

Soccer Devotional

Season 1

Integrating sports, life, and truth

Sport(s): Soccer

Ages: 6-14

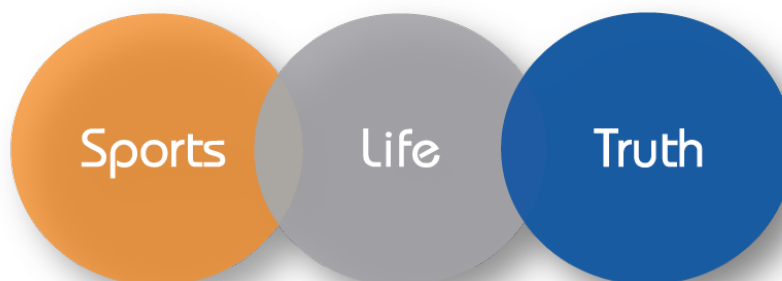
Overall Application:

These devotionals outline a soccer drill to be used during practice. The coach will ask leading questions to engage the players in a life-topic. The goal in each week is to tie in a Biblical truth pertaining to the topic discussed during practice.

How to use 3D Devotionals:

In our efforts to bring Christianity and Sports together, historically, Christians established a devotional time during practice breaks or half times of games. Oftentimes, the stories or passages used during these times didn't have much to do with the sports, and, even if they did, tended to feel like the biblical truths were being **injected** into the sports realm. Unfortunately, these efforts often led players and coaches to disconnect sports from biblical truth and build a “compartmentalized view” of life.

3D Devotionals come from a passion to live all of life for God's glory and, therefore, an approach to **integrate** sports and biblical truth. We designed 3D Devotionals to be used in the flow of practice, utilizing the drills and skills emphasized in each particular practice setting. Ultimately, the goal of 3D Devotionals is not to just learn truth but for coaches, players and parents to learn a new way of thinking that integrates **SPORTS – LIFE – TRUTH** and can be used far beyond their time in sports.



Week 1 - "GETTING ACQUAINTED"

Purpose – Get to know your players, showing them interest and concern.

Soccer/Icebreaker:

At the beginning of practice – play The Name Game.

- 1) Have each player give his/her name and tell you the athlete they would most like to be and why.
- 2) You, the coach, now try to go around and name each of the players and the athlete he wants to be like – this may be challenging.
- 3) Have each player go around and try to name all the players with the hero's name.

During a water break, find out from your players:

- Where they go to school
- Whether they have brothers and sisters
- What they like to do in their free time

Tell them a snippet of your story – you will do more of this through the season. This would include:

- Where you grew up
- Where you went to school
- Whether you have brothers and sisters
- What you liked to do in your free time when you were their age

**As you can see, the first week is very much an introductory week. The goal for week 1 is just to get to know your players and have them become comfortable with you as well as become comfortable sitting down and doing a devotional time.*

Week 2 – “SERVE OTHERS!”

Purpose – To see the importance of giving away what we value (serving).

Soccer Skill: Passing

Drills you could use – Stationary passing between 2 players; passing in a circle of all players with a player in the middle trying to steal the ball; passing while advancing down the field between two players.

- When you are dribbling down the field, we all want to keep the ball. Why?
- We want to score. Why? It is fun.
- But if we keep the ball to ourselves, eventually the other team will figure it out and swarm around us and keep us from scoring.
- The way to stop that from happening is to learn to pass.
- When we pass, we give the possibility of our joy to score to another person. We share the ball and give them our joy.
- When we do that, we make their joy our joy.

Life Principle: – Greater joy comes from sharing rather than keeping for ourselves.

- Sharing is a part of all of our lives. You practice this at home with your brothers and sisters when you share your (fill in blank or ask them – could be candy or Wii or some game)
- If you keep it all for yourself, then you don't let them have any joy. This is called selfishness.
- Just like in soccer, if we do this in life, we eventually lose our joy.

Biblical Truth: – Sharing with others is serving – by making their joy our joy.

- God calls this kind of sharing serving – when we want to share ourselves with someone else so they get happy/joyful.

- The greatest person who ever lived, Jesus Christ, said this about himself. “The Son of Man didn’t come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45
- Jesus didn’t live his life to keep what he had, to keep dribbling the ball so he could score. He passed the ball, shared what he had--his life-- so we could experience the greatest joy – that of having a relationship with Him and all it promises.
- With Jesus as our example, let’s keep practicing passing and remember what this opportunity presents – a chance to keep for ourselves or share the joy with others.

Week 3 - “SERVING IN CONFIDENCE”

Purpose: – To have confidence that I will be taken care of as I serve others.

Soccer Skill: - Advancing the Ball by Passing (rather than dribbling)

Activity 1: Passing mechanics

In pairs pass the ball through a marked out gate using the inside of your foot to control (receive) and to pass the ball.

Various commands given by coach.

Coaching points of pass:

1. Use the inside of your foot
2. Standing foot next to the ball
3. Strike the middle of the ball
4. Following through
5. Shoulders square (point to your target)
6. Tempo/speed of play

Drills you could use – All Touch Game

Form two teams to play a mini soccer game with the following parameter:

- Every player on the field has to touch the ball (pass and receive) before a goal can be scored. If any player is left out in touching the ball, the goal does not count.

- Encourage players to pass the ball to their teammates.
 - Help players look for teammates who haven't touched the ball.
- There are two ways to move the ball down the field. What are they?
Dribbling, passing.
 - Which one is faster? (Passing if good passing, Dribbling if poor passing, but good dribbling)
 - We want to learn to pass effectively to advance the ball down the field quickly. For this quick advancement, we need to be willing to give up the ball and serve our teammates by passing the ball to them.

Life Principle: - We need to trust that we will be taken care of as we serve others.

- One of the biggest obstacles to serving others is the fear that no one will take care of me. We see this on the soccer field – players either think their teammates will not pass the ball to them, so when they get the ball they keep it to themselves.
- The question we ask is “If I give up the ball and pass it to my teammate, who will make sure they pass it to me?”
- The answer is that the coach will make sure that they pass it back to you and to other players. You have to trust that your coach will make sure that the player will pass the ball.
- When you believe that your coach will make sure that your teammates will pass the ball to you, then you will pass to them.
- We do the same thing in life. We don't trust that other people will look out for us and we become selfish/self centered and do not serve others. Can you think of an example where you acted selfish or didn't serve others?
 - Getting upset because you didn't get what you wanted.
 - Not sharing your toys with your siblings.
 - Pushing someone out of the way so you could be first in line.

- Just like the coach will look out for us on the soccer field, there are other people who will also take care of us as we serve others. Can you name them?

(God, parents, teachers, friends, etc.)

Biblical Truth: – God has given us many people that will take care of us and the promise that he himself will take care of us.

- This truth – that God will take care of us – is mentioned in the Scriptures in Isaiah 41:13.
- It says: “For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.”
- This is a promise from God that he will take care of us and help us.
- We don’t need to be afraid that no one will take care of us, because God promises that he will.
- We need to trust that God will take care of us as we serve others.
- So let’s remember this as we think about passing the ball to the other players and as we live our lives.

You can serve others because you can trust that God and others will take care of you. This is a promise from God.

Week 4 - “JUST ASK”

Purpose – To recognize the proper position for receiving – a soccer pass and in life.

Soccer Skill - Receiving a pass

Drills you can use – In pairs, pass the ball through a marked out gate using the inside of your foot to control (receive) and to pass the ball.

Coaching points for receiver:

1. On your toes – Preparation
2. Cushion the ball absorbing its speed
3. Keep the ball moving

4. Guide ball to either side of your body to create an angle for your return pass

- We have been talking about making a pass and what is involved in that. Now we want to talk about the other end of the pass – receiving a pass from a teammate.
- Just as there are good mechanics in passing there are good mechanics in receiving a pass. Today we are going to work on the proper position to receive.
- The position I want you to take is what I call an “ready position” – where you are slightly crouched and your weight is on the balls of your feet/ toes.
- You are not standing straight.
- Your weight is not on your heels
- Now everyone get in that “ready position”
- Let’s pass and work on being in this proper position, this “ready position” to receive.

Life Principle: - We need the “ready position” of asking for what we need.

- In life we need this “ready position” to receive from others as well. We need the proper position to be shared with, to be served.
- To think about that proper position in life, I want you to think for a moment about soccer and your teammates. If you are the one passing to them, what attitudes do you not like to see them have? (1. “PASS ME THE BALL” yelling all the time, a demanding to be shared with 2. “You better pass me the ball. I am the star. I am better than you. I deserve for you to pass me the ball” - expectant, sense of entitlement.)
- In life these two attitudes are the improper position, the opposite of the “ready position” to receive from others. When we have these it diminishes the desire of others to share with us.
- What is the ready position in life? It is to ask, humbly, openly.
- What would that look like in soccer? (“Hey, pass it to me, I am open!” Note the difference in tone from demanding and heart from expectant)

- What would it look like in life? (“Hey, sis, could I have a turn on the Wii?”
Hey brother, could I have some of that popcorn?”)
- Do you think that “ready position is hard or easy in life? (Hard – they could say no)

Biblical Truth: – God wants us to have this “ready position” with him as our Father.

- Now this “ready position” for people to share with us, to give us what we want, applies also to God.
- He wants us to come to him with this humble asking – not demanding or expecting from him, just ask openly.
- Jesus talked about this when he said to his followers in Matthew 7:7,8. He told those followers “Ask and it will be given you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”
- To emphasize how God responds to this “ready position”, he goes on to tell them this example – “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”
- What does Jesus says God the Father will do to those who come to him in this “ready position”? (Give them what they ask.)
- This is his heart – to be generous in answering our requests so we don’t need to demand from him. Just ask, humbly.

Week 5 - “SOFT FEET, SOFT HEARTS”

Purpose: – To understand the importance of “cushioning” when receiving.

Soccer Skill – To have the receiving foot be “soft” when receiving a pass.

Demonstration –

- Have them all stand before you in the ready position

- Slightly lift their receiving foot off the ground
- Let that foot swing free, loose
- Have someone pass you the ball, show them how to let their foot be soft absorb the ball, keep it close – like it hit a sponge or a pillow
- Show them how you don't want them to receive – with a “hard” foot – where the ball bounces away like it hit a wall

Drill - In pairs pass the ball through a marked out gate using the inside of your foot to control

Coaching points for receiver:

1. On your toes – Preparation
2. Cushion the ball absorbing it's speed
3. Keep the ball moving
4. Guide ball to either side of your body to create an angle for your return pass

- Ready position
- Lift your receiving foot off the ground
- Relax the lower part of your leg
- Imagine a soft foot to take in the ball – to keep it close

Life Principle: We need to take in the ways people serve or share with us.

- When we think about a soft foot for receiving a pass, I want you to think about a soft heart when someone shares with you or serves you in life.
- You remember we talked about the two wrong attitudes for receiving – demanding (PASS THE BALL) or expectant (I deserve for you to pass me the ball.)
- In life, this hard heart attitude would be like a hard foot when receiving a pass – what someone shared would just bounce off our hearts.

- Someone with a hard heart would say things to themselves like “of course they should share;” “After all, look what I did for them.”
- What would a soft heart look like? (Every time someone shared or served, they would genuinely be thankful-- grateful, knowing they didn't deserve what they were getting.
- You might imagine how this would look on the soccer field – (every time a player received a pass they would say under their breath, “Thanks” and move on with the game).

Biblical Truth: - God wants us to have soft hearts that respond with gratitude.

- Who would you rather play with – players with soft or hard hearts?
- Who would you rather share with or serve – friends with soft or hard hearts?
- God knows this and this is why he tells us to be thankful. In Ephesians 5:20 it says “always give thanks to God the Father for everything.”
- Who does it say to give thanks to? (God our Father – remind them of the previous lesson about asking God humbly as our Father in heaven)
- What are we to be thankful for? (everything – every time God shares with us, gives us what we ask for)
- Can you give me some things God has shared with you recently or requests he has answered that you can be thankful for?
- How about giving you things like ... (your life, parents, friends, clothes food, this team, etc)
- I want you to go out and when you are receiving a pass, practice saying “thanks” under your breath. Practice this soft heart so that you are on the lookout in life for the things to be thankful for and you avoid this demanding or expectant hard heart.

Week 6 – “MOVE”

Purpose: For players to understand the importance of movement and how it pertains to their growth as a player, person, and child of God.

Soccer Skill - Movement

Drill – After you pass the ball to your partner move around the cone, then return to your original position to receive the ball once more.

- Complete the passing technique before moving, however do not stand and admire
- Communication – teamwork, help your partner
- Speed of movement (fast and slow)
- Tempo and preparation

Conclusion – Good passing teams are full of players who can space the field and work to get open. This kind of movement lends itself well to keeping possession of the ball and creating scoring chances.

Life Principle – Don't be too easily satisfied (or don't be satisfied by the status quo).

- In life, it's easy to be lazy. In other words, it's comfortable to live on past accomplishments and not strive to be better (this is similar to making a great pass in soccer and staring in amazement at what you've done instead of continuing to move). It's easy to stay the same. Improving your life can be hard work! Don't let hard work keep you from your potential.
- A great example of this truth is shown in school. Most adults will tell you that they regret not trying harder in school. For example, they will admit settling for a 'B' when could have worked harder and achieved an 'A.' Maybe you've experienced that too?

Biblical Truth - Following Christ requires an active, moving, and vibrant faith.

- James 2:17 says, "...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." It's not enough for us to rest in our faith alone. In other words, it's not enough to be comfortable in receiving Christ as your Savior. God desires for us to grow and to mature. He wants us to move! Through this movement, we grow in our knowledge and faith of Him.

Week 7 - “MOVE PURPOSEFULLY”

Purpose: – For players to understand the importance of movement and how it pertains to their growth as a player, person, and child of God.

Soccer Skill – Movement

Drill you could use

After you pass the ball to your partner, move around the cone, then return to your original position to receive the ball once more.

- Complete the passing technique before moving, however do not stand and admire
- Communication – teamwork, help your partner
- Speed of movement (fast and slow)
- Tempo and preparation

Conclusion – Last week we talked about how good passing teams are full of players who can space the field and work to get open. Obviously, movement is a very important part of this spacing but this week we want to clarify what this movement is. It’s not just any movement but rather purposeful movement.

Life Principle – Don’t be too easily satisfied (or don’t be satisfied by the status quo).

- Last week we discussed how easy it is to be lazy. Can anyone remember the example of laziness we discussed in school? We talked about how it can be easy to settle for a ‘B’ when an ‘A’ is possible with hard work. Working to get an ‘A’ is not just an example of hard work but of purposeful movement. What do I mean when I say purposeful movement? In soccer, movement is more than not staying in one place. Rather, it’s about looking to see where you are at, where the defenders are at, where there is open space, where the goal is at, etc. Moving to find an open space, moving to get open for your teammate, and moving around the defenders are examples of purposeful movement. Purposeful movement in soccer then becomes more than just our body moving but rather our body moving in conjunction with vision and purpose.

- Can you think of other examples in life of purposeful movement?
Examples where you don't just do something but you do something with intent? Examples at school or at home?

Biblical Truth – Following Christ requires an active faith but also one with vision

- Last week we discussed James 2:17 which says, "...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." With that verse in mind, I want to introduce a new verse this week.
- Colossians 3:1-2 says, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." What do you think Paul means when he says "set your heart and mind on things above?" I think this is a good example of purposeful movement with our faith. If we set our hearts and minds on Christ this will help us to have a godly vision for our actions (James 2:17).
- So, if we are to set our hearts and minds on Christ to get vision and we know we are to act on this vision because otherwise our faith is dead, then what does this "purposeful movement" look like in our faith? What can we do to make sure our faith isn't dead? (Examples could be reading Scripture, praying, being generous, serving others, etc.)

Week 8 - “Everyone Is Important”

Purpose: – To see the reality that everyone is important – you to others and others to you.

Soccer Skill – Advancing the Ball by passing (rather than dribbling).

Drill - Who’s the Leader?

3 Players, 3 cones

Place the Middle Player about ½ field

Place the Left Player on the left about ½ way to the goal from the Middle Player

Place the Right Player on the right about ¾ up towards the goal from the Middle Player

Middle Player starts the ball and can only touch it once and pass it forward to the player on the left who must have to move up to get the ball. The player on the left passes the ball in the same manner to the player on the right – leading them with the pass and then that player puts it in the goal.

Accomplishes: passing, teamwork and spreading the field.

Comments

- There are two ways to move the ball down the field. What are they? Dribbling, passing. Which one is faster? (Passing if good passing, dribbling if poor passing but good dribbling) We want to learn to pass effectively to advance the ball down the field quickly. For this quick advancement, we need two things – good positioning/spacing and then good passing.

- Good spacing is not getting too close together. Why is this important? (Makes it much tougher to defend - one defender can’t stop two passers well spaced.)

- Good passing is passing long enough and far enough ahead of them to run to the ball without having to stop.

Life Principle: We need others to effectively accomplish tasks in life. Others need us to effectively accomplish tasks in life.

Comments during drills –

- There are two common misconceptions people have – ‘I don’t need other people,’ and ‘other people don’t need me.’ We see this on the soccer field

– players either think the team doesn't need them or they don't need the team.

- In the drill we just did, we learned the opposite of those two ideas - we need each other to move the ball down the field. We need the team and the team needs me.
- When you believe that and you don't have the ball, you work on spacing.
- When you believe that and have the ball, you pass the ball to your teammate.
- Life is just like that drill. We have things in life where we need others and others need us. Can you think of an example of this in your family?
 - o You need your parents to provide clothes, food, etc.
 - o Your parents need you to help around the house – do chores.
- How about at school?
 - o You need the teacher to teach you – pass along the information like a soccer ball.
 - o She needs you to cooperate and listen to receive that information.

Biblical Truth: - God has designed us to work together – needing others and others needing us.

Comments during drills –

- This truth – others need us and we need others – is mentioned in the Scriptures in 1 Corinthians 12.
- The writer Paul says it this way. “Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.” Here he is using our physical body as the illustration.
- How many body parts can you mention?
- Which ones are important? (They all are)
- Paul then addresses those who think they are not needed or important and says, “and if the ear should say, ‘because I am not an eye, I don't belong to the body.’” Or “because I am not an eye the body doesn't need me.”

- Paul then says, “God has arranged the parts in the body every one of them as he wanted them to be.” They are all important. All with a significant contribution.
- Then Paul addresses those who think they don’t need others by saying “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you.’ On the contrary those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.” This is the way God made it.
- We need each other. Others need us.
- So let’s remember this as we think about advancing the ball down the field or taking on any task or challenge in life.
- You are important to others. They are important to you. This is the way God designed us.

Week 9 – “The Goal of the Game”

Purpose: for players to realize the greatest goal of life.

Soccer Skill – looking for scoring opportunities

Drill – Counter Attack

Divide team into two teams.

Set up two small goals in corners of the field opposite the big goal (about 10 yards in from mid field)

One team attacks the big goal

Other team attacks the two small goals

Change ends about every two minutes

When the team is about to dribble through either of the two small goals teams change directions.

Goal is to always be looking for scoring opportunities

Comments during drills –

- In this drill, what we are trying to work on is “looking to score” – looking for scoring opportunities.
- When you see them, you shoot, you try to score.
- This scoring is what we are working toward – all our passing, dribbling, spacing. All is designed so that when one of you has a scoring opportunity-- a good shot, you take it.

Life Principle – It is often very confusing/difficult to determine what it means to score in life.

Comments during drills –

- It is clear in a soccer game what it means to score – you put the ball in the goal.
- But in life it sometimes isn’t quite so clear. What do you think it means to score in life? (interesting to see what they say – I would imagine it will be some things like “make good grades, cooperate with mom & dad/family but interesting to see. If they have a difficult time answering, this illustrates the idea.)
- Do you notice the difference in our answers? Which one is right?
- How do we know the best or right answers to what it means to score in life?

Biblical Truth - God has made it clear that when we please God we score in life

Comments during drills –

- To answer that question, let’s go back to soccer. Who determine what it means to score? (inventor of the game)
- So who determines what it means to score in life? (Inventor of life) And who is that? (God)
- Just like the soccer inventor, God has told us what it means to score in life.
- He did this in the Scriptures.
- If you were to sum all that up in one sentence it would be – to score in life is to live in a way that pleases God. That makes him happy.

- How do we do that? By obeying what he has said to do in life.
- Can you think of some things he has told us to do?
- Doing these things, makes him happy.
- When we make him happy, we score in life.
- That is why the apostle Paul says, "I make it my goal to please God." (2 Corinthians 5:9)
- In 1Corinthians 10:31 he tells us "Whatever you do, do it all to make God happy." (My translation)
- So remember, the goal in soccer is to score. The goal in life is to make God happy.

Week 10 - "A Defensive Attitude"

Purpose: for the players to have a mindset that equips them to get rid of the things in life they need to.

Soccer Skill - Defensively moving the ball away from the goal, in the opposite direction of coming toward you.

Drill – Clean Your Room

Tell the players they need to think of themselves on defense.

Define an area in the field (may be the area around ½ the field)

Put about a 4 foot area in the middle with cones – dead area

Players are divided into two teams one on each ½ of the dead zone

Players are not allowed in the dead zone

Each player has a ball

They are to use the inside of their foot and pass the ball to the other side (change to kicking technique as you play the game) inside foot/outside of foot, left foot only, etc.

The team is to try and kick as many balls on the other teams side as possible

They are not allowed to retrieve any balls from the dead zone in the center.

You can have extra balls for this drill

Works on quickness to the ball and power behind the kick

Comments –

- In this game, imagine you are on defense.
- On defense, when the ball comes to you, you want to get rid of it. Get it out of your area. Move in the other direction, away from your goal.
- To do that, you don't just kick wildly.
- You first control the ball (trap it) and then kick hard and accurately away from your area.

Life Principle - We need to remember who we are and recognize those dangers that come our way.

Comments during drills –

- In soccer if you are on defense, you need to think of the ball as something you need to get rid of, move away from your goal.
- Life has certain things like that that you need to get rid of. Can you think of some things that are bad for you --that when they come you need to rid yourself of them? (drugs, lying, cheating, but probe more for attitudes as well like anger, selfishness, jealousy)
- What if instead of thinking you were on defense, you thought you were on offense. How would that change your attitude toward the ball? (Want to keep it, not get rid of it.)
- Life is just like that. To rid ourselves of bad things, we first need to remember who we are and where we are.
- Second, we need to be aware of the dangers that are coming at us. Like the ball coming at us in the drill, we need to recognize those things that we need to rid ourselves of.

Biblical Truth – God provides us with truth about what we need to get rid of and the help to do so.

Comments during drills –

- God has told us what those things are in the Scriptures. One example where he did that is in Colossians 3:8 – But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, saying hurtful things to others, telling bad things about others, and all filthy language. (My translation)
- These are just some of many things we need to get rid of in our lives.
- The Bible calls these things we need to get rid of sin. When we are offered the opportunity to do these things, we call that temptation. (Give an example)
- Learning about these things is one of the reasons we read the Bible. To see the dangers, the balls coming toward us on defense, so we can get rid of them.
- But God doesn't just tell us what to get rid of and then leave us alone to do it by ourselves. He has promised to come alongside us and help us when we face these temptations, when we need to get rid of the "ball." He says whenever we are tempted, he will provide "the way of escape" so that we can get rid of it, we can kick the "ball" away from us and our goal.
- So when you are facing something that you need to get rid of, ask God for help. He promises he will help you.
- One of the ways he does that is to give you teammates and a coach in life just like on this team. If you have something in your life these days that you are having a hard time getting rid of that you know you should – like playing defense but not doing it very well – then let me know. I would love to talk to you about it and pray for you. (You may want to refer to one of the previous lessons where we emphasized the need for others. Getting rid of bad things is one of those places we need others – God and people.)