

# ARMOR OF GOD



THE LORD MAKES US STRONG



## Devotion Guide for Coaches

### OVERVIEW

We have an opponent who is out to win. We can't see him, but we know he is real by the frustration and harm he brings. Fortunately, God is always on our side. He gives us protection. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul describes how we can remain strong against the devil's evil plans when we put on all of God's armor.

*Ephesians 6:10-20* This season players will learn why we need God's armor, how each piece of God's armor protects us, and how to put it all on. Our prayer is that players will learn to depend on God's mighty power as they begin to understand God's truth, are made new by his godliness, comforted by his peace, stand confident in their faith, accept the gift of salvation, learn from God's Word, and recognize the power of prayer.

### SAY • THINK • ACT • PRAY

Engage players with a relatable story or question. Encourage them to ponder the Bible verse\* and what it would look like on the field, at home, school, or anywhere in their daily life. Challenge players to take action demonstrating their faith in real ways. Use the prayer suggestion, your own prayer, or ask for a volunteer to pray to close the devotion.

*\*New International Reader's Version unless otherwise noted*

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# TEAM SPORTS devotions

1

## Protective Gear

Ephesians 6:10-11, John 10:10, 1 John 4:4



**What kinds of gear protect you when you play football? What could happen if you didn't wear protective gear?**

"Put on your seat belt," Dad reminded his kids as they piled into the car to go to practice. Clicking sounds indicated Mark and his little sister had fastened their seat belts. "Why do we always have to put on our seat belts?" Mark's sister whined. Mark answered, "The road can be dangerous. If we got into an accident, our seat belts would help protect us." Mark's sister pulled her arm out of the shoulder strap. "No," Mark instructed, "You have to wear all of the seat belt. Otherwise you won't be fully protected." Dad chimed in, "That's right. Don't ever ride in a car without wearing your whole seat belt." Mark's sister put the shoulder strap back over her arm.



***Finally, let the Lord make you strong. Depend on his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor. Then you can remain strong against the devil's evil plans.***

Ephesians 6:10-11



**What makes the road dangerous? How does a seat belt protect us?** Roads can be dangerous. We are glad we have seat belts to protect us. Playing football can be dangerous. We are glad we have gear that protects our bodies. The Bible warns us about another danger in the world—the devil. The devil's name is Satan. He is always looking for ways to ruin things for us. The Bible says Satan tries to trick us. He also tries to take good things away from us. *John 10:10* But God's power is stronger than the devil. *1 John 4:4* Because God loves us, he gives us protective gear. The Bible calls it God's armor. If we wear it, our hearts and minds will be protected from the devil.



**Is it wise to tackle your opponent without wearing a helmet and pads? (No) Why not?** In the same way, it's not wise to tackle the devil's evil plans without God's armor. This season, we are going to learn about God's armor. We will learn how it can protect us and how to put it on.

### PRAY

***Heavenly Father, you are good and give us good things. We know Satan tries to ruin the good things you give us. Thank you for giving us armor for protection from the devil's evil plans. Teach us about each piece of your armor and how to put it on. We love you Lord. Amen.***

# TEAM SPORTS devotions

2

## Had a Bad Day

Ephesians 6:13a, Romans 13:13b-14a



Last season, Thomas was the best receiver on the team. He practiced hard and enjoyed showing the younger players how to improve their grip strength and ball control. He was kind, helpful, and had a great attitude. He even got an award for good sportsmanship and kindness. This season, a new receiver named David joined the team. David's skills were better than Thomas'. David got a lot of attention from the coach. Thomas began to feel jealous of David. He began to think mean thoughts about him. He wanted to say mean things about David to his friends. Thomas was in a bad mood and didn't want to help the younger kids anymore. His jealousy ruined the joy he used to have playing football.



***So put on all of God's armor. Evil days will come.***

Ephesians 6:13a



**Why did Thomas feel jealous of David? How did it change what Thomas thought, did, and said?** Some days it is easy to think, do, and say the right thing. Other days Satan makes it much harder for us. God helps us get ready for the days when Satan is working against us. Wearing God's armor helps us push away mean thoughts and keeps us from saying hurtful words. God's armor protects us from losing our joy.



The Bible says, *"Don't fight with each other or be jealous of anyone. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ as if he were your clothing."* Romans 13:13b-14a Wearing Jesus is like wearing love, joy, kindness, and forgiveness. **How would Thomas change if he put on love, joy, kindness, and forgiveness?**

## PRAY

*Heavenly Father, we want to be more like Jesus. Help us think like him, act like him, and talk like him. If we feel jealous, help us be comforted by knowing you love us the way we are. We can love others because you first loved us. 1 John 4:19 Amen.*

# TEAM SPORTS devotions

3

## Ready to Run and Score

Ephesians 6:14a, John 8:31-32 & 44, John 14:6



Think about a football uniform. **What is the purpose of the belt?** (it holds the pants up and secures the pads) The belt keeps a player's pants secure when he's running. They also hold in place the hip pads and rear pads.



***So remain strong in the faith. Put the belt of truth around your waist.***

Ephesians 6:14a



Putting on God's armor begins with the belt of truth. God wants us to put his truth all around us so we will be ready when the devil tries to cause us problems. To put on the belt of truth, we need to know God's truth. **How do we know God's truth?** Jesus taught us how to know God's truth. He said, *"If you obey my teaching...you will know the truth. And the truth will set you free."* John 8:31-32 **How do we learn what Jesus taught?** We can read the Bible to learn what Jesus taught about who God is and how much he loves us. Jesus also showed us how much God loves us by dying on the cross for us. Wearing the belt of truth around us is like wearing God's love around us. **How can knowing how much God loves you help you trust him?**



**Can you trust a truthful person? Why? Can you trust a liar? Why?** Jesus tells us Satan is a liar. Jesus called Satan the father of lies and said there is no truth in him. *John 8:44* Satan tells nothing but lies. **Who always tells the truth?** Jesus always tells the truth because he is truth. Jesus said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."* *John 14:6* We can trust Jesus because he always tells us the truth. When Satan tries to trip us with lies, God's truth frees us. **How do we put on the belt of truth?** We read the Bible and obey what Jesus taught. We memorize Bible verses so we can remember God's truth when we need it.

### PRAY

*Heavenly Father, you are truth we can trust and depend on. Protect us from being tripped up by Satan's lies. Help us understand your truth better by reading the Bible and obeying Jesus' teaching. Amen.*

# TEAM SPORTS devotions

4

## Heart-Guard

Ephesians 6:14b, Proverbs 4:23



**When football players wear shoulder pads and rib guards, what are they protecting themselves from?** Football players wear shoulder pads and rib guards to protect their chest area from a hit or tackle. **Why is it important to protect this area of the body?** This part of the body contains many necessary organs. An injury to this area, especially the heart, could be very serious or even deadly.



*Put the armor of godliness on your chest.*

Ephesians 6:14b



In Bible times, a Roman soldier wore chest protection called a heart-guard. It was made of metal and fastened to the soldier's belt. **What comes to mind when you think of the heart?** We think of an organ that beats and pumps blood to our bodies. We also think of warm happy feelings like love and tenderness. We might think of a broken heart like hurt and disappointment. Our heart is the part of us that connects to God and other people. It is an important part of us and needs to be protected. Proverbs 4:23 says, *"Above everything else, guard your heart. Everything you do comes from it."* Satan attacks our feelings causing us heartache. For example: Let's say you give your brother the silent treatment by not talking to him. **What feeling is Satan attacking?** (Anger) Let's say you avoid your friends because someone made a joke about you. **What feeling is Satan attacking?** (Embarrassment) Let's say you lie and tell your mom you missed the bus because there is a bully on the bus. **What feeling is Satan attacking?** (Fear) When Satan attacks our feelings, he can do damage to our heart.



Satan wants to ruin things for us with the people we care about. But we can keep Satan away when we do things that connect our heart to God's truth. **How can you connect your heart to God when you feel angry?** (You can forgive others the way God forgives you.) **How can you connect your heart to God when you feel embarrassed?** (You can remember how wonderful you are in God's eyes.) **How can you connect your heart to God when you feel fearful?** (You can ask God for help because he is always with you.) God's truth tells us that regardless of what we have ever done that was selfish, mean, or wrong, God still loves us. When we believe and trust in Jesus and ask him to forgive us, he does. He takes away everything we did that was selfish, mean, or wrong. To God, we look perfect, clean, and brand new. When we put the armor of godliness on our chest, we will want to be like Jesus. We will want to do things God's way instead of our way. **What is one thing you do God's way instead of your way?**

### PRAY

*Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us your godliness. Help us want to do everything your way instead of our way. Help us forgive others when we need to. Help us be kind and loving. And help us get along with our friends and family. Amen.*

# TEAM SPORTS devotions

5

## Traction To Move

Ephesians 6:15, Psalm 34:4, 2 Timothy 1:7, Revelation 21:4, Isaiah 26:3



**What are on the soles of your football cleats?** (plastic or rubber molded spikes) **Why are they made that way?** (they keep us from slipping on grass and turf) Getting ready for the game means putting on your cleats. These special shoes give players better traction to move forward because the spikes dig into the ground.



*Wear on your feet what will prepare you to tell the good news of peace.*

Ephesians 6:15



**If you were walking along, what kind of things would stop you in your tracks?** You might stop in your tracks if you realized you were lost. Or if the lights suddenly went out and the room became totally dark. **Why would these things make you stop in your tracks?** When we aren't sure where to go, worry and fear can stop us in our tracks. We need the protection of God's armor on our feet to keep moving in the right direction toward God.



Way back in the beginning, Satan tricked Adam and Eve, causing them to slip up and turn away from God. Our friendship with God became broken. Since then, people have worried and felt afraid. This was not the way God meant for it to be. But there is good news because God promised he would not let it stay that way. He made a plan to make everything right again. Jesus saved us from everything we are afraid of. Because of him, our friendship with God is made whole again. We have God's peace and the power of God's spirit to win over worry and fear. And one day, God will get rid of all worry and fear once and for all when Jesus returns. *Psalm 34:4, 2 Timothy 1:7, Revelation 21:4* Trusting in God gives us perfect peace. *Isaiah 26:3* **How can you change your worry into trust?** Our opponent, Satan, wants us to worry about our problems and forget about God. When we think about God instead of our problems, we have traction to move forward with peace. **How does trusting God give us peace?**

## PRAY

*Heavenly Father, no matter how scary things seem, we will remember that you are the God that gives us perfect peace when we trust you. Help us think about you instead of our problems. Help us pray when we need your help. Help us move toward you. Amen.*



# TEAM SPORTS devotions

6

## Bring the Heat

Ephesians 6:16 & 3:17-19, Psalm 136 & 1:1-3, Matthew 6:25-34 & 11:28-30



**What does “bring the heat” mean?** Bringing the heat means bringing your best game and trying your hardest to play well and win the game. **How do you defend against an opponent who wants to “bring the heat” against you?**



*Also, hold up the shield of faith. With it you can put out all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*

Ephesians 6:16



**What is faith?** If I told you we have a football game in two days, you would show up to the football field wearing your uniform with all your gear ready to play. That's faith. You counted on the promise that we had a game and trusted that I told you the truth. When you say you have faith in Jesus, you're saying that you trust and believe that his death on the cross really did pay the price for your sins. You follow Jesus and count on God's promise to take you into Heaven when you die. When you have a shield of faith, you believe in God's promises. **What are some other things God has promised us?** God promises there is no way he will ever stop loving us. *Psalm 136* God promises that if we do things his way, everything will turn out well. *Psalm 1:1-3* Jesus promises we don't have to worry because if we do things his way, he will take care of everything we need. *Matthew 6:25-34* Jesus promises that when we feel tired and worn down by our troubles, he will give us a place to rest. *Matthew 11:28-30*



**How does our opponent, Satan, bring the heat?** Satan tries his hardest to make us to question if God really loves us. Satan wants us to think things will be better if we do them our own way instead of God's way. Satan wants us to worry that we can't depend on God. He wants to wear us down and make us give up. **How can we be ready to stand strong against Satan's fiery lies?**

## PRAY

*Let's pray a prayer found in Ephesians 3:17-19: Heavenly Father, I pray that Christ will live in our hearts because of our faith. I pray that we can understand how wide and how long and how high and how deep your love is. Christ's love is greater than any of us can ever know. But I pray that we will be able to know your love. Then we can be filled with the fullness of God. Amen.*



# TEAM SPORTS devotions

7

## Head Out Confidently

Ephesians 6:17a, Hebrews 5:9, Colossians 2:6, 2 Thessalonians 2:13



**What piece of equipment in football protects your head? (helmet) Why do we always wear our football helmet?** A helmet saves our head and brain from injury and harm. Without a helmet, you could be knocked out and even die. Wearing a football helmet can save your life.



***Put on the helmet of salvation.***

Ephesians 6:17a



The Bible tells us to wear another kind of helmet. This is the helmet of salvation. **What is salvation?** Salvation is being saved from harm. If you get hit in the head, your helmet is your salvation because it saved you from harm. When we do things our way instead of God's way, we are putting ourselves in harm's way. Doing things our way instead of God's way is sin. Jesus came to save us from the harm of sin. That means Jesus is our salvation. **How did Jesus save us from sin?** Jesus, who always did things God's way and never sinned, knew that sin leads to serious harm and death separated from our Heavenly Father forever. God couldn't bear the thought of that, so he sent Jesus to die on the cross for us. Jesus died so we wouldn't have to. The most amazing part is that three days later, after Jesus died, he came back to life. He walked around and talked with his friends. More than 500 people saw him alive again. This proved Jesus had power over sin and death. When we choose to follow Jesus, he saves us from the power of sin and death. The Bible says, *"Eternal salvation comes from him. He saves all those who obey him."* Hebrews 5:9 When we believe and trust in Jesus and live our lives for him, we will live safely with him forever.



**When you have the protection of a helmet on your head, do you feel more confident that you won't get hurt?** Wearing the helmet of salvation gives us confidence in the one who saves us. The Bible tells us, *"You received Christ Jesus as Lord. So keep on living your lives in him."* Colossians 2:6 God gives us the helmet of salvation to keep on living our lives in Jesus. The Holy Spirit helps us believe the truth about God and care about others the way Jesus did. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 **How can we put on the helmet of salvation?** We put on the helmet of salvation by following Jesus and doing things the way he did. This leads to a forever life with our Heavenly Father who is good, caring, generous, and powerful.

### PRAY

*Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus to save me from serious harm and death. Help me follow him, doing things your way instead of my way. Amen.*

# TEAM SPORTS devotions

8

## Carrying the Ball High and Tight

Ephesians 6:17b, John 10:10, Matthew 4:1-11



Turning over the ball is a huge deal. When you have the ball, you need to protect it by carrying it high and tight. The five points of pressure or contact helps you carry the ball high and tight. The opponent wants to force a turnover. The five points of contact keep the ball secure and help prevent a fumble and turnover. **What are the five points of contact?** 1. hand 2. forearm 3. bicep 4. across the chest 5. pointer finger on the tip of the football



***And take the sword of the Holy Spirit. The sword is God's word.***

Ephesians 6:17b



Our opponent, Satan, is trying to force a turnover of our faith. He tries to steal and kill and destroy. *John 10:10* But God gives us something to prevent a turnover of our faith. He gives us the sword of the Holy Spirit. **What does today's verse say is the sword of the Holy Spirit?** (God's word) God's word is the Bible. In the Bible is God's truth. We want to carry God's truth in our mind and heart like we carry the ball in our arm and hand. There are points of contact we can have with God's word: 1. read or hear it 2. understand it 3. memorize it 4. remember it 5. speak it out loud. **How many points of contact do you have with God's word?**



The Bible tells us how Satan tried to force a turnover with Jesus. Jesus, who had the Holy Spirit in him, went out into the desert. There, Jesus stayed for 40 days without any of the things that make us comfortable, including any food to eat. Jesus knew his Heavenly Father would take care of him. The devil, who was also in the desert, tried to turnover Jesus' faith that God would take care of his needs. Knowing Jesus was hungry, the devil said that if Jesus was really God's son, he should prove it by turning stones into bread. But Jesus quickly knew the right verse to say. Jesus said, *"It is written, 'Man must not live only on bread. He must also live on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"* Then, Satan tried to turnover Jesus' faith that God loves him. Satan dared Jesus to jump off the highest point of the temple to prove his Father would save him. Again, Jesus quickly knew the right verse to say. He said, *"It is written, 'Do not test the Lord your God.'"* Finally, Satan tried to turnover Jesus' faith that God is enough. Satan promised to give Jesus power and riches from all the kingdoms of the world if he would bow down and worship Satan. Jesus quickly knew the right verse to say. He said, *"Get away from me, Satan! It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve.'"* Jesus knew God's word, understood it, memorized it, remembered it, and spoke it out loud to Satan. **Why should we learn how to do what Jesus did?**

### PRAY

***Heavenly Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Teach us how to use it the way Jesus did so the enemy can't turnover our faith in you. Amen.***

# TEAM SPORTS devotions

9

## Communicating on the Field

Ephesians 6:18a



How do players communicate with each other on the field? How does it help us win the game?



*At all times, pray by the power of the Spirit. Pray all kinds of prayers.*

Ephesians 6:18a



**What does a football player do to get ready for the game?** A football player is ready to play when he is wearing his uniform and has all his gear. But when he gets out on the field, he won't be ready to win if he doesn't communicate with the other players. Like a football player, we can put on all of God's armor, but we won't win against the devil without communicating with God.

**How do we communicate with God?** (prayer, talking/listening to God) Praying to God is like sharing everything with your best friend. We can just be ourselves and talk about anything we want. We can talk out loud or pray silently in our hearts. God loves to hear all our prayers and is never too busy to listen. **How can we pray at all times?** We can't talk to God every minute of the day because we need to do things like eat, play, do school work, and practice football. But we can remember God when we do all these things. We can thank God for the good things he gives us. We can play fairly. We can be honest and do our best work. We can ask for help when we're not sure what to do. We can listen in our heart for God to give us an answer. God is always with us. Remembering him at all times is like praying to him at all times.



**What kinds of prayers should we pray?** (all kinds of prayers) We can pray out loud in front of people or silently in our hearts. We can pray a memorized prayer or a quick one-word prayer like "help", "please", or "thanks". We can pray with eyes closed or open, kneeling, standing up, sitting or lying down. We can tell God how much we love him. We can pray for ourselves and for each other. We can trust him to hear us and do what is best for us. **What would happen if we forgot to pray?**

### PRAY

*Heavenly Father, we want to remember to pray by talking to you, listening to you, and remembering you at all times. We can tell you everything because you love us no matter what. Help us listen for you to speak to our hearts and be willing to do what you tell us. Amen.*

# TEAM SPORTS devotions

10

## Make a Bold Move

Ephesians 6:20



What do you think of when you hear the word “bold”?

What is a “bold” move in football?

What does it mean when you have a “bold” thing to say?



*Because of the good news, I am being held by chains as the Lord's messenger. So pray that I will be bold as I preach the good news. That's what I should do.*



Ephesians 6:20



Imagine some of your teammates are laughing when a player trips and falls down. **What is a bold thing for you to do—laugh along with your friends or comfort and encourage the player who fell?** Imagine some of your friends make jokes about a kid praying before he eats his lunch. **What is a bold thing for you to do—go along with them or say that you believe in prayer, too? How does that show your faith? What message does that send to your friends?** We can preach the good news boldly through our words and actions. We are God's messengers. He wants us to boldly share the good news of truth and life.



**What is the good news?** God made the whole world and everything in it. And that means he is in charge of it. God is good and loving and gave us life so we could have a wonderful forever life with him. But instead, we turned away from him. We do what we want to do instead of what God wants us to do. We say “no” to God and act as if we're in charge. This is called “sin” and it deserves punishment. But because God is good and loving, he sent his own son, Jesus, into the world. Jesus never said “no” to God and didn't deserve to be punished like the rest of us. But Jesus took the punishment for us. The good news is that when we believe, trust, and follow Jesus, God forgives us for saying “no” to him. We can have that wonderful forever life with him after all. Living God's way is the only way to truly live. **Are you ready to make a bold move? Do you want to believe, trust, and follow Jesus? If so, pray with me...**

### PRAY

*Heavenly Father, I'm sorry I've said “no” to you and acted as if I was in charge. Please forgive me. I want you to be in charge of my life from now on. I believe that Jesus died so I can live. Change my heart and give me faith to trust and follow Jesus because he leads me to you. Amen.*