



2021-2022

## Coaches Devotional Guide

*Time first with God is the most important part of our game.*



MATTHEWS UNITED METHODIST

## Matthews UMC Youth Basketball League



### STATEMENT OF MISSION & PURPOSE

To provide a recreational opportunity in a Christian environment with emphasis on affirming, encouraging and nurturing teens in Christ's love.



## Welcome to the MUMC 2021/2022 Basketball Season!

**THANK YOU, COACHES!** Thank you for your commitment of time and energy to this wonderful ministry. **The most important thing you will do this season is to build relationships with youth that model the unconditional love of Jesus Christ!** Please enjoy your time here and let's work together to honor God together in the way we reach out to youth in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Core Mission: *"For physical training has some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."***  
**- 1 Timothy 4:8**

The MUMC Youth Basketball Ministry is providing this devotional booklet for you to use throughout this season. Coaches are expected to lead one devotion per week as part of your practice time. We ask that you take 10 minutes at the start or end of every practice to sit with your team and discuss the devotions. Please follow through the devotions in order (they are dated) as each team in the league will be doing the same one each week. At weekend games before the opening prayer, teams will be to summarize the devotional thought of the week and how it may apply to their game that day.

As we're still experiencing, our youth of today are facing a much different world than the one in which we grew up; the pressures they experience are tremendous and ever-changing. Often, the positive experiences they may pursue are overshadowed by threats, fear, and uncertainty. Social media seems to promote that youth should do whatever it takes to get ahead, to make themselves appear more popular or successful, even if it means cheating, lying, or hurting other; that 'the ends justify the means.' Teens & young adults need sound spiritual, moral, and ethical leadership. They must have a clear understanding of honesty, respect, obedience, love, and other foundational truths that will help them stand strong in a world which more and more often is choosing wrong over right and evil over good.

You, as the Coach, have an awesome responsibility & an awesome opportunity! Your players will trust and rely upon you to show them what is right, not only on the court, but with life in general. Your words and actions are precious to them. Whether you realize it or not, God has placed you in this position because He has equipped you for the task. Your knowledge and love of sports is secondary to the real reason you have been chosen - you are called to live in and share the love and message of our Lord Jesus Christ. Take this responsibility seriously and rise to the calling. You can do it – we can do it together!

Please know that the MUMC Youth Staff is here to assist you in any way necessary; do not hesitate to ask. If you need help in presenting lessons or encouraging tips, or have any questions as the season progresses, please call Rob Hunter at (704) 618-5880, text a message, or send him an email.

Together in His service!



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# Devotion Topics

**Nov. 14 - 19**                      **Review of Code of Conduct**

NOTE: No practice week of Nov. 21 - 25

**Nov. 28 – Dec. 2**                **Respect the Ref** (Trusting God's Plan)

**Dec. 5 - 9**                        **Know the Game** (Understanding the Christian Life)

NOTE: First game weekend Dec. 10/11

**Dec. 12 - 16**                    **Practice** (Spending Time Building Your Faith)

NOTE: Christmas Holiday break Dec. 19 – Jan. 2

**Jan. 3 - 6**                        **Listen To Your Coach** (Finding Discipleship)

**Jan. 9 - 13**                      **Wear Your Uniform** (Putting On The Armor Of God)

**Jan. 16 - 20**                    **Score An Assist** (Serving Your Teammates)

**Jan. 23 - 27**                    **Get Off The Bench** (Applying Scripture To Your Life)

**Jan. 30 -Feb. 3**                **Respect Your Opponent** (Loving Your Enemy)

**Feb. 6 - 10**                      **Use The Right Equipment** (Understanding The Holy Spirit)

**Feb. 13 - 17**                    **Season Review**

**Feb. 20 - 26**                    **Season Celebration**

## Review of Code of Conduct

- **During this 1<sup>st</sup> week, go over conduct rules.** "This is what we, as a team, are committing to and will sign together: "

### 2021-2022 YOUTH CODE OF CONDUCT

As a participant in the Matthews UMC Youth Basketball Ministry, I agree to model behavior that is only supportive, encouraging and affirming to all players and visitors. I will be respectful to the referees and coaches at all times, whether or not I agree with the officiating or coaching. I will not display any inappropriate language and will taunt or be disrespectful towards anyone.

I understand that I will be benched or suspended if these guidelines are not followed.

Q: Why do you think we should sign a code of conduct?

Have the youth discuss why a code of conduct is important

*(all playing with same understandings & intentions; promotes fairness & respect; it is what God expects of each one of us)*

Mention & discuss that you & all of the coaches also signed a Coach's Code of Conduct too. *(the importance of holding one another accountable)*

Q: To who will they (and you) be modeling this positive code of contact?

*(to one another, the other team, parents, younger brothers & sisters, to God!)*

Q: What are the 'benefits' for playing with low integrity?

*(possible short-term 'benefits' – winning a game, but long-term...*

Q: What are the likely outcomes of playing (or living) without integrity?

*(loss of respect, trust, friends, opportunities...)*

**READ: Proverbs 28:18** - "Whoever walks in integrity will be delivered, but he who is crooked in his ways will suddenly fall."

**Close in prayer**

# Respect the Ref

## Trusting God's Plan

**Coach's Prep:** This week we'll be talking about the importance of trusting God's plan, even when it seems like He's making a bad call. Begin the devotion time with prayer and ask God to help everyone on the team see the importance of faith in times of doubt.

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### Team Questions:

- Has anyone ever been playing a game and had a ref make a bad call?
- Why did you think it was a bad call?
- How did it make you feel?
- How do you typically respond when things don't go 'your way'?

**Game Prep:** There will be, without a doubt, a time this season when you'll disagree with a call made by a Ref, or missed by a Ref. But we need to understand that referees see things from a different perspective. While sometimes they may miss something, they are also able to see things that we cannot see from a different position on the court.

In the same way, we have to understand that there will be times in our lives where we disagree with what God is doing in our lives. There are lots of times when we think we're doing pretty well on our own; not really having to think about God, just trusting our own judgement, our own perspective. We think that we know what is best for us. The truth is, however, that God has a completely different perspective than us. He can see things we don't see, sometimes things we *don't want to see*, and He knows things we do not. God always knows and wants what is best for us.

### Read: Romans 8:28

*"And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."*

- Is this sometimes hard to remember, or to believe?
- How would our lives look differently if we fully understood & accepted this?

**Game Plan:** This week, our challenge is to understand that while the refs may not always make perfect calls in our perspective, we have to place our faith in that they are doing their best from their perspective. Unlike the refs, God's plan and vision is perfect. He knows what is best for us and always for our good.

### Close in prayer

# Know the Game

## Understanding the Christian Life

**Coach's Prep:** This week we'll talk about what it means to be a Christian? Does it just mean doing the right thing? Being a good person? Reading the Bible? Let's have that conversation...

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### Team Questions:

- Do you remember ever playing a game for the first time, not exactly sure of the rules? What happened? Was it a fun experience? If it was not fun or easy, what would have made it better?
- So, what does it mean to be a Christian? Are there rules to being a Christian? Do you worry sometimes that you don't think you're getting it right?

### Read: John 14:1-2

*"Let your hearts not be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?"*

- What does this passage say about our salvation – where we stand with God when we mess things up?

**Game Prep:** If you were to ask a group of 10 people: 'What is the goal of a Christian life?', how many different answers do you think you'd get? Unfortunately, that means there's a lot of people who are wandering around – on that confusing basketball court of life – not knowing who they are or what their purpose is.

If we didn't know the rules or purpose of basketball, it would be a pretty confusing game. We wouldn't know what to do with the ball, what the lines all over the floor are for, who is supposed to go where, and most confusingly, what we are supposed to do.

Interestingly, living a Christian life is very similar. There are many people who say that they are Christian because they were born into a Christian family, because they go to church, because they read the Bible. Or some people say they are Christian because they do good things.

The good news is that the Bible is very clear. Today's verses tell us that we are saved by grace and it's not because of anything we've done. They also tell us that ultimately our goal is to love God and to love others. The Christian life is actually pretty straight forward.

**Game Plan:** This week, our challenge is to investigate our faith and to take a serious look at what it means to be a Christian. We all have to understand that the goal of the Christian life is to know & love God and to love others.

**Close in prayer -**



# Practice

## Spending Time Building Your Faith

**Coach's Prep:** This week we're going to explore the question: 'why do we practice?' - not only in basketball, but our faith as well. Is it really that important to practice? If we know how to play the game, why practice Likewise, if our faith is only about trusting God, why do we need to read the Bible, why do we need to 'practice' our faith?

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### Team Questions:

- What is the hardest thing you've ever had to prepare for?
- How did you prepare for it?
- How do you prepare for a big test at school?
- So, what happens when we don't work hard at basketball practice?

### Read: 1 Timothy 4:15

*"Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress."*

- What happens when we don't practice a skill – like basketball?
- What can happen if we really *do* really practice our faith?
- Does practice mean we'll get it perfect every time?

**Game Prep:** Every week our team meets to practice. We run drills, play practice games, and prepare for the next game. But what would happen if we didn't practice at all? Would we be prepared for every game? Would we still be a team?

Here is how each of you can be a productive part of the team:

### Read: 1 Thessalonians 1:3

*"For we remember before our Father how you put your faith into practice, how your love made you work so hard, and how your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ is firm."*

**Game Plan:** This week, our challenge is for each of us to spend at least 10 minutes a day reading from the Bible. You can choose your favorite stories or even read the same thing every day if you like. But take time to listen to what God may be saying *to you* and consider how prepared you may be to respond to those who question your hope or your faith.

**Close in prayer -**

# Listen To Your Coach

## Finding Discipleship

**Coach's Prep:** Your devotion this week is to focus the players on the importance of listening to and trusting what the coach has to offer. We'll look at how we can gain wisdom from people who have more life experience than us and why we should all seek to be disciplined by someone who is more mature in their faith.

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### Team Questions:

- So, why do we have coaches?
- Who in your life do you really listen to, look towards for guidance?
- Are there some other areas in your life where having a coach could be helpful?

**Game Prep:** Every one of us has someone we listen to. We listen to our parents, our teachers, maybe our coaches or small group leaders. But why? Why do we listen to them? Sometimes it's because they hold authority over us, but sometimes it's because we trust their opinions, their guidance. And sometimes we are in desperate need of advice and support.

As Christian, we can't expect to get through life alone. Since the beginning of time, people have needed the guidance and direction from others. This isn't because of our sin, but because we are human. We were created to seek and receive direction and guidance from God and from others in our lives.

Because of this, we have to understand that we all need someone in our lives who will tell us the truth and who will guide us towards God; someone who has been working on their relationship with God longer than us and who can help us to see God's truth. And with their 'coaching', you can become a guide to others. Listen to these words from John:

### Read: John 13:34-35

*"As a new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

- In this command from Jesus, does He give us a choice to love others if we truly want to be His disciples?
- What are some practical ways on the court you can show you're working on being a disciple of Jesus?

**Game Plan:** This week, our challenge is for each of us to think about who we have in our lives who can offer us advice and guidance. Thank these people for helping you to find God and ask for their continued help in our spiritual journeys.

**Close in prayer -**

# Wear Your Uniform

## Putting On The Armor Of God

**Coach's Prep:** This week we're talking about the importance of a uniform. Not only does our spiritual uniform identify us as followers of Christ, but it also protects us from the enemy's attacks. Begin today's devotional time by praying that God protects the team from spiritual attacks and that you would all have the boldness to stand and defend what you believe in.

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### Team Questions:

- How seriously do you take getting ready for basketball games?
- What do you have to be sure to do before walking onto the court? (*uniform?*)

**Game Prep:** Why are uniforms so important? What do they do for us? These questions are important not only for you as basketball players, but to Christian as well. Today's passage tells us about the uniform that God gives us as believers.

### Read: Ephesians 6:13-17

*"Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything - to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waste, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the sword of God."*

- Why is it important that we put on the full armor of God?
- What are some ways God's armor can protect and help us?

The cool thing is that *this* uniform serves two purposes : first it identifies us as followers of Christ; it allows others to see the love and forgiveness we have found in Christ. Think about that – people can learn about Christ simply by observing the way we act when we're wearing God's uniform!

Secondly, our uniform protects us! Have you ever felt ill-equipped to tell others about God? Sometimes we think we're not strong enough or smart enough to do what God is calling us to do. We become afraid and we doubt ourselves. Our scripture today tells us, though, that God gives us everything we need to go into battle!

**Game Plan:** This week, our challenge is for each of us to share their faith with someone who isn't or may not be a Christian. Remember, it's never been our job to bring others to faith, but simply to tell others about Jesus – He'll take care of the rest!

**Close in prayer -**

# Score An Assist

## Serving Your Teammates

**Coach's Prep:** Do your players have a problem passing the ball? Often, we find ourselves in positions where we want to take the glory for ourselves – we crave the spotlight. Whether on the court or in other areas of our lives, we love for people to acknowledge our achievements. Today, we'll discuss how we can put ourselves second to others. Begin today's devotional time by praying for clarity and humility for everyone on the team.

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### Team Questions:

- Why is it important to pass the ball in basketball? (*think offensively, defensively, teamwork*)
- What happens when a player just doesn't like passing?

**Game Prep:** So, how often do you call for a pass and not get the ball? You may be wide open, ready for a shot, but your teammate just ignores you; or maybe just doesn't see you. A lot of times, when we get the ball, we get tunnel-vision; it may not be that you're being ignored or devalued, but that the player with the ball is just not focused on the team in that moment. It may be that we've just not yet jelled as a team, anticipating one another's moves; but it also may be that you become convinced that only you know what's best in that moment, or maybe that only you can help the team succeed.

This happens in more places than just on a basketball court. Because we are sinful – most likely not on purpose – we tend to put ourselves first in our lives. Today's passage, though, speaks against this type of attitude. In verse 3, Paul writes "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others greater than yourselves.*" This is one of the most difficult challenges we all face in our lives.

### Read: Philippians 2:1-4

*"Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being unified with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any command sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being in one spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."*

- What does this passage say about serving others?
- What should our attitudes be – on the court & off the court?

**Game Plan:** This week, our challenge is for every one on the team to find a way that he/she can serve someone else on the team. Right now – look at your teammates; choose one of them & serve them in some way this week. And think about how we can live every day of our lives with this kind of attitude.

**Close in prayer -**

# Get Off The Bench

## Applying Scripture To Your Life

**Coach's Prep:** Sometimes coaches have to bench players for all kinds of reasons - injuries, attitudes, fatigue, or sometimes to simply provide equitable playing time. In our lives as Christians, though, there's no excuse for not being in the game. The Bible is clear – it tells us we should apply scripture to our lives and become people who truly follow Christ.

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### Team Questions:

- Have you ever had to sit on the bench during a game for any reason? Do you line it?
- What's the difference between someone being on the bench and being in the game?

### Read: James 1:22-23

*"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, walks away and immediately forgets what he looks like."*

- Why is it so hard for us to *actively* practice our faith? (*urge conversation here*)
- Why is it easier for us to just *go along*, act like others around us, not challenge others when we see them moving in a dangerous direction?

**Game Prep:** There are dozens of reasons for a player to get benched in a game. However, in our lives as Christians there are no excuses for sitting on the sidelines. As we read in today's scripture, it is not enough to just believe in God. Even non-Christians know who God is; even demons know who God is.

We all have to understand that our salvation comes through personally inviting Christ into our lives. When this happens, our lives will be changed. It's not enough to just sit by and watch the world fall apart as we sit and thankfully think 'I'm glad I'm not like that!' Our goal as Christians, our commitment to Christ, is to make Christ known in this world through applying scripture to our lives and going out and making a difference!

### Read: James 2:14-17

*"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."*

**Game Plan:** This week's challenge is to continue reading the Bible in your devotional time, but this time in a different way. Ask yourself – *"What can I do TODAY to directly apply this in my life?"*

**Close in prayer -**

# Respect Your Opponent

## Loving Your Enemy

**Coach's Prep:** Today you're going to talk about the importance of playing the game respectfully. In the same light, you should discuss how we should not only just love our friends and teammates, but also love the people who are hard to care about – our enemies. Begin today's devotional time in prayer, asking God to help everyone to see the people in their lives who they should be loving more.

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### Team Questions:

- What happens when you don't respect your opponent?
- What about when you underestimate them, because you don't respect their abilities?
- When have you ever had to 'turn the other cheek' when playing a game?

**Game Prep:** There will undoubtedly be a time this season when you will be upset by something an opponent does. They may foul you, knock you down, or get away with something the ref doesn't see. How will you respond in these situations? Fight back? Walk away? Apologize for getting in their way? Or do you look for a way to serve them?

The last choice may seem totally crazy – there's no way you'd let someone take advantage of you, mistreat you, disrespect you – and expect to be prepared to 'serve' that person. But that's exactly what Jesus expects us to do. He challenges us to love others in a way that may be absurd to the rest of the world. But He calls on us to love not only the people who love us, but also those who hate us.

### Read: Matthew 5:38-39

*"You've heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also."*

- Do you believe this passage is saying that we should open ourselves for abuse from others? *(No, but Jesus is telling us not to be taunted or pulled into conflict with someone else. If you allow that to happen, you are allowing that person to control you.)*
- So, how does this apply to how we should play our game?

What does God expect of us? How can we do that, be that?! God knows that we 'serve' our 'enemies' when we model Christian character before them. When we do not take personal the taunts or the fouls, but show that we are composed, we are comfortable with who we are – this changes people.

**Game Plan:** So, this week's challenge may push you out of your comfort zone – but right now let's spend a few minutes discussing how we can serve the team we'll be playing this week. Maybe we bring them a snack or drink, we individually wish for them a good game, but we do something to model Christian character. Suggestions??

**Close in prayer -**

# Use The Right Equipment

## Understanding The Holy Spirit

**Coach's Prep:** A few weeks ago we talked about putting on the armor of God as our uniform and being able to stand up against our enemy. This week we're going to talk about another important tool at our disposal as Christians – the Holy Spirit. Often overlooked or misunderstood, the Holy Spirit can offer us comfort, strength, and wisdom in time of need.

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### Team Questions:

- What kind of equipment do you need to play basketball?
- What would happen if you showed up with the wrong equipment – like cleats & pads?

**Game Prep:** When playing basketball, our equipment is essential. Without the right shoes, jerseys, a ball and a goal, we'd all just be standing around with nothing to do. Each piece of equipment serves a different but important purpose.

In the same way, we have many tools available to us as Christians. We have the Bible, books, journals, friends, pastors, and many other things to help us in our faith. However, one of the most important but commonly overlooked tools we have is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God's powers within us – powers which can guide us. It's that feeling we experience when we see someone hurting and know that we should reach out, that guiding force in us to keep us from making poor decisions. The Holy Spirit provides us the guidance, strength, and wisdom essential in our times of need.

### Read: John 14:16-18

*"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him or knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."*

- Who is the Holy Spirit? (*the powers of God in action*)
- What does the Holy Spirit do for us? (*provides strength, encouragement, guidance*)

We're human, we can too easily let our mind go there. But as Paul shows through this passage, while God may become frustrated with how we may stray, God does not stop loving us; He does not give up on us; and He is always with us!

**Game Plan:** This week, thank God for accepting you – as you are. And take some time to investigate the Holy Spirit.

**Close in prayer -**

# Season Review

Open with your honest feelings about the season coming to a close...

Here are some questions for conversation starters; Do not be afraid of some silence at first!

Q: What have you learned about yourself this season?

Q: How have you seen God this season?

Q: What was most encouraging to you?

Q: What was most frustrating for you?

Q: What are some things our team was good at?

Q: What were some areas we could have done better?

Listen to these words from the Apostle Paul:

***Romans 12:9-13:*** "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil;  
cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love.  
Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal,  
but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.  
Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.  
Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality."

Q: In what ways did our team embody this verse?

Q: In what ways could we have done better?

Q: How can we live this out in our everyday lives?

Close with your own comments about the season. Be sure to thank and commend them for their presence and their willingness to grow.

**Close in prayer**