

Motivation

MEMORY VERSE

“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.”
— Hebrews 10:24

INTRODUCTION

The world of sport is full of highly motivated competitors and strongly motivational leaders. The bookstore shelves are full of books designed to motivate readers to achieve greatly. Some motivate with hype, others with challenge, some with shouts of excitement, and others with promises of rewards. What best motivates you?

APPLICATION

1. What do you think most motivates you to train and compete at your best?
2. How do your coaches and teammates motivate each other in sport?
3. On a 1 to 10 scale how well do those motivational methods move you?
4. How do your parents, teachers, and friends motivate you to do things?

BRIDGE

The writer of the Bible book of Hebrews spoke directly to the methods and objects of motivation: “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24).

1. Do you think motivating people requires the same process or are people motivated differently? Explain.
2. How have you noticed that some of your teammates are motivated differently from you?
3. What are acts of love and good works toward which you are motivated with your teammates?

CONNECTION

1. Briefly share what most motivates your team to be at your best, on and off the field, court, mat, pitch, track, or in the pool.
2. What motivational methods do some use that really do not work with you?
 - Shouting
 - Challenges
 - Rewards
 - Encouragement
 - Shame
 - Hype
 - Pats on the back

DISCOVERY

1. Look for ways today to motivate each other to acts of love and good works.
2. Practice the most effective motivational methods with each of your teammates.

Confidence

MEMORY VERSE

“Since this new way gives us such confidence, we can be very bold.” —2 Corinthians 3:12

INTRODUCTION

We love watching teams that are enjoying long winning streaks, or athletes who are “in the zone” and seem to compete as though everything they do will be successful. What makes this team and individuals so successful? Did they increase their skills or abilities overnight? Not at all! They are just experiencing the intersection of where skills and abilities meet, and where factors like team chemistry, health, motivation, and confidence are present. Confidence is one of the most important attributes a team or athlete can possess.

APPLICATION

1. Describe a time you competed with a high level of confidence. What was that like?
2. Does your team play confidently? Explain. What can you do to ensure that your team consistently competes with confidence?

BRIDGE

David was a teenage shepherd when he fought the giant Goliath. When David was asked why he was so confident that he could defeat the warrior, In 1 Samuel 17, David famously defeats the giant Goliath. Afterwards, Saul (the king of Israel at the time) asks David where his confidence came from? David replies, “I have done this to both lions and bears, and I’ll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God! The Lord who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:36–37). David didn’t think he would win because he was more talented or more capable, but because of what God is capable of.

CONNECTION

1. Confidence is achieved through hard work and experience. What experiences did David rely on to give him confidence so that he could defeat Goliath?
2. Why is it important that David’s trust was in God?

DISCOVERY

1. What are some experiences you obtain (or have) that gives you confidence?
2. What are ways you can start bringing God into your sport to help you work hard and play with confidence?

Today, increase your trust in God’s ability to help you play with excellence so that you can compete with confidence.

Emotions

MEMORY VERSE

“Those who know Your name trust in you, for you, O Lord, do not abandon those who search for you.” —Psalm 9:10

INTRODUCTION

We have all experienced the highs and lows of sports. This includes the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. One of our biggest struggles when it comes to emotions is answering whether we have control of our emotions or whether our emotions have control over us. For many, our days can be put on hold based on our emotions, which are determined by whether we have a good practice, if we meet a personal goal, or we win a game.

APPLICATION

1. When do you get the most emotional when it comes to your sport?
2. How does your team handle the positive and negative emotions that come with your sport?
3. When was a time that your emotions held you hostage in having a positive attitude for the day?

BRIDGE

One of the most emotional characters in the Bible is David. We can examine David’s emotional highs and lows throughout the entirety of Psalms. We see when he is sad, when he is joyful, when he is hurt, and when he is celebrating. “O Lord, hear me as I pray; pay attention to my groaning. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for I pray to no one but you. Listen to my voice in the morning, Lord. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly” (Psalm 5:1–3).

David teaches us that through the emotions of our circumstances we can still pray, cry out, and emotionally attach ourselves to God. We can expect Him to hear our cries in the losses and celebrate our joy in the wins. Why? Because He is an emotional God who loves us deeply.

CONNECTION

1. David was emotional in everything he did. How does that connect with you?
2. How does David’s relationship with God encourage you?

DISCOVERY

1. Do you control your emotions or do your emotions control you?
2. How can we have healthy emotions when it comes to our sport or team but be emotionally attached to God?
3. Write about a prayer like David, and share your emotions with God.

Teamwork

MEMORY VERSE

“How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!” —Psalm 133:1

INTRODUCTION

Some of the elements of sport tear at the very fabric of what makes for great teams. Competition, comparison, ambition, emotional intensity, among several others can overcome a team’s cohesion and destroy its vitality. Your team has surely faced some challenges to its oneness, oneness and unity.

APPLICATION

1. What are some factors that can ruin the relationships on a team?
2. Which of the items below do you think are the greatest causes of division on sports teams?
 - Jealousy
 - Comparison
 - Off-field or court issues
 - Envy
 - Self-centeredness
 - Pride
 - Favoritism

BRIDGE

The apostle Paul was very familiar with the factors that caused division between people. In his case it was contentions among people in his church. He wrote to the church at Ephesus about these issues: “Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called in one glorious hope for the future” (Ephesians 4:3–4).

1. Why would the letter “S” in Spirit be capitalized in verse 3?
2. How does the Spirit produce unity among believers in Jesus Christ?
3. How does peace act as the binding agent for the hearts of teams in sport?
4. To what have these people been called in one glorious hope for the future?

CONNECTION

1. How can teams create peace in their relationships, rather than division?
2. What does your team do that binds your hearts together?
3. What are some factors that try to separate you as a team?
4. How does your team’s hope for a glorious future unify your hearts?

DISCOVERY

Follow the apostle’s instruction and make every effort to keep yourselves remembering the following principles:

1. Being unified in the Spirit. How can you do that today?
2. Binding yourselves together with peace. How can you promote peace among your teammates today?
3. Remembering your unity and your calling to a glorious hope for the future. What would you say is your unified, hopeful future as a team?

Character

MEMORY VERSE

“And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.” —Romans 5:4

INTRODUCTION

The legendary coach, John Wooden said, “Sports do not build character. They reveal it.” Character is the combination of qualities in a person that makes them different from others. In athletics, the pressure, the wins and losses, and the adversity all reveal what kind of character traits each person has, positive or negative.

APPLICATION

1. What are some positive character traits?
2. What are some negative character traits?
3. How does character of an individual affect chemistry in a team?

BRIDGE

Paul was a team leader for the early Christian church. He had plenty of pressure, wins and losses, and of course, adversity. In one of his letters to the church of Philippi, he said one of the most quoted verses in all of sports: “For I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13). Everybody can quote this verse when they are winning or when everything is going their way, but what happens when it’s not? We can’t have Philippians 4:13 without Philippians 4:12: “I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.” These two verses reveal the character of Paul because this was not written in the middle of winning season or from the mountain top of a championship, but was written from the chains of a prison. In the middle of adversity, he was not bitter or blaming others around him, but trusting the God who lived in him.

CONNECTION

1. What are the character traits you see in Paul with the verses above?
2. How does the adversity Paul faced and the character he revealed challenge and encourage you?
3. What are some positive character traits you have seen in your team times of adversity.

DISCOVERY

1. What are some character traits you have that affects your team positively or negatively?
2. What are some character traits you would like to focus on to help your team?
3. Who on your team has positive character traits that help your team? Tell them today!

Identity

MEMORY VERSE

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” —2 Corinthians 5:17

INTRODUCTION

Has your team ever played relaxed, unified, and happy while winning but tight, disjointed, and lethargic while losing? While all teams face highs and lows during a season, many struggle with consistency because they lack a team identity. The greatest, most enjoyable teams refuse to define themselves by wins and losses or by what others say about them. The best teams know they represent something bigger than themselves. They represent their school, their community, and some even choose to represent Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION

1. Identify some positive mindsets and strategies your team uses to help establish team identity.
2. What are some ways your team handles with the highs and lows and wins and losses of the season?

BRIDGE

The Christians in Corinth were tempted by a society that focused on immorality, selfishness, lying, and wealth. When the apostle Paul wrote to them, he made sure they knew the truth about their identity, especially the fact that their identity was in Christ, not what society tempted them to do. By getting rid of old ways of thinking, the Corinthian believers glorified God as they represented Jesus.

CONNECTION

What are some reasons that having a strong identity in Christ could help the Corinthians handle the pressures and temptations to sin?

DISCOVERY

1. Name several reasons why it is important to have your identity rooted in who you are rather than what you do.
2. As a team, how can you encourage others to live boldly for Jesus?

Purpose

MEMORY VERSE

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.” —Romans 12:1

INTRODUCTION

If your team was to express its purpose for being, what would you say? How would you describe your team’s Why? Why do you train and practice so much? Why do you endure the pain and inconvenience of a life in sport? Why do you do all this? Is it just to win a game? Surely there is more to it than just that.

APPLICATION

1. Which of these values make sport seem purposeful? Which ones don’t measure up?
 - It develops relationships
 - It shows me as superior to others
 - It’s an act of worship
 - It’s fun
 - It defines me
 - It rewards hard work
 - It satisfies
 - It’s a distraction
2. In what situations do you have a sense that sport’s true purpose is being fulfilled in your experience? Describe them.

BRIDGE

Jesus lived every day of His life with a profound sense of purpose, and He spoke directly with His disciples about it in the face of suffering and death. In John 12:27–28 He says: “Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But this is the very reason I came! Father, bring glory to your name.”

1. Why would Jesus’s soul be deeply troubled?
2. Why didn’t Jesus ask God the Father to save Him from the soon-to-come torturous death by crucifixion?
3. How would Jesus’s fulfillment of His purpose bring glory to God’s name?

CONNECTION

1. What aspects of your life in sport occasionally trouble your soul?
2. Is your experience in sport fulfilling what you believe to be God’s purposes for it? Explain.

DISCOVERY

1. How can you encourage your teammates as they encounter the soul-troubling moments in sporting life?
2. What could your team do to fulfill its purpose and bring glory to God’s name by how you live in sport?

Self-Worth

MEMORY VERSE

“But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me . . .” —1 Corinthians 15:10a

INTRODUCTION

One of the most crucial factors in how competitors view their worth is how they are seen by their teammates. Do they see my presence as important to the team’s success? Do I add real value to the team? Am I important to how our team functions, or am I just along for the ride?

APPLICATION

1. How does a team communicate the value it has for each of its members?
2. How well has your team expressed the value they perceive of your being here? Give it a letter grade: A, B, C, D, or F.

BRIDGE

Paul the apostle came to the Church of Jesus with a less than impressive resume’ for being one of its leaders. He writes about this in a letter to his friends: “For I am the least of the apostles. In fact, I’m not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God’s church. But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me - and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles, yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace” (1 Corinthians 15:9–10).

1. What were the things in Paul’s past that made him feel unworthy of being called an apostle?
2. What overcame those feelings and enabled him to serve well?
3. More than Paul’s hard work, what and who was at work to produce the results of his service?

CONNECTION

1. In what moments do you feel unworthy of being part of your team? Why do you feel that way?
2. How does it seem God has poured out His special favor on you when you think about your role on your team?
3. How is God’s grace demonstrated by the presence of particular members of your team?

DISCOVERY

1. How will you express the value you feel for each of your teammates today?
2. Choose one of your teammates and describe the results that he or she brings to your team by God’s grace.