THE PLEDGE

2018 Moody Family YMCA

Youth Sports Devotions

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Before every YMCA youth sports game or event we say the Youth Sports Pledge:

**Win or lose, I pledge before God, to do my best, to be a team player, to respect my opponents, teammates and officials, and to improve myself in spirit, mind and body**

The Sports Pledge is more than just words – it represents everything that YMCA Youth Sports is about. In this series of devotions we’ll look at each line of The Pledge and talk about how we can live out that pledge on and off the court or field. As a result, you’ll be stronger and healthier spiritually, mentally, and physically. And that will make your family and your community stronger and healthier. And that’s good for all of us!

**Win or lose, I pledge before God, to do my best, to be a team player, to respect my opponents, teammates and officials, and to improve myself in spirit, mind and body**

I: The Pledge

Win or lose, I pledge before God, to do my best, to be a team player, to respect my opponents, teammates and officials, and to improve myself in spirit, mind and body

Chalk Talk

You’ve probably said the Pledge of Allegiance: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

You’ve probably been to a wedding where the bridge and groom exchange vows, or pledges: I, \_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_, to be my lawfully wedded (husband/wife), to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part

What is a pledge? It’s promise or agreement. When you play sports through the YMCA, you make a promise or pledge every time you compete:

Win or lose, I pledge before God, to do my best, to be a team player, to respect my opponents, teammates and officials, and to improve myself in spirit, mind and body

Did you know that when you say the youth sports pledge the YMCA pledges back to you? Here’s the Y’s promise to you: to help you put Christian values into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

In this series of devotions, we’re going to take each line of the YMCA pledge and talk about what it means and how you can put it into practice every day. And at the end of this series, we’ll look at a very special promise God makes to you. Here’s a sneak preview:

**God said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation…All the families on earth will be blessed through you – Genesis 12:1-3**

Practice Drill

Memorize the youth sports pledge

Wrap-Up

**In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God – John 1:1**

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II Why The Pledge

Win or lose, I pledge before God, to do my best, to be a team player, to respect my opponents, teammates and officials, and to improve myself in spirit, mind and body

Chalk Talk

In 1892, James Naismith, a coach at Springfield College in Massachusetts wrote down the first rules for an indoor game he invented for his P.E. classes. He called the game “basketball.”

Suppose one morning you walked into Coach Naismith’s class but he was nowhere to be found. Soon, one of your classmates notices a yellow Post-It ® note stuck on the bleachers that reads: “Do what you want to do. Have a good time” – Coach N.

**Question: What kind of class would you have?** [Jump rope might break-out in the middle of a soccer game. And some boys and girls might just sit down right in the middle of everything].

**Question: In this situation, which activity would be the right one to do?** [No one can really say. A guideline would need to be established before anyone could answer that question].

**Question: In this situation which person has the right to say what game should be played?** [No one...yet]. A person would need to be put in charge to say what the right game to play is.

**Question: In this situation, what one thing is certain?** [Each person would do as he or she pleases].

Rules are in place so you’re safe and so everyone works toward the same goal. Can you imagine what kind of practice you might have had today if your coach said, “Do whatever you want to do?” Now, can you imagine what your family, or your school, or your neighborhood, or your city would be like if everyone does whatever they want to do whenever they want to do it? The Bible says that with some people that really happens, and it gets crazy and sometimes dangerous. Now, imagine what would happen if everyone lives the way God says is best? The Bible calls it “godliness” and promises us it’s the best way to live.

So if you want to have the best life possible - not the easiest – but the best – let the Y sports pledge help you live a godly life. We’ll look at the first part of the pledge in our next devotion.

Practice Drill

Memorize the youth sports pledge

Wrap-Up

**For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to com - 1 Timothy 4:8**

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III: Win Or Lose

Win or lose, I pledge before God, to do my best, to be a team player, to respect my opponents, teammates and officials, and to improve myself in spirit, mind and body

Chalk Talk

The first line of the Y Pledge makes it clear that in competition there will be a winner and there will be a loser. Does God care whether you win or lose? Yes. But what I believe He cares more about is not just winning or losing but how you go about winning and how you go about losing. How you react when you win and how you react when you lose. What lessons you learn from winning and what lessons you learn from losing. Here are some examples:

* When you win, how do you win? Do you win graciously – not bragging about how well you played or trash-talking or belittling someone on the other team or do you congratulate them on a game well played?
* When you lose, how do you lose? Do you lose graciously – not making excuses or whining or complaining but congratulating the other team on their win?
* When you win do you win with empathy? Do you think about how players on the other team that just lost feel?
* When you lose do you gain hope to improve in the next practice or game?

To gain loss can actually be to gain victory. The Bible says that by losing or getting rid of those things in your life that are not godly is gain, or victory. Learning how to win is important. Learning how to lose so you may gain from it is more important.

Practice Drill

What is one way you will win graciously? What is one way you will lose graciously?

Wrap-Up

**“If any of you wants to be my [Jesus] follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost? – Luke 9:23-25.**

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IV: Before God

Win or lose, I pledge before God, to do my best, to be a team player, to respect my opponents, teammates and officials, and to improve myself in spirit, mind and body

Chalk Talk

If you meet someone you don’t know, usually the first thing you find out about that person is their name. So for you Trolls fans - King Gristle: And what might your name be? Bridget: I’m Lady Glitter Sparkles.

Names have meaning. If you asked God, “What might your name be,” He would say, “I AM.” In the Bible, I AM is simply written as LORD. Our definition of “Lord” is one who has power and authority over others. And God has that power and authority, but God’s name goes way beyond that.

In the Y Pledge, when you say, “I pledge before God,” you are making a promise to the One who created all things and is the standard of what is right, what is true, and what is beautiful. God is the most important and most valuable person ever, past, present, and future. In fact, without God, there is no past, present, or future, because God holds everything in the universe together (that includes you). God is more worthy of our interest and attention than anyone or anything else.

But if you had to choose one word to describe God it would be this: love. To love someone is to want the best for them and put their needs before your own.

Practice Drill

How can you love someone today?

Wrap-Up

**God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love - not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other – 1 John 4:9-11**

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V: Play the Game Well

Win or lose, I pledge before God, to do my best, to be a team player, to respect my opponents, teammates and officials, and to improve myself in spirit, mind and body

Chalk Talk

**Question: How do you know how to play a game?** [You practice and you play]. Here are some ways to learn how to play whatever game you’re playing well:

* Be Thankful – Be thankful you can run, jump, throw, hear, see, and think so that you can learn and play.
* Be Encouraging - Never embarrass or put down your teammates in front of them or to anyone else (even privately). Cheer them on and encourage them if they make a mistake. Help a teammate improve her swing; help him learn a new play. Be the first to congratulate a teammate or opponent on a good play.
* Be Approved – Play the right way even if no one is looking
* Be Masterful – Learn all parts of the game and find ways to help your team.
* Be Mindful - If your teammate passes to you when she could have shot, return the favor sometime. When your coach takes his time to be at practice or games, listen to him.
* Be an All-Star – Determine to do a good job in practices and in games.
* Be a Trailblazer - Be a leader. Find new ways to make games and practices fun.
* Be Enthusiastic - If you can’t find anything to be enthusiastic about, pretend to be enthusiastic and pretty soon, you will be enthusiastic. Show up to the game even if you’re sick or injured. Even if you’re the least player on the last place team, your good attitude will make it a winning season.
* Be a Servant - No matter how much we like getting, it feels even better to give. Same thing goes for sports. Pick up equipment after a game. Volunteer to give up some of your playing time so everyone can play the same amount.

Practice Drill

The first letter of each characteristic above spells a word. Pick one of those characteristics in the word: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to put into practice on and off the field or court.

Wrap-Up

Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people – Colossians 3:23

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VI: Obey the Rules

Win or lose, I pledge before God, to do my best, to be a team player, to respect my opponents, teammates and officials, and to improve myself in spirit, mind and body

Chalk Talk

Athletic competition has most likely been around longer than recorded history. I imagine the first sports contest went something like this:

“Race you to that tree and back.”

“Hey - no fair - you went before I said, ‘Go!’ ”

So rules needed to be introduced. Then, somewhere along the line the person who could run faster, pick-up or throw something heavier or jump farther became very important. Local competitions popped up. Bragging rights were introduced. Trash-talk started:

“We’re going to cream you guys.”

“Bring it on!”

So referees, umpires, and judges were employed to make sure the athletes and coaches follow the rules during the competition. In our second devotion it was mentioned that rules are in place so you’re safe and so everyone works toward the same goal. Ultimately, rules are in place so there is peace. The Bible says: **Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone – Romans 12:18**.

Practice Drill

What are ways you can bring about peace with those around you, whether on or off the court or field?

Wrap-Up

**And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness – James 3:18**

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VII: Good Sport

Win or lose, I pledge before God, to do my best, to be a team player, to respect my opponents, teammates and officials, and to improve myself in spirit, mind and body

Chalk Talk

**Question: How would you define being a good sport**? The Bible calls it being gracious. Grace means undeserved favor. So to be gracious means to be full of grace – showing others kindness and favor even if it’s not deserved.

It’s easy to be kind when others are kind to you. But how can you be gracious - a good sport - to others even when it’s not deserved?

* Be polite to everyone you're playing with and against.
* Be modest. People know if you’re good.
* Congratulate your opponents win or lose.
* Be fair - winning is not so important that you would cheat to win.
* Show up for practices and games on time.
* Listen to your [coaches](http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/coach.html) and follow their directions.
* Show respect for the officials. If you don't understand a certain call, wait until after the game to ask your coach or the official to explain it to you.
* Encourage and not blame. Learn from what happened.
* Be willing to sit out so other team members can get in the game.
* Cheer for your teammates even if the score is 1,000 to 1!

Practice Drill

Choose one or two ways to be a good sport (or make up your own) and practice doing it all week (or for the rest of your life).

Wrap-Up

**May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace – Romans 1:7**

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VIII: Spirit, Mind, and Body

Win or lose, I pledge before God, to do my best, to be a team player, to respect my opponents, teammates and officials, and to improve myself in spirit, mind and body

Chalk Talk

In our first devotion I said at end of this series you’d get a sneak preview of a very special promise God makes to you - God said to Abram [Abraham], “All the families on earth will be blessed through you – Genesis 12:3.

I want to explain God’s promise to you in a story. Two years ago the doctors told me I had cancer. So I had an operation and the doctors physically removed the cancer from my body. And while cancer is a really bad thing, the only thing cancer can do to me is hurt my physical body.

You and I, however, are more than just a physical body. You have a soul that will live forever (your soul is what makes you, you). And as bad as cancer is, it cannot hurt your soul. But you and I share a much more dangerous condition than cancer. That condition is called sin and it separates you from God so you cannot have a relationship with Him, and will one-day separate you from God forever. That’s the bad news. And what makes it worse is that you can’t get rid of it on your own - a doctor cannot get it out of you, you cannot pray it out of you, you cannot get rid of it by going to church, and you cannot get rid of it by being a good enough person.

But here’s the good news - Jesus is able to forgive your sin so that you can begin a relationship with God and are no longer separated from Him. This is the pledge – or promise – that God makes to you: **If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved – Romans 10:9.**

Jesus is the promise God made to Abram way back near the beginning of the Bible. When God said, “All the families on earth will be blessed through you,” He was talking about Jesus, who is His gift to rescue all the families on earth from sin.

If you’re hearing this today and have not asked Jesus to rescue you from your sin, and would like for Him to, you can say a simple prayer right now if you’re ready:

“Father, I believe you love me. I know that my sin has separated me from You. I’m sorry – please forgive me. I believe that You gave your one and only Son Jesus to rescue me. Apart from you, I die. With you, I live. Today and every day from now on, I choose life. I choose You. Please make me a part of your family.”

If you asked Jesus into your life today, you have taken the first step on the greatest journey anyone on earth can have. Through Jesus, you now have His power to help you become the person in spirit, in mind, and in body that He created you to be.

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