

Victory Sports Outreach
Fall Season
Weekly Devotions Overview

Season Theme:

2008

Victory Sports Outreach
~Fall Season~

Weekly Devotion Guide

Season Theme Verse: Philippians 3:8a-
“What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”

Our passion is to make Jesus Christ known to the children and families that attend Victory Sports functions. In an age of confusion about spiritual matters, the Bible is our only completely reliable source of truth. We want there to be no mistake that we are presenting the Jesus of the Bible. So this season, we’re going to dig just a little bit deeper and look at the names Jesus identified Himself with in the New Testament, specifically in the book of John.

If you’re new to Victory Sports, we use a fictional story to begin each devotional session which leads into the Bible portion. Then we end each session with prayer. Last year, each sport season represented one segment of a three-part story.

This year we’ll begin a totally new set of devotions. Set in a small southern town, our main character Jay gets a phone call from an old friend asking him to come out to California to lead his sports camp for the summer. Excited at the chance of a lifetime, Jay quickly agrees, but first must get himself and his family across the country. And that’s where his adventure begins. Jay’s family experiences the names of Jesus in the people and places they visit on their journey. But of course, they can’t keep all of this to themselves! They will use their experience to give away their faith to a very special person.

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The story and devotions are just a starting point. If you have a personal experience or can think of other verses that also fit the topic, please share from your heart. The devotions work best when you have had a chance to look over the lesson beforehand.

Here are the weekly chapter topics:

Week #1~ Jesus, the One and Only
Week #2~ Jesus, the Bread of Life
Week #3~ Jesus, the Light of the World
Week #4~ Jesus, the Good Shepherd
Week #5~ Jesus, the Lamb of God
Week #6~ Jesus, the True Vine
Week #7~ Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life
Week #8~ Summary

For deeper insight, please consider the following resources that were used in the devotional sections.

Desiring God by John Piper. Multnomah Books. Colorado Springs, CO. 2003.

Psalms 23: The Song of a Passionate Heart by David Roper. Discovery House Publishers. Grand Rapids, MI. 1994.

Andrew Murray on Prayer by Andrew Murray. Whitaker House. New Kensington, PA. 1998.

All Scripture references are taken from the *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible : New International Version*. AMG International, Inc. 1996.

Week #1- Jesus, the One and Only

John 1:14- “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

For the Fame of His Name: Chapter 1

Jay Phillips could hardly believe his ears! Was he really hearing what his old friend Doug Randolph was saying on the other end of the phone?

“You want *me* to come out to California to direct your sports camp? The *one and only* Randolph Sports Camp?”

“Yep. Jay, I’m retiring this year, and you were the first one I thought of to run it. You could bring your whole family and stay out here for the summer in my condo. What d’ya say? Just think about it and let me know.” Doug offered.

“I’ll talk it over with my family, but it sounds like a great opportunity. I’ll call you soon.” Jay could hardly get the words out, he was so excited.

Being the athletic director for the local high school, Jay hadn’t made many plans for his summer yet, so the timing of Doug’s phone call was great! Jay raced out the back door to where his family was playing with Rufus, the family’s little black poodle.

“Who wants to go to California for the summer?” Jay asked in a loud voice.

“What?” his wife Betty gave him a puzzled look.

“Yah!” both his kids, Heather and Junior, shouted.

“Remember my old friend Doug Randolph, who runs the Randolph Sports Camp in California? He’s retiring this year and he wants me to come out and run it this summer- and bring all of you, too!”

“Really?” Betty asked, “The one and only Randolph Camp? It’s been years since you’ve talked to Doug.”

“I know. That’s what I said. It’s amazing, isn’t it? What d’ya think?” Jay asked.

“Wow! It sounds like God has given us a mission for this summer. I think we’ve been given an opportunity to share Jesus with your old friend Doug.” said Betty.

“That’s just what I was thinking.” said Jay.

“Can we take Rufus?” Heather asked as she scooped up the little dog in her arms.

“I’ll go call Doug back right now and find out.” Jay said as he walked back into the house with a big smile on his face.

The next few weeks passed quickly as school ended and the Phillips’ started packing up their red minivan, complete with Rufus and his gear, to head across the country.

What kind of adventures will the Phillips family have along the way? What kinds of people and places will they come across? Come back next week and find out what happens next!

Follow-Up Questions:

1. What did Mr. Randolph ask Jay to do?
2. What did they think God was giving them a chance to do?

Bible Thought~

Both Mr. and Mrs. Phillips referred to the Randolph Sports Camp as *the one and only* in our story. That means there’s something special about it- like it’s really famous and many people have heard of it.

A lot of times we call things the “one and only”, but there is Only One Jesus. In John 1:14, we read, “The Word (*or Jesus*) became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Sometimes it is hard to understand, but when Jesus came to earth, He was still God; He was fully God and fully man at the same time.

We know this because of other verses in the Bible too, like Hebrews 1:3- “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”

This tells us that Jesus has all of the qualities of God inside a physical bodily form.

Since He is fully God, we can look back at some wonderful verses in the Old Testament like Isaiah 46:9, where God says to Isaiah, “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.”

Also in Isaiah is chapter 42, verse 8, where we read, “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.”

In 1 Kings 18 we see a perfect example of this when the prophet Elijah basically has a showdown with the prophets of Baal- a false god that many people worshiped. Two altars were built- one for Baal and one for the One True God.

Nothing happened when the prophets of Baal called on the false god to light their sacrifice. But Elijah prayed for God to do a mighty work so all the people there would know that there was only One True God. Elijah even went so far as to soak the wood of the altar. And when he called upon God to light the sacrifice, everything was instantly burned up right in front of their eyes! Everything including the rocks that made up the altar!!

There was no doubt in anyone’s mind that day that there is only One True God. Pretty cool, huh?!

Many people worship other gods, but they are not the One True God- the God of the Bible. Worshiping other gods is just religion- man’s outward attempt to *reach up* to what he or she believes God to be.

But God sent Himself as Jesus *down to us*, so we might know Him and believe. Jesus reaches into our hearts and gives us faith.

Jesus, the One and Only- He's the *real* thing!

Pray to close the session.

Week #2- Jesus , the Bread of Life

John 6:35- "Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.'"

For the Fame of His Name- Chapter 2

The day the Phillips' left for their cross-country trip was bright and sunny. As they all piled in the van, Mr. Phillips said a prayer, "Lord, thank You for the opportunity You have given us. Please keep us safe on our journey so we can bring You praise and honor at the sports camp. Please give us an opportunity to share You with my old friend, Doug. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

They quickly put on their seatbelts and pulled out of their driveway. Heather put on her headphones and began be-bopping to the music as the van went down the road. Rufus stuck his little head out the window, his tongue hanging out and his ears beginning to flap in the wind. Junior instinctively searched out the bag of chips and snacks his mom had packed and started devouring them, crumbs starting to fall onto the seat and floor.

They had traveled for a few hours when, suddenly, out of nowhere, Junior shouted, "Are we there yet? I'm hungry. What's for lunch?"

Heather shot him an annoyed glance, still able to see the remains of his earlier snack on the seat and floor.

His mom answered, "We'll pull over at the next rest area and get our picnic basket out. I figured we needed to enjoy the weather and save some money, so I packed a picnic lunch this morning."

Four exits later, the Phillips' pulled off the highway. As they were getting out of the van, Heather put on Rufus' leash to take him for a walk. Junior grabbed his soccer ball to practice some passing. Mrs. Phillips, however, noticed an older man rummaging through the garbage can in the picnic area. His clothes were dirty and he carried a large knapsack over his shoulder.

About that same time the rest of the family noticed him too.

“Wow- that man looks hungry. Do you think he’s homeless?” Junior asked.

“I’m not sure. He does look hungry though. Would you guys mind if I offered him our picnic lunch?” Dad asked.

“I think that would be what Jesus would do,” said Mom. Heather and Junior nodded.

Mr. Phillips took the picnic basket and walked up to the man. “Sir, I wonder if I could offer you our picnic lunch?”

“I’d be right grateful to you. I haven’t eaten much over the past few days. The name’s Wheatley. Joshua Wheatley.” the man answered back.

“Nice to meet you, Mr. Wheatley. I’m Jay Phillips.” They shook hands and then Jay turned to walk away. But then he stopped and looked back at the old man. “Jesus loves you,” he said.

“I know- because He sent you to me today.” Joshua replied with a smile as he pulled a small New Testament out of his shirt pocket.

Come back next week and see the other exciting things that the Phillips family experience on their cross-country journey!

Follow-Up Questions:

1. What did the Phillips family see when they stopped for lunch at the rest area?
2. What was the old man’s name?
3. What did they do for Mr. Wheatley?

Bible Thought~

In our story, Junior seemed to be hungry a lot. We all need to eat physical food and sometimes we’re hungrier than other times. But do you know what? Each and every person on the face of the earth has a hunger for spiritual things. One phrase you may have heard is that we all have a “God-shaped hole in our hearts.”

Having a hunger for spiritual things makes people look for ways to satisfy that desire. The problem is that many people fill that longing with things that don’t really satisfy (*Note: You may want to give an example from your own life or discreetly from the life of someone you know at this point*).

Oh, they may fill their lives with temporary things to cover up the symptoms of being spiritually hungry, but later, they feel like there’s something missing from their lives and they go looking again.

Some of the things people fill their lives with are: money, power, friends or relationships, material things like cars or houses or electronics/video games, maybe even sports.

We’re glad you’re here today to learn more about soccer and teamwork, but being on **Jesus’ team** is the only way to have a fulfilled life. Jesus is the only thing that can fill that “God-shaped hole” in our hearts.

In John 6:35, we read, “Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.’”

Jesus is talking about that spiritual hunger and thirst. Once you get a taste of the One and Only Jesus, something amazing happens, your tastes change and you don’t want to go back to the worldly substitutes you were seeking before.

You only want to seek Him more- there is a new desire, a new hunger and thirst for the things of Jesus. The Bible is God’s letter to us. That’s how we learn more about Him and grow in our faith.

That is also why we use so much Scripture in the weekly devotions. We don’t just make this stuff up. We want to point you to the source of our faith- the Jesus of the Bible. Let’s pray to Him right now.

Week #3- Jesus , the Light of the World

John 8:12- “When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

For the Fame of His Name- Chapter 3

The Phillips-mobile covered many miles the first day of travel. A beautiful sunset was produced from the clouds that began to roll in during the evening as they began to look for a motel to spend the night. The Lighthouse Inn seemed like just the right place- not too big, not too small. They checked in and made it to their room just in time to see some rain start outside the window.

“I’m glad we decided to stop when we did,” said Mr. Phillips.

At first, it was just a little rain, but it kept getting harder and harder. Then they saw the first flash of lightning and the clap of thunder and knew this was a big storm. Flashes and crashes filled the night sky like nothing they had ever seen.

Then it happened. The power went out. Mr. Phillips went to his bag to dig out a flashlight. He pulled out a little pen light. The bigger one was in the car and he was not about to go out into the storm to get it.

The storm had begun to drive poor little Rufus crazy. He was running around in circles barking. It would’ve been funny had the storm not been so bad. They hoped no one else could hear him barking in any of the other rooms.

“Well, since we don’t know when the power will come back on, let’s read the Bible together by flashlight before we go to bed tonight. I think we’ll find something appropriate for our situation in John chapter 8.” Mr. Phillips offered.

After their Bible study together, Heather noticed that only a little light was needed to light up the room as they talked about Jesus being the light of the world. Wow! She was really seeing the Bible come to life in front of her eyes!

The power was restored shortly after they finished their

devotion time. They all had a lot to think about as they drifted off to sleep- their lunch they gave away to Mr. Wheatley and the power going out- all on their first day of traveling. Mr. & Mrs. Phillips talked about how it really seemed like they were being sent on a mission to experience what Jesus is really like as they go across the country. They prayed that they would find the right words to say to Mr. Randolph when they got to California.

What other exciting adventures will come their way? How else will Jesus reveal Himself to them as they make their way across the country? Come back next week to find out!

Follow-Up Questions~

1. What was the name of the motel where they stayed for the night?
2. What happened that night?
3. What did Heather notice as they read the Bible by the little pen light?

Bible Truth~

In our story, the power went out and it became really dark. There is another kind of darkness in the world that the Bible identifies as sin and evil. But even in this world of sin and darkness, there is an everlasting source of righteousness/hope or light.

In 1 John 1:5, we read, “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”

“God is light” tells us something about His glory or character. Light is the total opposite of darkness, so God is the total opposite of sin and evil. What are some words you can think of to describe God’s light or glory? (perfect, holy, righteous, set apart, truth, love, sovereign, etc.)

In fact, Jesus calls Himself the “light of the world” in John 8:12, “When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, ‘I am the light of the

world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

We can either walk in darkness or walk in the light, but not both. We have to choose to walk with Jesus in His light. If we do not choose to walk with Jesus, we walk in sin or darkness (see 1 John 1:6-9). That is our “default position.”

Walking in darkness means to continually live in sin. Walking in the light means we have chosen to live in obedience to Jesus and have a right relationship with Him.

Of course, we still sin at times, but if we have a relationship with Jesus, He has made the provision for us to be forgiven of our sins. We just need to confess them specifically and ask Him to forgive us.

Jesus also calls us to be light to the world (see Matt. 5:14). Matthew 5:16 states, “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

Giving glory to God is God’s top priority and it is to be ours also. Any way we can help others see the light and give glory to God makes Him happy.

Week #4- Jesus , the Good Shepherd

John 10:14- “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”

For the Fame of His Name- Chapter 4

The Phillips family climbed back into the van the next morning as they waved good-bye to the Lighthouse Inn and got back onto the highway. They hadn’t traveled far when they saw the first billboard. It read: “Uncle Moo’s Petting Zoo and Country Store- 200 miles.” The next one they saw read 100 miles; the next one- 50 miles; and then 25 miles. By the time the sign read 10 miles, Junior said, “We’re going to stop at Uncle Moo’s, aren’t we?”

Mr. Phillips really wanted to make good time today but finally consented, “OK, but we can’t take a lot of time. We’ll just stop for a little while.” Junior and Heather both cheered. Mrs. Phillips smiled and wondered if Jesus would teach them anything from Mr. Moo.

A few miles later they began to see animals on the side of the road- lots of them- plus a big barn and country store.

“*It looks like it might be a fun place after all,*” thought Mr. Phillips as pulled into the parking lot.

Heather and Junior got out and walked Rufus around before finally deciding to tie him to a tree with his food and water bowl nearby. They ran over to the fenced in area and began petting the animals. There were goats and sheep, pigs and ducks, rabbits, and a calf.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Phillips walked over to the country store. An older woman greeted her as she walked in the door, “Good afternoon. Welcome to Mr. Moo’s. I’m Maggie. My husband runs the petting zoo but I run the store here.”

“Nice to meet you, I’m Betty Phillips...” she paused a moment then said, “Maggie Moo? You’re not THE Maggie Moo are you?”

“You mean the ice cream store? Heavens no,” she said with a laugh, “but I get asked that all the time. ‘Thought about changing

my name once, but I like to see folks' faces as they try to figure it out. I just like to make 'em laugh! Folks don't laugh enough these days."

Maggie and Betty continued talking while Mr. Phillips stayed outside with Heather and Junior. They enjoyed petting all the animals but they were somehow drawn to the sheep. Some were black, some were white, and some were both black and white. They really enjoyed feeling their soft wool and watching their little stubby tails wag.

Mr. Moo met them outside and began calling the sheep as it was their feeding time. Heather and Junior tried to call the sheep too, but they only responded to Mr. Moo's voice. Mr. Moo explained that sheep grow accustomed to their shepherd's voice and that is the only one they will follow.

Junior thought about this and remembered the passage in the Bible where Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd. He reminded himself to bring it up when they all got back in the car.

That's not all the Phillips family gets to do at Mr. Moo's Petting Zoo! Come back next week and hear what else happens!

Follow-Up Questions~

1. What was the name of the petting zoo?
2. What was Mrs. Moo's first name?
3. What animal did Heather and Junior enjoy the most?

Bible Thought~

The coaches here at VSO try to lead and guide you into a deeper understanding of soccer (or cheerleading), but Jesus can lead and guide your whole life as your Good Shepherd.

Sheep aren't known for being one of the most intelligent animals. In fact, they're known for being rather dumb. They need love, protection, direction (leadership), and discipline.

In many ways, we are a lot like the sheep. We sin, make bad

decisions, do things our own way, and get into trouble when we don't live by God's Word. Fortunately, God knows everything we do; everything about us. He calls Himself our Good Shepherd in John 10:14- "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me."

Way back in Genesis (the first book of the Bible) Jacob was the first to write that God had been His shepherd all of his life (Gen. 48:15). Jacob had done many wrong things and yet God was still willing to be called "The God of Jacob." Other men like David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel also refer to God as a shepherd in the Old Testament.

When Jesus came in person in the New Testament, He came to be a shepherd in flesh and blood to those who were lost. Consider these thoughts about Jesus being our Good Shepherd:

(based on a quote from F.B. Meyer in David Roper's book *Psalm 23: The Song of a Passionate Heart*, p. 43)

He has a shepherd's **heart**, who loves us more than we can imagine (Ephesians 3:18- I pray that you will "grasp how wide and long, and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.")

He has a shepherd's **eye**, that knows what we're doing all the time. He knows everything about us and we're important to Him. When we stray, He goes after us. That's what a good shepherd does (see all of Psalm 139. Verses 1,2, and 16 read, "O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.").

He has a shepherd's **leadership and tenderness**, that guides and directs us how we should live. He speaks through the Bible and His Holy Spirit, which is inside us when we ask Him to be our Savior and

Lord (Psalm 23:1-3- “The LORD is my shepherd. I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”)

He has a shepherd’s **faithfulness**, which will never leave us or forsake us. He doesn’t leave us alone when we’re in trouble (Josh 1:9- “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be terrified; for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”)

He has a shepherd’s **strength** so He is able to deliver us from things we are too weak to bear. (1 Corinthians 10:13- “But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”)

Let’s thank Jesus for being our Good Shepherd! Next week we’ll talk about one more thing our Good Shepherd has done for us- and that’s the most important thing of all!

Pray to close the session.

Week #5- Jesus , the Lamb of God

John 1:29- “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.’”

For the Fame of His Name- Chapter 5

Mr. Moo asked Heather if she would like to hold one of the baby lambs to feed it. She said yes and gently held the little lamb in one arm and held a big bottle of milk in the other hand. The little lamb was hungry and quickly drank down the milk then started licking Heather in the face. It tickled!

“What’s his name?” she asked Mr. Moo.

“We call him *Ammie*, not because I can’t say the “L” for *Lambie*, but because it’s short for *Amnos*- that’s the Greek word for lamb in the New Testament of the Bible.

“Oh, are you a believer in Christ?” Mr. Phillips asked Mr. Moo.

“Have been for 53 years. I accepted the Lord as my Savior and Lord at a summer sports camp when I was just a kid. Now that my wife and I are retired, I raise the animals for the petting zoo and my wife uses the sheep’s wool to make some of the crafts in the country store over there. We try to tell folks about Jesus whenever we can.”

“We follow Christ also. In fact, we’re on our way to California so I can run a sports camp for a good friend of mine who’s retiring this year. I plan on telling him how Jesus has changed my life once we get there. By the way, what’s your favorite animal?”

“No doubt about it- it has to be the sheep. Every time I look at one of them, I am reminded about Jesus being the Good Shepherd and that Jesus is called the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

“That’s exactly what I thought you would say,” Mr. Phillips said with a grin.

Meanwhile, back in the shop, Maggie and Betty were having a similar discussion. Maggie gave Betty a piece of wool as a

reminder to pray for them. They began to feel like they were old friends even though they had only been talking for about a half hour.

When it was time to go, they exchanged addresses, phone numbers, and emails. And they promised to pray for each other. Mrs. Phillips treasured up this experience in her heart and thanked God for making new friends.

It seems like Jesus is really giving them some cool things to be able to share with Mr. Randolph soon. Come back next week and see what else happens to the Phillips family!

Follow-Up Questions ~

1. What was Heather able to do?
2. What was Mr. Moo's favorite animal?
3. What did Maggie Moo give Betty Phillips? Why?

Bible Thought~

In our story, Mr. Moo's favorite animals were the lambs because they reminded him of Jesus being the Lamb of God. In the Bible, John calls Jesus the "Lamb of God" in John 1:29- "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.'"

The punishment for sin has always been death. In the Old Testament, before Jesus came, God made a provision for the people. They could sacrifice an animal, sometimes a lamb, and its blood would *atone*, or take the punishment for their sins. Then God would forgive them.

For the people of the Old Testament, they would have also remembered how Moses led the people of Israel out of Egyptian slavery. God would send His death angel to kill the firstborn of every household that did not have the blood of a lamb spread on the doorframe (see Exodus 12).

The killing of a lamb and the spreading of its blood over the people

of Israel was a very real example of God's deliverance and the passing over of His judgment upon His people.

So when Jesus came to earth in the New Testament, He became the ultimate, once-and-for-all sacrifice for us. His blood was enough to take God's wrath or judgment toward our sin.

To reject what Christ did on the cross means that God's judgment remains on us because our sins are not forgiven. By trusting in Jesus' shed blood for us on the cross, our sins are forgiven, and we escape God's judgment. We are then able to live with Him in heaven when we die.

If you would like to talk more about this, see one of us afterward and we'd be glad to explain this to you in more detail.

Pray to close the session.

Week #6- Jesus , the True Vine

John 15:5- “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

For the Fame of His Name- Chapter 6

Crossing the Rocky Mountains brought the Phillips family to “new heights” as they witnessed the grandeur of God’s creation. They had never seen mountains so tall! They all sat in wonder and amazement and praised God for what they were seeing!

Those “mountain top” experiences helped encourage them as they drove across the desert and finally to the state line into California.

A few hours into California brought them into vineyard country. “Oh, I love grapes! Can we stop at one of the stands and get some fresh grapes? Purple is my favorite color,” she pleaded.

Junior piped in, “Yah, I could go for some grapes or a jelly sandwich right about now.” They all remembered how quickly Junior got hungry!

Mr. Phillips was getting tired so he agreed to take a little break at the next one they saw. It’s a good thing they did, because when they parked the van and got out, Mr. Phillips noticed a puddle forming on the pavement. It was on the driver’s side and he suspected the radiator might be leaking. He had noticed the temperature gauge running a bit higher than normal.

He told the kids they would have to stay there a while to let the van cool down so he could check the anti-freeze. Heather and Junior didn’t mind. They played with Rufus and got out the soccer ball again to practice some passing. Mrs. Phillips went over to the stand to purchase a big basket of fresh grapes and some jelly.

Just then a boy about Junior’s age came up to them and asked if he could borrow the ball for a second. He began doing all kinds of tricks and fancy footwork. Junior and Heather watched in amazement.

“Wow! That was great! Where did you learn to do that?”

asked Junior.

“I practice a lot and I’ve been to the Randolph Clinic a few times now,” the boy said. “By the way, my name is Ricardo Blankenship. But my friends call me Trix because of the tricks I do with the soccer ball.”

“Trix- - you mean like the cereal?” Junior asked.

“Spelled the same.” replied Trix.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Junior Phillips and this is my sister Heather. We’re actually on our way to the Randolph Sports Campus right now. My dad is taking over for Mr. Randolph who is retiring this year. Maybe we’ll even see you there. Say, what are those people doing in the vineyard?” Junior asked as he pointed out to the fields filled with rows and rows of grapevines.

“Oh, they’re pruning the vines. Around here, everyone knows that the pruned vines produce the biggest and sweetest grapes.”

At that same time, Mr. Phillips walked up and overheard what Trix was saying. “I think that we might be getting a bit of a pruning right now- it looks like our radiator has overheated. Are there any auto parts store nearby?”

Trix gave them directions into town to the auto parts store. The kids got their new friend’s address and phone number, said good-bye, and put Rufus back into the van.

Mr. Phillips told them they’d have to roll the windows down until they could fill up the anti-freeze again and get some stop leak for the radiator. They were uncomfortable for a while, but the Lord did seem to be teaching them some patience. They tried not to complain; instead they tried to think of the fun things they had done and the new friend they just met.

Mr. Phillips thought of all the similarities between what Jesus said about being the True Vine and the many lessons they had learned over the past week of traveling. Now, if he could just get his thoughts in order to share Jesus with Doug Randolph...

What will happen next week as the Phillips’ meet up with Mr. Randolph? Come back next week for the exciting conclusion!

Follow-Up Questions~

1. Where did they stop when they got into California?
2. What was wrong with their van?
3. Who did they meet at the grape stand?

Bible Thought~

Does anyone know what a “vineyard” is? Right! It’s like an orchard, only for grapes. If the vines are properly pruned, one vine can grow thousands and thousands of grapes, depending on how many branches it has coming out from it.

Jesus saw this as a good illustration or example of the relationship we can have with Him. When you meet someone new, in order to get to know the person, you have to stay close and spend time with him or her, right?

That’s what Jesus wants us to do too! In John 15:5 Jesus says “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Jesus tells the disciples that they are like the branches that are connected to the central vine of Jesus Himself. We can’t live the way God wants us to on our own- we have to stay connected to Him.

The chapter of John 15 gives us several reasons Jesus wants us to stay connected to Him.

☞ First, He wants us to “bear fruit.” That means we are able to say, or think, or do things which bring glory to God. Of course, sometimes that means we need to be “pruned” or disciplined in order for that to happen.

☞ Next, we will be able to learn more about Jesus and His will for our lives through His Word.

☞ We will also be able to pray better when we know Jesus better.

☞ We will *abide* or live in His love. We will notice more clearly the things He provides for us because of His great love for us.

☞ We will be better able to love each other because of the great love we have experienced from Christ.

☞ Lastly, Jesus wants us to have joy- His *full* joy which can get us through the tough times of life because we know that He is with us, that He loves us, and whatever happens will ultimately bring glory to Him.

☞ Galatians 5:22 also gives us a list of some “fruit” that we will produce when we abide in Christ- love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Let’s thank Jesus for being the central vine, giving us eternal life and wanting to have a special relationship with us!

Pray to close the session.

Week #7- Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life

John 14:6- “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

For the Fame of His Name- Chapter 7

It was late in the afternoon when Mr. Phillips pulled the van into the campus where the Randolph Clinic is held each year. Doug Randolph had obviously been watching for them because he came out to greet them as they parked and got out.

The two men shook hands as Mr. Randolph asked, “Glad to see you, Jay! Hope you and the family had a nice trip out here.”

“We sure did. The only thing we ran into was a leaky radiator a few miles back. We stopped by a little stand near the vineyard and a boy named Trix helped us find the auto parts store here in town. He was a really nice kid.” Mr. Phillips commented.

“Oh- so you’ve met my nephew already! Trix is my sister’s son. He comes every year to the clinic. I was planning to have you over to the house tomorrow so you could meet the rest of my family anyway.” Mr. Randolph said. “We’ll look at paperwork and schedules over the weekend for the clinic, but let me show you to the condo across town. You must be pretty tired from the long trip.”

“It was a long trip, Doug, but we had some really meaningful encounters along the way.” Mr. Phillips started to say.

“Oh? What kind of encounters?”

“Well, all along the trip, it was as if Scripture was coming to life right before our eyes- like God was showing us what He’s really like in the people and places we came across.” Mr. Phillips went on.

“Really? What do you mean? What did you see?” Mr. Randolph asked.

Mr. Phillips went on to tell him all about the homeless man, the power outage, Mr. Moo’s petting zoo, and the van breaking down at the vineyard stand. He ended with John 14:6- “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

“It’s funny you should mention all of those things. Just last week, Trix was trying to tell me about Jesus like he’s done so many times before and I just shrugged him off. But today, for the first time, it all makes sense.” He paused for a moment, then said, “I’d like to know Jesus like you do. Do you think you could tell me how?”

“Nothing would please me more!” Mr. Phillips replied. He went on to tell Mr. Randolph to acknowledge his sin, that he had no way of being good enough to get to heaven on his own, and to put his trust in what Jesus did on the cross to get him to heaven.

When they were done praying, Mr. Randolph said, “Wow! I feel twenty years younger!”

Mr. Phillips said, “I hope that doesn’t mean you’re not going to retire! You *do* still need me to run the clinic don’t you?”

Both men started laughing.

“I guess we’d better get you to the condo. You’ve got a big day tomorrow.” Mr. Randolph said,

“I guess I do. Let’s go guys- back into the van.” Mr. Phillips said as he scooped up Rufus into his arms.

Once they were all in the car, Mr. Phillips prayed a prayer of thanksgiving for their safe trip and their friends new conversion to Christ. A moment later, Mr. Phillips looked over to his wife and noticed a tear of joy running down her face. What a good trip they had! But it was only the beginning. The clinic awaited and he could hardly wait to get started.

The End.

Follow-Up Questions

1. Who did Trix turn out to be?
2. What was Mr. Phillips able to share with Mr. Randolph?
3. How did Mr. Randolph react to this?

Bible Thought~

(Note: for a fuller understanding of the salvation experience, refer to

the Appendix at the end of the devotion book.)

In our story, when the Phillips family arrived at their destination, it wasn't the end, but the beginning. And just like Mr. Randolph, when we accept Christ, it is not the end, but just the beginning.

Does anyone remember the verse for today- John 14:6? "Jesus said, I am the _____, the _____, and the _____. No one comes to the Father except through _____."

We're so glad you came to play soccer this season, but if there's one thing we want you to remember, it's that there is only one Jesus and He is the only way to heaven.

Even some of Jesus' disciples, who had been with him for three years didn't fully understand Who Jesus was, so He explained Himself to them.

We don't want you to have come all these weeks and not know Who Jesus is. He is fully God and He died on the cross to take our punishment so we could be seen as perfect, holy, and righteous before God.

He wants us to rely on what He did on the cross because we can't earn our way into heaven on our own. Once we acknowledge that we can't make it on our own, we can ask Him to come in and be our Savior and Lord. Then He helps us live in such a way to bring glory to Him! ☺

Maybe you know that you have not begun to have a personal relationship with God yet and you'd like to do that today:

(Use the colors of the salvation bracelets to present the gospel)

Gold- God's glory- He's perfect and holy. God's glory is all of Who He is put on display. Like the Westminster Catechism states, "The

chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever." We glorify Him by acknowledging Who He is.

Black- Man's sin- we can't do anything to earn salvation- we need a savior. We sin when we fail to give God the glory (praise or thank Him or acknowledge Him as the One True God). Romans 3:23- For *all* have sinned and *fall short of the glory* of God.

Red- Jesus' blood- He became our savior, dying on the cross to take the punishment for our sins.

White- Cleansing of sin- When Jesus died on the cross, the punishment for our sin was placed on Him. He then has given those He has called to salvation His perfect righteousness (the perfect, sinless life we could not live). We then become clean before our holy God. If we believe in this message, and want Jesus to be our most precious treasure in all the world, God will forgive our sins, bring us into His family, and begin the journey of growing fruit into our lives.

Green- GROW in Christ -ways that God uses to grow us to be more like Himself. We will want to:

Go to God in prayer,

Read the Bible,

Obey God, and

Witness- tell others what God has done in your life.

All of this leads to the ultimate goal of worship- glorifying God and enjoying Him forever. We end up right where we started- with God's glory.

If you would like to ask Jesus to come into your life right now, you can pray something like this in your heart.

Jesus, I admit that I cannot get to heaven on my own because I have sinned. But right now, I believe that You died for my sin so I could live with You in heaven when I die. I ask You to come into my heart

and make me clean. Help me to live the way You want me to. I want to get to know You as my best friend. In Your name I pray, Amen.

If you prayed this in your heart, please see one of the coaches afterward so we can rejoice with you!

Pray to close the session.

Week #8- Summary

Our season's theme verse is *Philippians 3:8a-*

"What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

We hope you have learned that knowing Jesus as your Savior is the most important thing in life. Let's review what we've learned about our incredible Lord so far this season:

<p>Week 1 Jay Phillips gets a call to come out to California with his family to direct the Randolph Sports Clinic.</p> <p>†There is only one Jesus!</p>	<p>Jesus, the One and Only</p> <p>John 1:14- "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."</p>
<p>Week 2 On the first day, the family stops to have lunch and sees a homeless man and decides to give him their picnic basket.</p> <p>†Jesus is the only thing that will satisfy the spiritual hunger and thirst in our lives.</p>	<p>Jesus, the Bread of Life</p> <p>John 6:35- "Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.'"</p>
<p>Week 3 The Phillips family stops at the Lighthouse Inn during a storm and the power goes out.</p> <p>† Jesus is the light, the total opposite of sin and evil.</p>	<p>Jesus, the Light of the World</p> <p>John 8:12- "When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"</p>

<p>Week 4 Signs for Uncle Moo’s Petting Zoo beckon the Phillips’ to stop and pet the animals. They are most interested in the sheep.</p> <p>‡Jesus is our Shepherd Who provides love, leadership, protection, and faithfulness.</p>	<p>Jesus , the Good Shepherd</p> <p>John 10:14- “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”</p>
<p>Week 5 Junior and Heather get to feed the sheep. Mr. Moo tells them his favorite animals are the sheep because they remind him that Jesus is the Lamb of God.</p> <p>‡Jesus died for our sin on the cross.</p>	<p>Jesus , the Lamb of God</p> <p>John 1:29- “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.’”</p>
<p>Week 6 The radiator begins leaking as the family stops at a grape stand in California’s vineyard country. They meet a boy named Tricky, who turns out to be Mr. Randolph’s nephew.</p> <p>‡Staying connected to the True Vine (Jesus) is necessary for bearing fruit, learning His will, prayer, loving others, and experiencing full joy.</p>	<p>Jesus , the True Vine</p> <p>John 15:5- “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”</p>

<p>Week 7 The family makes it to the Randolph Clinic offices and meet up with Mr. Randolph. Mr. Phillips shares their experiences traveling across the country and is able to witness to his old friend. Mr. Randolph decides to accept Jesus as his Savior.</p> <p>‡ Jesus is the only way to heaven.</p>	<p>Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life</p> <p>John 14:6- “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”</p>
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What was your favorite week’s lesson this season? Why?

There is still time to accept Jesus as your Savior if you would like. Just get with one of us afterward.

Take some prayer requests and pray to close the session.

Appendix~ A Fuller Understanding of Salvation

The Gold, Black, Red, and White color sections are based on Chapter 2 entitled “Conversion” (pages 54-64) from *Desiring God* by John Piper

The term “Glory of God” in the Bible generally refers to the visible splendor or moral beauty of God’s manifold perfections. God’s ultimate goal and our ultimate goal are the same: to glorify God. At the same time, He desires to satisfy the hearts of those who live to glorify Himself. He joins us in the pursuit to glorify Him. Of course, this does not apply to everyone, for not everyone will make Christ their ultimate treasure.

Mere “belief” is not enough. Many sinful folks say they “believe in Jesus” but it is not enough to change their lifestyle. Even Satan and his demons believe in Jesus. A more appropriate question is “Do you receive Jesus as your treasure? Do you treasure Him more than anything?” Note our season theme verse- Philippians 3:8, “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”

Note some key truths outlining our need and God’s provision:

Gold

1: We were created in His image so we would act as prisms, reflecting God’s glory. “The proper understanding of everything in life begins with God. No one will ever understand the necessity of conversion who does not know why God created us.” (p.56)

2: It is the duty of every person to live for the glory of God. Our duty comes from God’s design. That means to value Him/His glory above all else and make it known with implicit thanksgiving. Nature and conscience provide the witness for all men, so all men are without excuse (Rom. 1:20, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities- His eternal power and divine nature- have been

clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”).

Black

3. All of us have failed in some way to glorify God as we should. (Rom. 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”) This does not mean we are to be as glorious as God, but that we have exchanged the glory of God for images. (Rom. 1:22-23 states, “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.” This is how we “fall short” of God’s glory. We have exchanged something of supreme value for something of lesser value. All sin comes from not putting the supreme value on God’s glory. This is the very essence of sin. (p.57) We have dishonored His glory by trusting in ourselves. The evil of sin is not so much what it does to us or others, but what it does to God. But we do not just choose to sin, we are sinful by birth.

4. We are all subject to eternal condemnation by God for falling short of His glory. Hell is not just a temporary place of judgment and rehabilitation. It is eternal torment and separation because we have acted against our duty to glorify Him Who is eternally holy, righteous, excellent, and beautiful. (Rom. 6:23, “The wages of sin is death.” 2 Thess. 1:9, “They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might.”).

Red

5. In His great mercy, God has made a way for sinners to enter into His righteousness by dying on the cross in their place and rising from the dead. (1 Peter 3:18, “Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.” Rom. 6:5, “If we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.” Also note 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so

that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”)

The good news is that God Himself has decreed a way to satisfy the demands of His justice without condemning the whole human race. The wisdom of God has ordained a way for the love of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God—through the death of the Son of God for sinners.

White

6. The benefits of the death of Christ belong to those who repent and trust in Him. (Acts 3:19, “Repent, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out.”) Think of it as heads and tails—turn tail on the fruit of unbelief and head straight for Jesus and His promises. Conversion is a miracle of God. Repentance and faith are our acts, but it is made possible because of God’s work of regeneration.

Regeneration is where God takes our hard, rebellious hearts and replaces them with a heart that desires Him above all (Ezekiel 36:26-27, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” Also note Ephesians 2:4-5, “But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions— it is by grace you have been saved.” And Eph. 2:8-9, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.” Lastly note Romans 9:16, “It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.”).

So when we repent (turn) from our sin and place our faith in Christ alone for our salvation, we are in fact responding to the work of God already done in our hearts. Saving faith, then, is the confidence that if you forsake all sinful pleasures, the hidden treasure of holy joy will satisfy your deepest desire. Saving faith is the heartfelt conviction

not only that Christ is reliable, but also that He is desirable. It is the confidence that He will come through with His promises and that what He promises is more to be desired than all the world.

Green

Although not addressed in this particular chapter of *Desiring God*, we know that a close relationship with Christ is the key to real spiritual growth. John chapter 15 refers to this wondrous relationship as “abiding” or “remaining” in Christ. The chapter is a word picture of Christ as the vine, the Father as the gardener, and we as believers as the branches. The only way to live a fruit-laden, joy-filled, God-glorified life is to stay connected to the Vine. John 15: 5 states, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.”

As we grow in our relationship, we begin to bear fruit much like a real branch bears real grapes. This fruit comes in the form of attitudes, actions, and words born from a heart that is becoming increasingly more like Christ. Galatians 5:22 gives us a list of some fruit that we will produce when we abide in Christ— love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The G-R-O-W acronym mentioned in the weekly devotion section helps the children to get a better understanding of the actions which take place as a result of our new relationship with Christ. They will want to **Go** to God in prayer, **Read** the Bible, **Obey** God and parents, and **Witness** to others as a result of what has happened in their hearts.

Also, in John 15:9-11, “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father’s commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” This joy Christ is speaking of is the joy we find in knowing and glorifying Christ, which ultimately

leads us back to the gold color- God's glory. As a regenerated believer, we will have that new desire to give Him glory the way it should be.