

# DEVOTIONAL



## WINTER SEASON 2022

CHAMP Office – 704.341.5387  
Weather Hotline – 704.341.5473  
[www.champsportsinfo.com](http://www.champsportsinfo.com)

# Welcome to CHAMP Sports!

## Winter 2022 - Season Schedule

Practices Begin: Week of January 10  
Game Schedules: Week of December 17  
Uniform Distribution: Week of January 10  
First Game Day: Saturday, January 15  
End-of-Season Celebration: Saturday, February 26  
Season Ends: Saturday, February 26

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Weather Hotline: 704.341.5473  
Updated Mon-Fri. at 3:00 PM; Sat. at 7:30 AM

Join us weekly for Sunday morning  
worship service at 9:45AM in  
Calvary's sanctuary

**Please remember to pray for your team and their families!**

# Welcome to CHAMP Sports!

*Week of January 10-14*

Welcome to CHAMP Sports! Each week during devotions, you will have the opportunity to think and grow! This season we will be talking about the story of Jonah.

Jonah lived a long time ago—way before God’s Son, Jesus, came to earth. God called Jonah to be one of His prophets. As one of God’s prophets, Jonah’s job was to tell God’s messages to the people. Often, God sent His prophets to speak to the children of Israel, but sometimes God sent His prophets to speak to other people. God sent Jonah to speak to the people of Nineveh.

Nineveh was a great city, but the people of Nineveh weren’t very nice people. In fact, they were quite terrible. They didn’t follow God’s ways of love, kindness, and mercy, or of justice, righteousness, and truth. They did whatever *they* felt was right each day, and their lives were a mess because of it.

God is not pleased when people go their own way and do their own thing. God does not like rebellion. Satan, God’s great enemy, rebelled. Satan encouraged the first humans, Adam and Eve, to rebel. God says that those who rebel against Him are cut off from life; they cannot have true peace; they cannot have true joy; their hearts are cold and hard; they live in darkness, and they have no hope.

God is not pleased by darkness. He wants people to be full of life and light and truth. People who walk around in darkness often get hurt because they bump into things or trip and fall. God doesn’t want this. He wants people to walk in the light. He wants people to know Him and be full of life. Thus, when God sees people walking in darkness, He sends His prophets to tell them the good news that there is another way—a way of hope and light and life. All they must do is change their minds. They must stop going their own way and instead go God’s way.

When God spoke to Jonah about the people of Nineveh, God said, “they do not know their right hand from their left” (Jonah 4:11). What did God mean? He meant that the people of Nineveh did not understand basic things about life—like who God is and how life is supposed to work. God wanted to teach them the truth about Him and about life. God wants to teach each one of us His ways and His truth. Are you ready to learn?!

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**Psalm 118:27**

**The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us.**

*Questions: What is God like? Who is Jesus? What kinds of things does the Holy Spirit do?*

**Please remember to pray for your team and their families!**

# GO!

Week of January 17-21

When Jesus was here on earth, the very last thing He told us before He went up to sit down at God's right hand was that He wanted us to go and make disciples. A disciple is someone who dedicates himself or herself to learning from a teacher. Jesus had twelve disciples who lived life with Him for three years. They watched what He did. They went where He went. They asked Him questions; and they listened to His answers. Jesus was their teacher, and the number one thing He taught them to do was to know God.

Jesus spent every day of His life on this earth knowing His Father. He did the things His Father had for Him to do. He was taught by His Father as He Himself said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me" (John 8:28). Jesus told us that eternal life is to "know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3). So, when Jesus left this earth to return to His Father, He sent His disciples out to teach other people the same things that He had taught them. He sent them out to teach other people to know God.

A long time ago, when God saw the problems in the city of Nineveh, He decided to send His prophet Jonah to speak to the people of Nineveh. God told Jonah, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me" (Jonah 1:2).

God's goal in sending Jonah to Nineveh was that the people would hear and understand God's point of view regarding them and their city. When it comes to truth, what God thinks and what God says is 100% true. If we want to be people who know the truth, we need to hear what God thinks and what God says. Jesus told the Jews who believed in Him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

God's Word is true, and the truth sets people free. The people in Nineveh did not know God's truth, and because they did not know God's truth they were not free. The people of Nineveh were trapped in darkness and lies. They needed God's truth! Everyone in the world needs God's truth! Are you growing in God's truth?

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**Psalm 25:4**

**Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.**

*Questions: How can we learn God's truth? What is your favorite book in the Bible?*

**Please remember to pray for your team and their families!**

# Running Away from God

Week of January 24-28

After the word of the LORD came to Jonah and told him to go to Nineveh, Jonah had a decision to make. Would he obey God or would he disobey God? Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh so he decided to run away from the presence of God.

Jonah thought that the best way to get away from God's presence would be to get on a ship that was going to Tarshish, a city that was roughly 2,500 miles from Nineveh!

Do you think that people can run away from God's presence? Is there anywhere that we can go where God isn't? Of course not. God is everywhere, and He sees everything!

King David, in the Bible, says, "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139:7-10).

The fact that God is everywhere can be comforting, but it can also be scary. If we are in trouble, it is comforting to know that God sees us and that He is able to help us. However, sometimes we are like Jonah, and we don't want God to talk to us, or maybe are like Adam and Eve, and there is something that we've done that we want to hide from God. That can be scary!

What should we do if we are scared of God? First, we should get to know Him. God is good. He is Kind. He is Love. These are wonderful things! Knowing that God is gentle and patient gives us the courage to come to Him and to trust Him. However, we might still be scared of God if we've done things that we know aren't right, or if we think that God will ask us to do things that we don't want to do.

The good news of the Gospel is that God is both ready and excited to forgive us of all of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness if we will turn from going our own way and accept Jesus Christ, God's Son, as our Lord and Savior. Once we do that, God will start to teach us what He wants for our lives, which is for us to grow up in Jesus in all things so that we can be everything that God designed us to be. Sometimes God may ask us to do hard things, but He will always give us the grace to do them, and we will see afterwards how wise and good He is!

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## **Nahum 1:7**

**The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble;** he knows those who take refuge in him.

*Questions: How well do you know God? Do you trust God? Do you believe that God is good?*

**Please remember to pray for your team and their families!**

# A Great Fish

Week of January 31 – February 4

What is a miracle? In the Bible, a miracle is something that God does that shows His power and authority over creation. God did many miracles in Jonah's life. Today, we are going to talk about a number of them.

When Jonah got on the ship that was going to Tarshish, he told the sailors on the ship that he was running away from the presence of the LORD, and then he went to sleep in the bottom of the ship. Soon, a great storm began on the sea, and the sailors became afraid that the ship would sink. So, they each cried out to their gods for help, but nothing happened. Then, the captain, seeing Jonah asleep in the bottom of the ship, woke Jonah, and said, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god!" (Jonah 1:6). But Jonah knew why the storm was raging. God had sent the storm because Jonah was running away from Him.

In their desperation, the sailors decided to cast lots. The lot fell on Jonah, and the sailors demanded to know who Jonah was and what he was doing. As Jonah explained his situation to them, the sailors said, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us? (Jonah 1:11). And Jonah said, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you" (Jonah 1:12).

At first, the sailors did not want to throw Jonah into the sea, but eventually they decided to do it because the storm just wouldn't stop. As soon as they threw Jonah into the sea, the sea miraculously stopped its raging, and the sailors feared the LORD.

It would seem that Jonah's story would end there. He was stuck in the middle of the sea with nothing but his swimming skills, if he had any, but God had a job for Jonah to do, and so God appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah up. Not only did the fish swallow Jonah up, but the LORD spoke to the fish, and the fish obeyed the LORD and spit Jonah up on dry land!

How many miracles did God do to get Jonah back on track to go to Nineveh so that he could deliver God's message to the people? [Coaches, you can ask players to think about it and give you an answer.] At least five! 1) God sent a storm, 2) The lot fell on Jonah, 3) God quieted the storm, 4) God appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, 5) The fish spit Jonah up on dry land.

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## **Proverbs 9:10**

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom**, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

*Questions: What does it mean to fear God? Is the God of the Bible your God? Do you obey Him?*

**Please remember to pray for your team and their families!**

# Salvation Belongs to the LORD!

*Week of February 7-11*

Does anyone know how long Jonah was in the belly of the fish before God commanded that the fish spit him out? Three days and three nights!

Three days and three nights is a very important amount of time in the Bible. Do you know why? It's because Jesus, after He died on the cross for our sins, was in the tomb for three days and three nights before God raised Him from the dead.

The story of Jonah helps us understand something about what it was like for Jesus to die for our sins and be buried in the grave.

While Jonah was in the belly of the fish, he prayed. In his prayer, he describes his situation. He was distressed. He was deep in heart of the seas, and the waters had closed in over him to take his life. His head was wrapped with weeds, and his life was fainting away. However, in the middle of that darkness, Jonah had hope because when he called out to the LORD, the LORD answered him" (Jonah 2:1). By faith, Jonah knew that God would save Him.

When Jesus died for us, He committed His spirit into the hands of the Father. Jesus trusted that He would be saved from death and that He would be "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4). Jesus was raised from the dead because death could not hold Him. His human life was perfect in every way because He always did what pleased His Father (John 8:29).

God's good news is that because Jesus lives, we can live also! All we must do is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and we will be saved. What does it mean to believe in Jesus? It means that we stop trusting in ourselves and instead place our trust in God. It means that we accept what Jesus did for us on the cross and accept Him as our Lord and Savior.

If you want to believe in Jesus today, please let me or (Coach -----) know. If you already have placed your hope and trust in Jesus Christ and you want to learn more about how to know God better, please let me or (Coach -----) know. Now let's pray:

Father, we thank you for the salvation that you have provided for us in your Son, Jesus Christ. Fill us with all wisdom and spiritual understanding so that we can walk with you all the days of forever. Amen!

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**Habakkuk 3:18**

**I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.**

**Please remember to pray for your team and their families!**

# They Believed God!

Week of February 14-18

God sent Jonah to Nineveh with a message. The message was, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4). The reason that God was going to overthrow Nineveh was because their “evil had come up before Him” (Jonah 1:2).

As Jonah called out against the people of Nineveh because of their evil, something amazing happened. We read that, “the people of Nineveh believed God” (Jonah 3:5).

When the people of Nineveh believed God everything about their situation changed! Their focus shifted from themselves to God. They stopped listening to themselves and started listening to God. When God “saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, He relented of the disaster he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it” (Jonah 3:10).

Who we listen to is so important! If we listen to God and believe what He says, we will walk in God’s truth. If we don’t listen to God, we will end up doing whatever is good or evil in our own eyes. God warns us against doing this. He says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death” (Proverbs 14:12).

God made each one of us to live by faith. What does it mean to live by faith? It means that we take our direction from God. It was when Eve, “saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise” that “she took of its fruit and ate” (Genesis 3:6).

Eve got in trouble because she turned from looking to God for direction and started looking to herself. If we do not want to make the same mistake as Eve, we must learn to “look to Jesus” (Hebrews 12:2) instead of looking to ourselves.

As we look to Jesus, He will lead us through life. He will teach us what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false, what is good and what is evil. When we follow Jesus, we are following *the Way*—God’s Way.

God’s Way leads to life. God’s way is *the Truth*. Do you know God’s Way? Do you know Jesus?

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## Hebrews 10:38

**My righteous one shall live by faith,** and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.

*Questions: What does it mean to live by faith? Can you think of some people in the Bible who lived by faith? (Hebrews 11 has a great list of people who lived by faith.)*

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# Our Kind God

Week of February 21-25

God tells us what He wants us to do each day: “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

Sometimes it is hard for us to do justice and love kindness at the same time, but it isn't hard for God. God says of Himself that He is, “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6-7).

In the story of Jonah, we see how God is both just and merciful. The people of Nineveh had done evil things in the sight of God, but God was willing to show them mercy if they would humble themselves before Him and turn from their evil way (Jonah 3:9).

When the people of Nineveh did turn from their evil way, God showed them His mercy by forgiving their transgression and sin and relenting from the disaster that He said He would do to them.

God was able to forgive the people of Nineveh because Jesus died on the cross for the sins of every person who has ever lived. Jesus died for Adam's sins, Abraham's sins, Jonah's sins, and the sins of every human being, including each one of us!

In Jesus, God's love, justice, and mercy work together in such a way that we can be saved! As we study our Bibles, we will understand better and better exactly how God saves us and what it means to be saved.

Salvation is a big subject. When we talk about salvation, we have to understand what God saves us from and what God saves us to. We have to understand what it means to be born again and what it means to grow up in Jesus Christ. We have to understand what it means to be justified, sanctified, and glorified. If you want to learn about all of these things and more, study your Bible and ask God for wisdom!

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## **Hosea 12:6**

So you, by the help of your God, return, **hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.**

*Questions: How does the Holy Spirit help us grow spiritually? Is God's Spirit living inside of you?*

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