

Welcome to Sports & Art Camp!

We are so excited you will be joining us in our devotions this week. Whether you're attending Sports Camp as a volunteer, or joining in prayer and devotions from home, we're excited to give you a glimpse of what our campers will be learning as we walk through God's Word together each day.

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Day 1 - Aim for the Goal

Devotional

Read Acts 9:1-9

Whether it's learning a new language, scoring high on a test, or buying a house, setting goals helps us achieve the things we want in life. While aiming for these goals and striving towards them demonstrates hard work and perseverance, we want to make sure we are aiming for the goals God wants us to achieve.

Paul—also known as Saul—had grown up learning about and living by God's laws. While that was a good goal to aim for, he veered off track when it came to believing Jesus was the promised Messiah and Savior of the world. As we see, Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus changed his goal and then began to change his heart. Ultimately, this experience gave Paul a new mission, along with the encouragement that God would help him press on through all the challenges ahead.

We have that same encouragement! When we aim for the goal of following Jesus and sharing His gospel more than anything else in our lives, others will see our example, hear our testimonies, and be pointed to the ultimate prize of eternal life with Jesus. No matter the challenges that may arise this week at camp, take comfort in God's promise to help us press on. Then, you can share that encouragement with the campers on your team!

Context:

- What does God's word teach us about pressing on?
- Are you focused on the goal of following Jesus and sharing His gospel?
- What is one practical way you can encourage others to persevere this week?

Meditate on: Philippians 3:13-14

Philippians 3:13-14 is the memory verse for this week at camp. Strive to read it every day and memorize it along with your campers. How will you use it as an encouragement to press on while you serve the Lord this week?

Contemplation:

As you prepare for Team Time, start by thanking God for inviting us to know Him through His Son, Jesus. Pray that the campers will come to understand God's love for them and how they should aim for the ultimate goal in life: following Jesus. Pray for the Lord to help you set an example of this theme as you interact with kids at sports camp.

Day 2 - Boldly Go

Devotional

Read Acts 9:10-31

Fear is a powerful motivator. As a natural part of being human, fear can call people to action in a heartbeat or stop people right where they stand. Boldness is one response to fear, and that is why we are focusing on it as our daily theme today.

As we see throughout Paul's story in Acts 9, the early Christians were being persecuted for their faith. Considering the context, imagine how scary it would be to press on and boldly proclaim the gospel in the face of imprisonment or death! This is what Ananias, Paul, and the other disciples were up against. After Ananias boldly healed Paul as God commanded, Paul escaped those who sought to kill him in Damascus, only to put his life in danger again by traveling back to Jerusalem.

Through a man named Barnabas, the disciples in Jerusalem learned that it also takes boldness to forgive someone who has wronged you. Offering and asking for forgiveness is a hard command to obey, but it is so important if we are striving to live like Jesus. Thankfully, as Romans 5:8 says, "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Knowing that we are loved and forgiven should give us joy and the confidence we need to boldly share this good news with others! When considering our weekly theme, **Press On**, also think about the importance of boldly going and boldly forgiving as we strive to become more like Jesus.

Context:

- How is boldness an important aspect of perseverance? What is the ultimate source of our boldness (Isaiah 41:10)?
- Why does forgiveness require boldness? How have you noticed this playing out in your life?
- What scares you about sharing your faith with campers this week? How can you practice boldly going into this?

Meditate on: Acts 9:28

Acts 9:28 says, "So he [Paul] went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord." How will you boldly share the gospel of Jesus with your campers this week?

Contemplation:

Go to the Lord in prayer. Ask Him for boldness to connect relationally with your team, that there might be an opportunity to share about Jesus. Pray for the Lord to open their hearts to the good news of Jesus' promise to forgive us of our sins, and that He would help you be ready to answer their questions.

Day 3 - Stay the Course

Devotional

Read Acts 16:16-40

If you have ever participated in an obstacle course, you know that they are created with obstacles for you to overcome, thereby demonstrating a feat of strength, endurance, patience, and/or other skills. As we look at aspects of pressing on this week, we'll see that today's theme emphasizes perseverance despite hardships.

As Paul demonstrates throughout his missionary journeys and imprisonments, relying on the Lord's strength is the best way to show perseverance. His admirable attitude of faith was seen during his prison experience with Silas in Philippi. Not only did they sing hymns of praise in their lowest moment, but when they had the chance to escape after the earthquake, they chose to stay to save the lives of the jailer and his family.

Staying the course is a critical element of perseverance, especially in the Christian life. When the enemy tries to prevent us from fully trusting in and relying on God, it can feel easier to give in to sin than to press on through the difficulty. Thankfully, we can look to Jesus' example of endurance for encouragement, even this week! If you're reading this devotional on Day 3, you're just about halfway through camp. This is the point where the excitement begins to wear off, and fatigue or discouragement can set in. Let today's theme be a reminder of our Savior's power to help us press on through hardships.

Context:

- What is so important about pressing on **through** difficulties rather than avoiding them?
- How have you seen your faith grow during trials in your life?
- How will you encourage your team to stay the course this week?

Meditate on: James 1:2-3

According to this passage, God uses trials to refine, shape, and grow our faith and steadfastness. How can you demonstrate this with a good attitude at camp so that others will see your example of pressing on?

Contemplation:

Spend some time in prayer for your group of children. Today might have difficulties you don't anticipate, so pray for the Lord's help to have an attitude of perseverance, trusting that God has a plan for these trials. Then, pray that the kids on your team will understand who Jesus is and the amazing gift of eternal life He offers!

Memory Verse

Philippians 3:13-14

But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Day 4 - Always Be Hopeful

Devotional

Read Acts 27

The world views hope as more of a wish, saying things like, “I **hope** it doesn’t rain today,” or “I’m **hopeful** that my basketball team wins our next game.” While this kind of hope can help us press on in a temporary sense, Jesus’ resurrection and the promise of eternal life give Christians a richer hope that helps us persevere through even the most dire circumstances.

Despite his arrest in Jerusalem, Paul’s ministry continued with a promise from the Lord that he would testify before Caesar in Rome. Paul’s hope in that promise was challenged during a terrible storm that arose on the seas as he traveled. Their ship and cargo were destroyed, but Paul pressed on and was able to share the hope of God’s promise with the soldiers and crew, resulting in their lives being spared. He had a higher hope—one rooted in God’s faithfulness—that was bigger than wishing for safety and deliverance. To press on, we should emulate this hopefulness by looking past our often negative circumstances and focusing instead on the hope of eternal life with Christ.

Before your Team Times today, intentionally prepare to share about the hope you have in Christ with your campers. Think and pray about ways to connect with your group because this might be the first time some of them have heard the gospel of Jesus! For others, it might be the hundredth time. Regardless, make every effort to encourage your group with the joy and hope that comes from His saving grace.

Context:

- Think of a team or individual who has set a good example of always being hopeful. What do you admire about them?
- What are some truths from God's Word that help you remain hopeful when your circumstances seem dire?
- How can you show your campers the great joy and hope that comes from putting their faith in Jesus for salvation?

Meditate on: 1 Peter 1:3

In this verse, Peter writes about a "living hope" we have through Jesus' resurrection. What an amazing gift! How will this be on display in your words and actions today at camp?

Contemplation:

As you pray over your team today, praise God that He offers us eternal hope through His Son, Jesus. Pray for the ability to set a good example for your campers of what it looks like to have faith in Jesus. Then, pray for their hearts to be prepared to receive the full gospel message and accept the invitation to join God's family today.

Day 5 - Finish Well

Devotional

Read Acts 28

Nobody wants to be remembered for starting a race but giving up before they reach the finish line! Finishing well means having a good attitude—even when the race is hard—and focusing on what lies ahead instead of what is behind us. When runners are training for a race, they are told not to look back or worry about what is going on right around them, but to look toward the prize or finish line.

That's what Paul writes in our memory verse this week: "But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and **straining forward to what lies ahead**. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14, emphasis added). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul ministered to the people in Malta and Rome, pressing on to share the gospel even as he waited for what was still to come. Keeping his eyes fixed on the ultimate finish line of eternal life was what helped him maintain a missional attitude and finish well.

When our hearts are changed and we receive a new life in Jesus, we should follow Paul's example by spending our whole lives focused on living out God's word, sharing the gospel of Jesus, and serving others. As it's the last day of camp, today is a natural "finish line," so encourage your campers to press on with a good attitude and think about how they can continue living for Jesus after camp is over. .

Context:

- What kind of race(s) are you running in your life right now, and why is the finish line important to focus on?
- Think about the day you gave your life to Christ. How has your view of the “finish line” changed since then?
- What are some practical ways to live out God’s Word, share the gospel of Jesus, and serve others?

Meditate on: Philippians 3:13-14

If you have yet to memorize the verse for this week, finish well! Show your campers that you care about memorizing God’s Word by reciting it to them today, and let Paul’s encouragement to press on resonate in your thoughts and actions as you finish camp.

Contemplation:

Thank God for allowing us to have new lives when we put our faith in Him and pray for your campers who may have accepted Jesus this week. Then, ask Him to help you finish camp well and be an encouragement to your campers as they go home, that they might lean on Him to help them press on in their lives.

Sinner's Prayer

"Lord Jesus, I know I've done wrong things. I believe you died and rose again to pay for my sins. I trust in you as my Savior. Thank you for forgiving my sins and making it possible for me to be with God forever in heaven. Amen."

Other Gospel Sharing Tips

Keep the tips below in mind as you share the Gospel with campers.

- Talk to each camper individually about the Gospel at least once during the week.
- Invite campers to read salvation verses for themselves and to personalize the verses
- Don't use a lot of symbolism; children interpret words literally at this age.
- Present the Gospel frequently during the week; children learn through repetition.
- Do not pressure campers to make a decision. Let the Holy Spirit do the convincing.
- Make sure campers understand sin, that we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God and are are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.
- Don't rush. Take time to talk, listen, and ask questions.