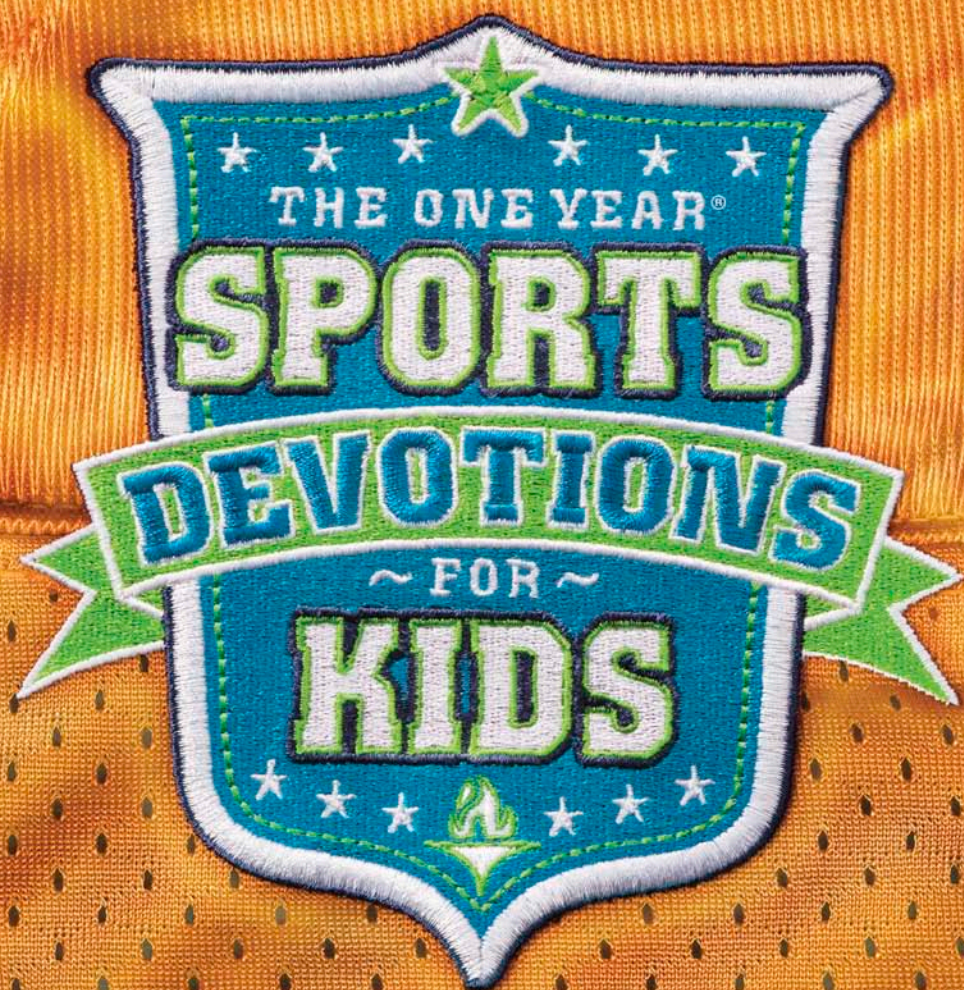


The ONE
YEAR®



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Who wants to go jump in a frozen lake? No takers. Okay, how about a quick dip in a freezing-cold ocean? Still nobody. Hmm.

Well, about 1,000 people joined the Coney Island Polar Bear Club for its annual New Year's Day swim in the Atlantic Ocean in 2010. With so many human popsicles bobbing in 44-degree water, the club president said it was the biggest turnout ever for this New York City tradition!

The Coney Island Polar Bear Club is the oldest winter swimming organization in the United States. Every weekend from November through April, members gather at Coney Island to swim in the Atlantic. Water temperatures start in the low 60s at the beginning of the season, but they have been known to dip down into the mid-30s. The club was founded in 1903 by Bernarr Macfadden, who believed taking a dip in the chilly ocean could keep people healthy.

□□ **What's the Score?**

The annual New Year's Day dip drew quite a crowd. Some came so they could wear a bathing suit and a Russian fur hat at the same time. But the real motivation was to raise money for children with life-threatening illnesses. The 2010 swim brought in about \$25,000 to help kids.

Every year on New Year's Day people talk about making changes for the better. They plan to exercise more, eat healthier foods, and be nicer to their families. Some of these resolutions don't last long. This New Year's Day, come up with a plan of how you can make a difference with the talents and gifts God has given you. In Romans 12:7-8, the apostle Paul says everybody has a gift: "If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously." With your God-given gifts, you can make a positive impact on the people in your life. And you don't have to jump into a freezing ocean to do it.

) **On the Ball**

What are your talents? List some here:

Now think of ways you can use those talents to help other people and to honor God.

> **COACH'S COMMENT**

If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. **ROMANS 12:7-8**

The game shouldn't have been that close. When Nebraska faced Miami in the 1984 Orange Bowl for college football's national championship, the Cornhuskers entered the game as 10½-point favorites.

But with just seconds on the clock, Nebraska found itself trailing 31–30. The Cornhuskers had just scored with a fourth-and-eight play as quarterback Turner Gill pitched the ball to running back Jeff Smith for a 24-yard touchdown. All Nebraska had to do was kick an extra point to tie the game and end the season as undefeated national champions. (This game occurred before the NCAA played overtime in football.) Instead of going for the tie, Nebraska coach Tom Osborne chose to attempt a two-point conversion to win the game.

With the season on the line, Turner looked to again connect with Jeff. The quarterback rolled to his right and threw a pass into the end zone. But at the last instant, a Miami defensive back tipped the ball away to earn the Hurricanes the victory and the national championship!

☐☐ **What's the Score?**

The high-powered Nebraska offense had averaged 52 points a game en route to building a perfect 12–0 record. At one point during the season, the Cornhuskers managed to score seven touchdowns in just 12 minutes. Miami, on the other hand, had lost its season opener, but then stacked up a 10-game winning streak to make it into the Orange Bowl.

With three of the best football players in the country—Turner Gill, Mike Rozier, and Irving Fryar—Nebraska planned to defeat the Hurricanes with ease. But with Mike injured and Miami playing a great game, things didn't go as planned.

Has that ever happened to you? You thought you had a sure thing, but then the outcome you expected didn't happen at all. God wants us to plan and prepare for the future. But as we plan, we should also remember that God controls what happens in our lives. The book of Proverbs reminds us, “No human wisdom or understanding or plan can stand against the LORD.” His plans are best. And his plans never fail!

) **On the Ball**

As you make plans for this year, be sure to include God. Only God walks with you throughout your entire life. Always seek to do his will as you make your plans.

> **COACH'S COMMENT**

No human wisdom or understanding or plan can stand against the LORD. **PROVERBS 21:30**

Maybe you've seen him in McDonald's commercials. A short, dark-haired boy with hands that move faster than your eyes can see. Steven Purugganan can stack cups in record speed. In fact, he set the world record in the individual cycle stack in sport stacking at the Greater Cleveland Ohio Sport Stacking Championships on January 3, 2009.

If you haven't seen this event, a competitor in the cycle stack must begin with 12 cups divided into three stacks. He starts by building pyramids of three, six, and three cups. Then he tears those down and creates two six-cup pyramids. Finally, he rips those apart and forms a 10-cup pyramid with one cup on each side. The last move has the athlete slide those cups down until he ends up the way he started with three stacks of cups.

It probably took you about 25 seconds to read that description of the cycle stack. Steven performed all those moves in 5.93 seconds! (You can see a video of speedy sport stackers like Steven on YouTube or by going to worldsportstackingassociation.org.)

Of course, Steven didn't always stack perfectly. Sometimes his cups fell down. A rule in sport stacking says an athlete must go back and fix his mistakes or his time doesn't count. Steven may have been young, but he knew to always fix his fumbles.

☐☐ **What's the Score?**

Wouldn't it be cool if we could always go back and fix our mistakes? Maybe we'd study harder for that test. Maybe we'd remember to take out the trash like our parents asked. Maybe we wouldn't say the mean comment to the new kid.

The cool thing about the Christian life is that we can be forgiven for our past mistakes when we ask for God's forgiveness. That doesn't mean there won't be consequences for what we've done, but it does mean we don't have to walk around feeling guilty about our former fumbles. When we do something mean or don't follow through on a promise, we have the opportunity to go back to the person we wronged and say, "I'm sorry." The same thing is true about our relationship with Jesus Christ. When we sin, we need to ask him for forgiveness as well. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness." Isn't it cool that God promises to always forgive us when we fumble?

) **On the Ball**

Is there a person you need to find to say, "I'm sorry"? Make a plan to ask for forgiveness.

> **COACH'S COMMENT**

If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 1 JOHN 1:9

Think of your most embarrassing moment. Maybe you accidentally called your teacher “Mom.” Perhaps you laughed so hard at a friend’s joke in the lunchroom that milk spurted out of your nose. Or maybe you tripped over your own feet as you were breaking away for the winning goal in a soccer game.

Those are all embarrassing (and the milk thing is a little gross), but probably not a lot of people witnessed your blunder. So can you imagine what it’d be like to be remembered for a mistake you made in front of an entire nation?

During the 1929 Rose Bowl, University of California star Roy Riegels picked up a fumble by Georgia Tech and ran 65 yards in the wrong direction. Instead of running 30 yards into the Golden Bears’ end zone for a touchdown, Roy got turned around and ran the wrong way in front of tens of thousands of people in the stadium and hundreds of thousands listening on the radio. One radio announcer started shouting, “What am I seeing? What’s wrong with me? Am I crazy? Am I crazy? Am I crazy?”

Roy nearly ran into his own end zone, but teammate Benny Lom caught up with Roy and screamed at him to stop. He did—on the three-yard line, where he was quickly tackled. For the rest of his life, he was known as Roy “Wrong Way” Riegels.

☐☐ **What’s the Score?**

So what does running the wrong way on a football field have to do with following Jesus Christ? A lot, actually. As you grow up, you might see some of your friends making bad decisions and going the wrong way in life. Maybe they’ll use words they shouldn’t. Maybe their actions will be harmful. As a Christian, you need to care enough to say, “Hey, you’re heading in the wrong direction.”

Benny cared enough for Roy to chase after him and tell him to turn around. That’s exactly what God wants us to do. In the Bible, God commands, “Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters” (1 John 4:21). Sometimes showing love means standing up to a friend who’s making a bad decision. Always try to be a good “teammate,” and encourage your friends to go the right way.

) **On the Ball**

Do you know a friend who says he or she is a Christian but doesn’t act like one? If so, you may want to tell your friend to get moving in the right direction.

> **COACH’S COMMENT**

He has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters. 1 JOHN 4:21

Can one player win a football game by himself? Probably not. But it certainly felt that way after Texas defeated the University of Southern California (USC) 41–38 in the 2006 BCS National Championship game. Texas quarterback Vince Young ran for 200 yards, passed for 267, and seemed to make every big play when the Longhorns needed it—including the biggest play of the game with 19 seconds on the clock.

Texas trailed the Trojans 38–33, and time was running out. It appeared as if USC would win its 35th game in a row and its third straight national championship when Texas was stuck on the nine-yard line and faced a fourth-and-five play. Vince took the ball and quickly looked for an open receiver. Almost immediately he got pressured from a USC defender on his left. Quickly tucking the ball, Vince sprinted to his right. His long strides took him past a diving defender and into the end zone for a 39–38 lead. Vince added a two-point conversion on the next play to make the final score 41–38.

□□ **What's the Score?**

Vince's heroics capped a stunning Texas comeback. Texas trailed 38–26 with 6:42 left in the fourth quarter. First, Vince ran in a touchdown from 17 yards away with four minutes left. Then he scored the winning touchdown—his third of the game. Justifiably, Vince was voted Most Valuable Player and given a crystal trophy. To many fans, it appeared as if Vince had won the game by himself.

But Vince knew better. He saw how the Texas defense had stopped the talented USC offense twice late in the game. He noticed how hard his offensive linemen and receivers had blocked for him. They deserved credit too.

Everybody can't be the quarterback. It's that way in the Christian life as well. Different people have different roles in God's body. Not everybody receives the same amount of attention and praise. But 1 Corinthians 12:22 tells us, "Some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary." No matter what you do for God's kingdom—even if you think it goes unnoticed—remember that you're a vital part of the body.

) **On the Ball**

The Bible says every part of the body is important. If you end up serving behind the scenes, do your best, because you're a necessary part of God's body.

> **COACH'S COMMENT**

There are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:20-22

How much time do you spend playing video games every day? Studies say the average kid spends 49 minutes a day video gaming. That's about the same amount of time that the average child spends reading each day.

Being balanced is a good thing. But in 2010, David Scherer of Clarksville, Tennessee, got a little out of whack. He spent 55 straight hours with a controller in his hand to set a world record for longest time spent playing a video game.

To David's credit, he normally wasn't a couch potato. He set a good example for kids as a swim coach and by staying busy at school and volunteering in his community. In fact, his reason for setting the world record was to raise money for his swim team to have a consistent place to practice. But still, 55 straight hours . . . yikes!

☐☐ **What's the Score?**

Many kids spend too much time playing video games. And if it's not video games, a lot of other distractions can rob our time. Research shows that some kids spend about seven-and-a-half hours every day watching TV, playing video games, and being on the Internet. That's more than 52 hours a week, which is more than a full-time job!

It's important to make the most of your time. The Bible says, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16, ESV). As you think about the things that you do, are there any changes you need to make to your schedule? Do you spend enough time with your friends? Do you help out enough around the house? Are you taking care of your pets? Or do you spend a lot of time by yourself in front of the TV or computer? The good habits you start now by managing your time will really help you as you grow.

) **On the Ball**

Do you need to change how you use your time? Create a plan to make the most of your time. Write down the top three things that you do with your time (don't count sleeping):

Now write down the top three things that you'd like to do with your time:

Time is a gift from God—use your gift wisely.

> **COACH'S COMMENT**

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. **EPHESIANS 5:15-16 (ESV)**

The Harlem Globetrotters are one of the most famous sports teams in the world. In fact, it was on this day in 1927 that the Globetrotters played their first game. The funny thing is, the Globetrotters began in Chicago, not the Harlem area of New York City. Plus, the team wasn't filled with globetrotters at all—they were athletes from Wendell Phillips High School on the south side of Chicago. Abe Saperstein, who founded the team, just wanted potential audiences to think his squad had traveled the globe.

The Globetrotters got paid \$75 for playing their first game in Hinckley, Illinois. They didn't travel with their own opponent back then like they do today (oh, the poor Washington Generals, who have lost more than 10,000 straight games to the Globetrotters). Instead they drove around the United States and played anybody who'd pay them to come. During their first season, the Globetrotters amassed an impressive record of 101–16.

In 1939, the Harlem Globetrotters started adding silly antics to their games. They'd do fancy ball-handling skills and comedic routines. Fans loved it, but Abe warned the team only to be silly after it had built up a solid lead. Today, the Globetrotters have played in more than 115 countries in front of over 120 million fans.

☐☐ **What's the Score?**

What's the first word that comes to mind when you think of the Harlem Globetrotters? If you've seen the team play, that word is probably *fun*. The Globetrotters make basketball fun. Sure, they show amazing skill, but their goal is to make everybody smile and have a good time.

Have you ever been to church or hung out with people who didn't smile? It's not much fun. It's okay for Christians to have fun. In fact, God wants us to enjoy life and have fun. Ecclesiastes 8:15 says, "I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life." Of course, we also have to work hard and take care of our responsibilities. But with a little creativity, we can make our work fun—just like the Harlem Globetrotters do.

) **On the Ball**

What's your least favorite thing to do? How can you make that thing more fun? Be creative. It's good to have fun, to be happy, and to work hard.

> **COACH'S COMMENT**

I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life. That way they will experience some happiness along with all the hard work God gives them under the sun. **ECCLESIASTES 8:15**
