning WILL strike!**

- **ALL CLEAR**

- The signal will be indicated by **THREE HORN BLASTS**, and the strobe light will stop flashing. At this time all activities will resume.
- If the horn sounds, this does not mean the game is canceled, just delayed until the all-clear signal. Go to your car or the field house and wait for notice.
- How do I know if the practice or a game has been canceled due to the weather?
 - Decisions as to playing conditions will be made after 4 pm. We will send communication via the TeamLinkt app and email if practices or games get canceled. Please check the recreation info line at (813) 264-8759 for a voicemail update after 4 pm.

What Do I Do If . . .

- *I need equipment:*
 - Contact John at 401-451-5930 with Field Operations.
 - Equipment Includes pinnies and soccer balls
 - Mouthguards are available for purchase at our concessions stand
- *I will not be available for practice or a game.*
 - Find a parent replacement from your team.
- *I'm struggling with my practices or games.*
 - Call Robert Pinkston: Office: (813) 865-9204
Cell (813) 696-9257
- *I am having parental problems.*
 - Please notify Robert Pinkston of any parental problems or discipline issues.
 - Try to meet with the parents to make sure they understand the intent of the Recreation Ministry program.
 - Let the Recreation Ministry Staff know so we can better serve you and this family.
- *I saw some field maintenance problems.*
 - Please email us at ibcrec@idlewild.org and we will make note of the problem.

- *A practice or a game has been canceled because of weather conditions or poor playing conditions due to the weather.*
 - Decisions as to playing conditions will be made after 4 pm. We will send communication via the TeamLinkt app if practices or games get canceled. Please check the recreation info line at (813) 865-9204 for a voicemail update after 4 pm.

End of Season

Joshua Awards

- **WHAT IS THE JOSHUA AWARD?**

The Joshua Award honors a single player displaying the service, dedication, and leadership embodied by the biblical character Joshua. Joshua was a key figure in the Exodus and the entry into the Promised Land. He exemplifies qualities ideal for a team leader as Moses' trusted successor.

- **NOMINATION CRITERIA**

We are looking for players who demonstrate outstanding kindness, devotion, unwavering courage, leadership, and a personal commitment to their team. A nominee must also have a healthy player-coach relationship, much like the relationship Joshua had with **Moses**, and is passionate about **Jesus Christ**.

Year End Celebration

We will have a closing ceremony at the recreation fields on the last day of games. This will be a wonderful time to celebrate your players and families with fun and bounce houses for the kids. Each coach will present the Joshua Award to your selected player too. This is also a great time to return all your equipment.

Post-Season

- *Year-End Celebration:*
 - Following your final games, we will gather at the Recreation Information tent to honor and celebrate our season and Joshua Award Winners on March 14th, 2025.
- *Equipment:*
 - Turn in all of your equipment to the Recreation Staff after your last game.
 - If you are not available at the last game, please have your assistant coach turn in your equipment.
- *Contacting the Recreation Staff:*
 - Any salvation decisions, ministry opportunities, or follow-up from your team.
- *Help recruit future leadership:*
 - If you see a parent or assistant coach that you believe would be a great servant leader in our outreach ministry, please let us know

IBC REC League Rules

Coaches, we ask that you communicate with parents regarding any changes to the schedule or games. This includes weather updates.

General Rules for Games

The head coaches set the tone for the game by gathering both teams and their coaches for a brief word of encouragement and prayer. This will also serve as a time to remind players to be aware of potential violations throughout the game. Arguing calls made by the umpire is not tolerated. Remember there is no official score or standings.

1. As a coach, follow the rules of each division.
2. All divisions bat through the entire lineup.
3. Rotate the batting order each week.
4. Batters must wear batting helmets.
5. No stealing bases.
6. No throwing of the bat. Extend grace for the first two weeks. At week three it will be considered an automatic out in older divisions.
7. Rotate players throughout the game back and forth between the infield and outfield.
8. Girls softball is played using a slow-pitch format rather than fast pitch.

Substitutions

The substitution system is designed to allow each child the opportunity to understand and apply the fundamentals of the game.

The Substitution system provides opportunities for:

- Rotate players to various positions

- Don't put a player somewhere where they are uncomfortable.
- Every player to be in the lineup.
- Good suggestion – mix up batting order week to week.

The Heart of the Substitution Model

As coaches, you should be interested in developing both the player and the team as a whole. Ensure that your players are developing in excellence throughout the season. Keep in mind the individual strengths and weaknesses of each of your players. If a child does not want to play a particular position, do not force him/her to do so. Give the child enough opportunity to understand the fundamentals of the position.

Youth Flag Football Rules

Game Format

- Games are **7 on 7**.
- Team plays with one of the **footballs which IBCREC supplies from the coach's bag**.
- Two **23-minute halves** with a **running clock** (5-minute break at halftime).
- The clock will **only stop** for:
 - Time-outs
 - Injuries
- The clock **does not stop** for:
 - Incomplete passes
 - Out-of-bounds
 - Change of possession
- The clock **will stop in the final 1 minute of the game** for:
 - Incomplete passes
 - Out-of-bounds
 - Penalties
 - If it's an offensive penalty, the clock will start on the official unless it is a dead ball foul.
- **Coin flip** determines choice of possession or direction.
- **One 30-second timeout per half**.
- Teams **switch sides at halftime**.

Basic Game Rules

- Each possession starts at the **5-yard line** after:
 - Start of game
 - Scores
 - Turnovers on downs
 - Halftime
- **30-second play clock**
 - **45-second play clock for K-2nd Grade Division**
- The offensive team has:
 - **3 downs** to reach a first down at midfield
 - **4 downs to score** once they have crossed midfield
- **Interceptions can be returned**, and possession will begin where the defender is flagged.
- **All players are eligible!**
- The **Center cannot take a handoff from the QB.**
- The ball is placed **where the flag is pulled**, not where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- **Only one player may be in motion** at a time.
- **3 players must be on the Line of Scrimmage**, or an Illegal Formation will be called.
- A receiver must have **at least one foot in bounds** for a legal reception. A catch is **not legal if either foot is out of bounds** at the time of the catch.
- **Laterals are allowed**; if the ball hits the ground, the ball is spotted at that yard mark.
- **A ball carrier may not leap or dive**
 - If a player dives, the ball will be spotted where the runner left his feet.
- **Absolutely no tackling, pushing or blocking**
 - Stationary picks are allowed, but the player cannot move.
- **No fumbles**

- A fumbled or stripped ball is dead and placed at the spot of the fumble with the offense retaining possession.
- **NO RUSHING THE QB!**
- Defensive players **cannot cross the line of scrimmage** until a handoff or pass has occurred.
- There are **NO safeties in the K–2nd Grade Division.**
- Games **cannot end on a defensive penalty.**
- **Coaches are NOT permitted on the field** in the Girls 3–12 and Boys 3–12 divisions (sideline only).

Play Is Dead When Any of the Following Occur

- Flag is pulled
- Runner's knee touches the ground
- Runner steps out of bounds
- If a player loses his flag, the opposing team must touch him down with one hand

Pass Game Rules

- The offense must throw the ball within:
 - **K–2nd Grade:** 6 seconds
 - **3rd–5th Grade:** 5 seconds
 - **6th–HS Grade:** 4 seconds
- The sack count starts **on the snap of the ball**, regardless of the offensive play attempted.
- Forward pass may be **underhand or overhand**, as long as it is beyond the LOS.
- If the QB does not release the ball before time expires:
 - It is a **sack**

- The ball is placed **5 yards back from the previous LOS**
- A sack can occur in the **end zone**, resulting in a safety if the ball is snapped **inside the 5-yard line**.
- Any sack occurring on a play that starts from the **5-yard line** will be placed on the **1-foot line**.

Run Game Rules

- A play is considered a **run play** when the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage.
- A play where a player takes a handoff and then throws a forward pass is considered a **pass play** and does not count as a run play.
- **Unlimited runs** in the **K–2nd Grade Division**.
- The offense may run the ball **once per first down** in the **3rd–12th Grade Division**.
- **NO direct QB runs**.
- **NO runs within five yards of the goal line** in the **3rd–12th Grade Division**.
- Ball carriers may **spin** to avoid a flag pull but **cannot flag guard**.

Offensive Penalties

- Offensive Pass Interference – 10-yard penalty and replay the down
- Illegal Motion (2 players in motion) – 5-yard penalty and replay the down
- Illegal Formation – 5-yard penalty and replay the down
- Illegal Run – 5-yard penalty and loss of down

- False Start – 5-yard penalty, play blown dead
- Illegal Forward Pass – 5-yard penalty and loss of down (QB steps over LOS)
- Blocking – ball is dead at the spot of the block
- Leaping – ball is dead at the spot
- Flag Guarding (including stiff arms) – ball is dead at the spot
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct – 15-yard penalty
 - Includes inappropriate language and taunting
- **NO END ZONE CELEBRATIONS!**
- Delay of Game – clock stopped and 5-yard penalty
- **No Intentional Grounding Penalty**

Defensive Penalties

- Defensive Pass Interference – 10-yard penalty and down over unless it's an offensive catch; offense decides
 - 1st down can occur depending on yardage
- Illegal Contact (holding, jams, etc.) – 5-yard penalty and down over unless it's an offensive catch; offense decides
- Defensive Holding while pulling flag – 5-yard penalty added to the end of the play and down over
- Illegal Flag Pull (before player has the ball) – 5-yard penalty and down over
- Off-sides – 5-yard penalty and replay the down
- Illegal Rushing (before a handoff occurs) – 5-yard penalty and replay the down; offense decides
- Inadvertent Tackle – 5-yard penalty added to the end of the play
- Inadvertent Tackle from Behind with clear path to the end zone – **Automatic Touchdown**

- Unsportsmanlike Conduct – 15-yard penalty and **automatic 1st down**
- Defensive penalties inside the **10-yard line** result in **half the distance to the goal line**, if applicable.

Devotionals

Champions in Christ

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Made in the Image of God, With a Purpose

Genesis 1:1,27 - "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." "So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

Psalms 139:13-14 - "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well."

Question: Have you ever thought about how wonderfully unique you are? What are some unique gifts or talents that you appreciate that God gave you?

Illustration: Kurt Warner's story is a powerful reminder that God creates each person with a purpose—even when the path seems unlikely. Warner went undrafted out of college and was stocking shelves at a grocery store while playing arena football just to stay in the game. Many people told him his football dream was over before it started. But God was not finished with Kurt Warner.

In God's timing, Warner was given an unexpected opportunity with the St. Louis Rams and went on to become a Super Bowl-winning quarterback, league MVP, and Super Bowl MVP. Throughout his career, Warner consistently gave glory to Christ, openly sharing that his identity and purpose were not found in football, but in being a follower of Jesus.

Today, Kurt Warner continues to serve Christ through ministry, family, and leadership beyond football—showing that God’s purpose for him was always bigger than wins and trophies.

Explanation: You also are created by God in His image and have a purpose. Your purpose might not be to win the Heisman trophy, but God has a unique purpose for you. The Bible says that you are wonderfully made. God made all the intricate details about you in your mother’s womb. You are unique with no mistakes and God loves you. You have a unique purpose.

Jesus said, “For God so loved the world (...so loved YOU) that He gave His only Son, Jesus, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.” One of your purposes is for Jesus to be your Lord and Savior.

Take Away: “For I know the plans I have for you, “declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11). When you feel insecure or are tempted to compare yourself to others, remember that God made you uniquely you. What can you do to remind yourself that you are created by God with a purpose? Who can you share this with that will keep you accountable?

(Coaches – Find an object lesson or phrase to share with your players to remind them of this principle.)

Identity in Christ - The Performance Problem

*I John 3:1 - "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!
And that is what we are!"*

Question: If anyone were to ask you, who are you? What would you say? Would you say, "Well I'm good at football, or I'm good at school, or I'm good at this or that, or even I'm taller or I'm short?" That is describing what you do, what you're good at, or what you look like. But who are you really?

Explanation: An Athlete's world is a lot about PERFORMANCE. If they excel on the field, they become significant to the coach, team and fans. Once they become significant, they are accepted. Plus, they get to play. As long as they are performing to the coach's liking, everything will go well. Often, this becomes their identity. **"I am a football player!"** Many times, as humans, we define our identity by what we do or what we are good at. The problem with this approach to life and sports is that things can happen to an athlete that can take this all away. For instance, an athlete can get injured, or somebody better can come along, or they can get old and can no longer perform. If their identity is based on what they do and their performance, their identity is shattered.

Illustration:

Former NFL quarterback Carson Wentz once shared how difficult it was when injuries and criticism threatened his career. Early success brought praise, attention, and a sense of worth tied closely to performance. But when injuries

sidelined him and public opinion turned, he wrestled deeply with identity.

Wentz later testified that God used that season to remind him that his identity was not “starting quarterback” or “franchise player,” but **child of God**. When football was taken away—or diminished—his faith anchored him. His confidence returned not because of performance, but because his identity was rooted in Christ, not the scoreboard.

This illustrates how performance-based identity eventually collapses—but identity in Christ remains unshaken.

For the Christian, identity is not defined by our performance and nor by what we do. In fact, Jesus says that he's the one that created us, and he loves us.

And because he loves us, he accepts us. That gives us significance. As believers, our identity is in Christ. The Bible says that in Christ we are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Because our identity is in Christ, we are always solid. God always loves us. Nothing that we can do will take away that love. We are always accepted, and this motivates us to give our best for Him: to perform for His glory and to please Him. But whether we perform or not, he loves us, and our identity is solid in him.

Take Away: Have you ever struggled with who you are? Have you ever compared yourself to others or felt like you haven't performed well enough? God loves you just as you are. What truth will you tell yourself from today's lesson? Who can you share this with that will help keep you accountable?

(Coaches – Find an object lesson or a phrase to share with your players to remind them that they have their identity in Christ).

An Audience of One

Colossians 3:17 - "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Question: Have you ever thought about your motivation for playing a sport? Have you ever made it too serious? Or put the focus on you?

Explanation: You have probably seen a professional athlete in a big game who appeared to be playing for his own glory. Whenever he did something spectacular, he would point to himself or show off. It was clear that he wanted the accolades of the crowd or that his name would become widely known. He wanted people's praise. Maybe there have been times when you wanted people's praise on the recreation field.

In today's passage (Colossians 3:17), Paul tells us that everything we do, we should do it for the Lord not for man. Not for ourselves.

Illustration:

Tony Dungy, Super Bowl-winning head coach of the Indianapolis Colts, was widely respected not only for winning games but for how he coached. Dungy consistently emphasized character, humility, and honoring God above public praise.

After winning Super Bowl XLI, Coach Dungy made it clear that his ultimate goal was not championships, but faithfulness to Christ. He often said he coached with the understanding that **God—not fans, media, or owners—was his true audience.**

His leadership showed that success means little unless it is done to honor the Lord. Dungy's career reflects what it looks like to live and lead for an Audience of One.

Take Away: This week we learned that we should play and live for God, and not for man. What is one thing that you can change in your actions and in your heart that will help you live for God and not for man? Who is one person that you can share this with that will help keep you accountable and help you with your desire to live for God, and not for man?

(Coaches – Find an object lesson or a phrase to share with your players to remind them that they are to play for God and not for man.)

*Adapted from Athletes in Action, Audience of One Bible study

What is Winning in God's Eyes?

2 Timothy 4:7 - "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

*1 Corinthians 10:31 - "So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do it all for the glory of God.**"*

Question: So, what is winning? How do you define winning and how does the world define winning? How do you know if somebody won?

Explanation: Winning. That's always a big topic. The world defines winning as the one that has the highest score at the end of the game, but I wonder if that's how God defines winning. Let's look at what God has to say about winning.

In today's verses, Paul says "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race; I have kept the faith." Here Paul uses two sport metaphors. First, with "fighting the good fight," he is referring to boxing or wrestling. To fight a good fight, you must play by the rules and give it your best. Then he says, "I have finished the race." It is easy to start a race, but it takes preparation, motivation, perseverance and determination to finish a race. In other words, giving your best effort. Lastly, "I have kept the faith." Paul is saying that he kept the right motivation and kept his eyes on Jesus. He did his very best.

Illustration: Nick Foles, quarterback for the Philadelphia Eagles, delivered one of the most iconic Super Bowl performances in history during Super Bowl LII. After winning the game and being named Super Bowl MVP, Foles stood on the biggest stage in football and said, "All glory to God."

Foles later explained that winning, in God's eyes, wasn't about statistics or trophies, but faithfulness—giving his best effort and trusting God with the outcome. He frequently

shared that success and failure were both tools God used to shape his character.

His words and actions reflected a biblical definition of winning: finishing strong, keeping the faith, and giving glory to God regardless of the result.

(Coaches, add a personal story here, in lieu of my example, that illustrates the point).

Paul also says to “**do all to the glory of God.**” This means seeking to honor God in giving my best in effort and attitude. Having an attitude of Christ being magnified instead of having everyone’s eyes on self.

Winning to God is 1) Doing the best you can do, trusting God for the results. And, 2) Doing everything for the glory of God. If you do these two things, **you are a winner**, no matter what the score says!

Take Away – Be a winner for Christ and do all for His glory.

What do you have to change in your heart or your attitude to be a winner in God's eyes? Who can you share this with who will keep you accountable?

(Coaches – You may add your own example or use an object lesson.)

The Dangers of Idolatry in the Sports World

Matthew 6:33 - "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things will be added to you..."

Exodus 20:1 - "I am the Lord your God...you shall have no other gods before me."

Question: Have you ever put something more important than God in your heart? Has a sport ever become more important than God?

Explanation: The Bible says that you should have no other god before God and that you should not bow down to any idols. Now, most of us when we hear that verse, we think, "Well no, I don't have any idols. I don't have any other gods." But the reality is, sometimes we make other things more important than God...especially sports! What is an idol? An idol is "whatever your heart clings to and relies upon for power, control, prestige, approval, dependence, and achievement – apart from God."¹ It is anything that takes the place of God in our heart. God says we're supposed to worship only Him. There is nothing else that we should set our hearts on that becomes more important than God.

Illustration: Former NFL quarterback Matt Hasselbeck once shared that early in his career, football consumed his heart. Success brought attention, and attention slowly became his source of worth. He realized football had subtly become more important than God.

God used a season of struggle to expose that football had become an idol—something he depended on for identity and satisfaction. Hasselbeck later repented and committed to keeping Christ first, openly stating that football was a gift, not a god.

This football example shows how easily sports can move from a blessing to an idol—and why God must always remain first.

God tells us that we should love Him above everything else. Jesus said you should “love the Lord of God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the greatest commandment.” (Matthew 22:37-38)

Take Away: Have you ever let something become more important to you than God? What is something you can do to remind you to keep God first? Is there a prayer that you could pray before a game? Is there a verse you could read? You could write it on a piece of tape to put on your jersey or on your wrist. Who can you share this decision with that will help keep you accountable to keep God first?

*Adapted from *Athletes in Action*, Audience of One Bible study

Pleasing God in Life & Sport

2 Corinthians 5:9 - "We make it our aim to please him."

Hebrews 11:5 - "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him."

Question: Have you ever wondered if your life was pleasing to God? To your parents? To your friends? Maybe it is something you never thought about.

Explanation: We don't know if Enoch was an athlete, but we do know that he is only one of two men in the Bible that went straight to heaven without dying. Before Enoch was taken up to heaven, the Bible says that he was a man that pleased God.

Quote: "If you please God, it doesn't matter who you don't please. But if you don't please God, it doesn't matter who you do please!"

Illustration:

Russell Wilson has often spoken about his desire to please God rather than people. Early in his NFL career, critics questioned his height and leadership ability. Instead of seeking approval from the media or doubters, Wilson focused on honoring God through preparation, humility, and faith.

Wilson has repeatedly said that his goal is not simply winning games, but pleasing God in how he lives, leads, and competes. His mindset reflects the truth that a life pleasing to God carries eternal value—far beyond wins and losses.

Take Away: God wants you to please Him in how you live and how you play your sport. What is something in your life that you can change to please God? What is an action you can take that will please God? Who can you share this with that will keep you accountable?

(Coaches – You may add your own example or use an object lesson.)

Overcoming Fear in Sports & Life

Isaiah 41:10 - "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Question: Have you ever experienced fear in a sports game? In the days or hours before it began? How does fear prevent you from glorifying God in your sport?

Explanation: Fear is a problem for a lot of us. Fear of failure. Fear in disappointing others (coach, friends, parents). Fear can paralyze us emotionally and physically. In today's verse, God tells us not to fear because He is with us. Alone, maybe you can't do it. But you and God together, you can. He takes your hand.

Illustration: King David in the Bible was not afraid of what others thought of him. After a great victory over the Philistines (the enemies of Israel), David brought the Ark of the Covenant (which held the 10 commandments) to Jerusalem. He was so excited about worshipping God and what God had done for Israel that David was dancing in the streets, not caring what anyone else was thinking, besides God.

Former NFL quarterback Alex Smith experienced one of the most severe leg injuries in football history—an injury doctors feared could cost him his leg, or even his life. Fear could have ended his career and crushed his spirit.

Through months of recovery, Smith leaned heavily on his faith, trusting God one day at a time. Against all odds, he returned to the NFL and played again. Smith later shared that God's presence gave him strength when fear tried to take over.

His journey demonstrates that courage is not the absence of fear—but trusting God in the middle of it.

Take Away: God says, “Fear not...I will strengthen you.” You do not need to live in fear. What will you change in your mindset to help you live in trust and not fear? Who can you share this with that will keep you accountable?

(Coaches – You may add your own example or use an object lesson.)

Playing for God's Glory

*1 Corinthians 10:31 – “So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do it all for the glory of God.**”*

Question: What does it mean to do all for the glory of God? Does it mean we should be any less competitive? What is the opposite of playing for God's glory?

Explanation: Have you ever seen a football player score a touchdown and then point to himself or to his name on the back of his jersey? He is basically saying, “Look at me! I am great! Give ME your applause.” In today's Bible verse, Paul tells us to **do all for the glory of God**. What Paul is saying is that our heart's desire should be to perform for God and for His honor, not to bring honor to ourselves. He is really talking about our motivation behind what we do.

Illustration: After winning Super Bowl LIX, Jalen Hurts publicly declared, “Through the highs and the lows, Jesus is greater than all of them.” Despite criticism earlier in his career and intense pressure at the highest level, Hurts consistently pointed attention away from himself and toward Christ.

Whether winning championships or facing setbacks, Hurts' posture reflected a heart committed to God's glory rather than personal praise. His example shows what it looks like to compete fiercely while remaining humble—playing not for self, but for the glory of God.

(Coaches, you may add a personal story here, in lieu of or in addition to this example, that illustrates the point).

Paul says to “**do all to the glory of God.**” This means seeking to honor God in giving my best in effort and attitude. Having

an attitude of Christ being magnified instead of having everyone's eyes on self.

Take Away: How can you glorify God in your sport? What is something tangible that you can do or say to bring glory to God? Who can you share this with who will help keep you accountable?

Three Circles Evangelism Guide:

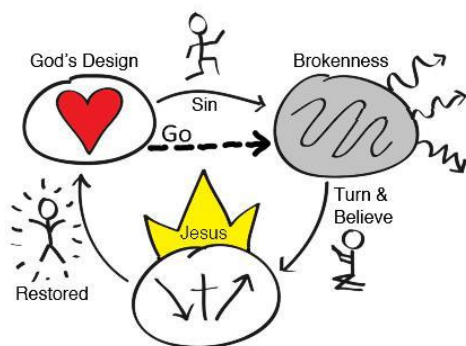
How to share the gospel

Introduction

This guide is designed to help Christians share their faith by incorporating a tool called three circles evangelism. This tool provides a method of turning everyday conversations about brokenness into everyday conversations about Christ. The goal of '3 Circles' is to equip Christians to share their faith with non-Christians.

Overview of 3 Circles

- This tool helps Christians to share the gospel using three simple circles. These represent (1) God's Design, (2) Brokenness and (3) the Gospel.



They also illustrate how accepting and

submitting to Jesus will grow faith and lead to God's perfect design.

- "Three Circles" is something that people easily understand.
- All you need to have is a pen and paper, or napkin, or hand!
- The method provides quick answers to common questions of faith:
 - What was GOD's DESIGN?
 - How did we depart from God's Design through SIN?
 - Can anyone escape BROKENNESS and what does BROKENNESS feel like?

Explaining the gospel using three Circles

1- Draw a circle and label it “Brokenness”.

Draw several squiggly arrows out from it and looping back to ‘Brokenness’. We are trying to show no matter what we do it just boomerangs back to brokenness.



Conversation Example: *“We live in a world of brokenness, full of hurting people hurting each other. We try escaping brokenness by focusing on career, gaining money, overachieving, drugs, gambling, or alcohol. But all this just leads to greater brokenness. I overachieved, and had a long string of failed relationships. But in the end I just felt more pain.”*

2- On the left, draw a second circle, and write “God’s Design” above.

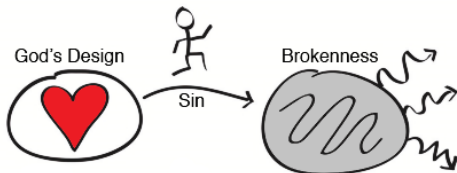
Conversation Example:

“Brokenness was not God’s original design! God’s design was perfect, like Himself, with no brokenness present.” (Draw heart to symbolize God’s love).



3- Draw an arrow from God’s Design to Brokenness and label it “Sin”.

Conversation Example: *“Each of us has rebelled against God and walked away from His perfect design. The Bible calls this sin, and this leaves us in brokenness. Are you familiar with the concept of sin? Do you see this in your own life?”*

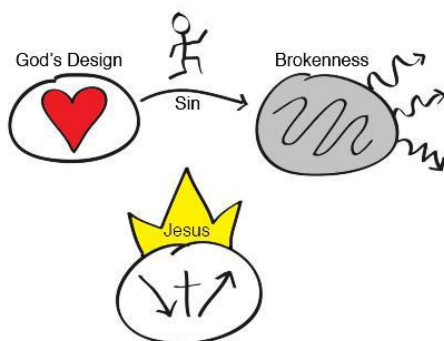


4- Draw a third circle below and between the first two (forming an upside-down triangle of circles) and write “Jesus” above it.

Conversation Example: *“God saw we could not escape our brokenness on our own, so God demonstrated his love towards us!”*

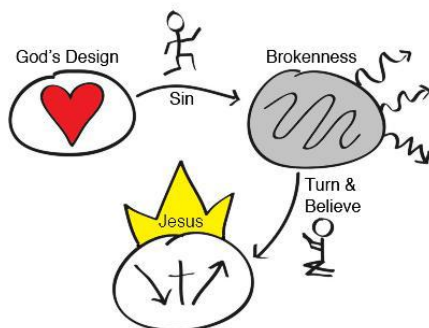
Now draw a down-arrow below Jesus’ name inside the circle. *“God sent Jesus to the earth. Jesus was perfect and lived a perfect life, because He was God.”*

Next draw a cross next to the down-arrow. *“He suffered a horrible death on a cross to take our sin upon Himself.”* Next draw an up-arrow next to the cross. *“Then Jesus rose again proving that He has power over death! He’s alive!”*



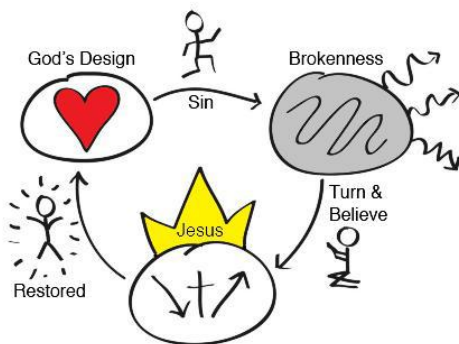
5- Draw a line from Brokenness to Jesus, draw a king’s crown and write Turn and Believe (or follow).

Conversation Example: *“Jesus tells all people to repent and **turn** from your sins. He also tells us to **believe** that He died for your sin and that God raised Him from the dead and to follow Jesus as king of your life. Jesus promises that if you do that you will be forgiven and restored back to God’s design!”*



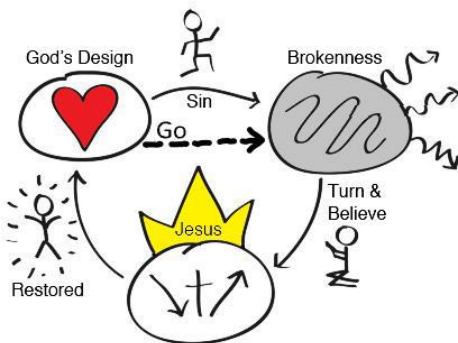
6- Draw a line from Jesus to God's Design and label it "Restored."

Conversation Example: *"If we turn and believe in Jesus we can leave this world of brokenness and be restored into a relationship with God and pursue His design."*



7- Draw a line from God's Design to Brokenness and write "Go" above it.

Conversation Example: *"More than that, God then sends us back into this 'Brokenness' to tell others about the good news of Jesus Christ."*



8- After the Diagram is drawn

Conversation Example: Ask them, *"Where do you see yourself? Are you in God's perfect design or are you currently in brokenness?"*

Their answer to this will help you understand where they see themselves in relation to God and give them an opportunity to respond to follow Jesus. This can be followed by your testimony.

Group Practice

Break off into pairs and practice the "Three Circles" evangelism method on each other.

Be sure to tell us about your opportunities!

Fill out the:

Gospel Conversation Form

