

Everyone starts somewhere, but most will be remembered for where and how they finished.

In every facet of life there are those who “Go the Distance,” and not only Go the Distance, but do it with a flair that causes those that know them to admire and emulate them. People who live to be 100 years of age, workers who finish 20, 30 or more years at the same job, marriages that last 50 years or more, and people who never waiver in their beliefs throughout their life; these people are admired for their ability to “Go the Distance.”

However, every person on the planet, even the successful ones, face struggles that cause them to want to quit, to take the easy path, to give up, or to compromise. People that persevere and “Go the Distance” without doing these things are admired and seen as successful. Everyone admires those who continue in the journey and finish the race strong, whether it is the athlete who has had a long and storied career, or the person who has completed a daunting task.

Athletics create situations that are great metaphors for life. A sporting contest, an athletic career, and a sports season all have beginnings and endings. Whether the athlete, coach or team went the distance is easily measured. These athletic metaphors, along with principles from God’s Word, form a powerful communication technique that helps us understand how to live our everyday lives so that we can “Go the Distance.”

The “Go the Distance” curriculum will take the approach of correlating five key qualities that give athletes the ability to “Go the Distance” with similar Biblical principles that can give us practical tips to help us “Go the Distance” in our lives.



Theme Verse

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

II Timothy 4:7-8

These qualities include:

1. Be willing to change
2. Endure hardships
3. Know how to renew your strength
4. Know you cannot do it alone
5. Know where the finish line is

To develop the theme we will look at great sports endurance stories, as well as accounts from the missionary journeys of Paul the Apostle for our inspiration. Our theme verses will be found in II Timothy 4:7-8, in which Paul states, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

The children who will hear these lessons will face crucial moments in their lives, where their decision could affect their ability to "Go the Distance." Through music, role modeling, teaching, actions, and the written word, the Christian child will be given guidance in how to recognize persevering principles from God's Word. The non-Christian child will be challenged and shown how to trust God for a life that will be abundant, fruitful, and fulfilling.

God's Word is the only true guide for living a life that will stand up under the pressure of life and finish strong. I pray that as you read and live the lessons in your preparation for teaching, that God will give you insights as to how to share your own applications of these concepts and that you will be inspired to "Go the Distance."



Theme Verse

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II Timothy 4:7-8

Weekly Outline

DAY	THEME: To Go the Distance You Must...	KEY POINTS	BIBLE STORY	SPORTS STORY
One	Be willing to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change can happen in an instant • Change will be permanent if God does it 	Conversion of Paul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18	Julian Edelman
Two	Endure hardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many times hardships seem undeserved • God uses our hardships for His glory 	Paul & Silas in Prison 11 Corinthians 11:23-27, Acts 16:16-34	Simone Biles
Three	Know how to renew your strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An off-season is always needed for rest • God never needs an off-season 	Paul's Shipwreck on the Way to Rome Acts 27	Chicago Cubs
Four	Know you cannot do it alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one can do it alone • You are never alone if God is with you 	Paul before King Agrippa Acts 25:23-26:18	Leicester City FC
Five	Know where the finish line is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finishing brings rewards • Finishing God's way has eternal rewards 	Paul in Prison in Rome Philippians 4:11, II Timothy 4:7-8	Lebron James

DAY 1

To Go the Distance you must...

Be willing to change

Bible Story

Saul's Conversion at Tarsus (Acts 9:1-18)

Theme Verse

II Timothy 4: 7-8

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

Key Points:

- * Change can happen in an instant.
- * Change will be permanent if God does it.



Lesson Focus

Everyone will finish their own personal journey at some time in some way. Choices made along the journey many times will determine how and in what manner the person finishes. In every person's life there are crucial moments of choice that determine whether you will be able to "Go the Distance." Finishing the race in the right way, having self-respect and integrity, and receiving the prize for work well done are things that can happen at any time because of a persons' choice to change the direction of their life at a crucial moment. In athletics it could be a choice of work ethic, coach, team or sport. In spiritual terms it boils down to a choice to do it with or without God's help.

Song List

1. My God
2. Everybody Everywhere
3. This Is Amazing Grace
4. Greater
5. Flawless
6. Glory

Sports Story: Julian Edelman

Hello my name is (insert your name) and welcome to (insert church name) sports camp. We are going to have a great week and I am glad you're here!

Opening Questions and Dialogue:

Why did you come to sports camp?

(Have a few kids answer- you are looking for the answer, "To learn".)

Yes you are here to learn. At other sports camps you will learn about your sport, but at this camp you will learn not only about your sport but you will learn new things about the Bible. You will learn new things about sports history and you will learn new songs.

That's right we sing at our camps! Yes, and everyone sings – even you big guys in the back. I brought along some coaches to help me this week and I want you to meet them.

Introduce your interns and church coaches.

Opening Music

Song: My God

Song: Everybody Everywhere

Just like that song said, going the distance is pleasing to God. I told you this camp was a little different than other camps. This camp has a theme.

Who can tell me the theme? (Go the Distance)

If I say as an athlete, "You need to Go the Distance," what does that mean?

(You finished strong, you did what was required of you, and you didn't quit.)

In life, not just sports, we need to be able to Go the Distance.

In our world today many people do not Go the Distance. When things get hard either they quit or go strong at first but don't finish; they try to do it alone and don't make it.

In the Bible in II Timothy 4:7-8 the Apostle Paul says this, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing."



Paul's words are going to be our inspiration this week. Each day this week we will try to learn what it takes to "Go the Distance." Today we find that in order to Go the Distance you must be willing to change!

Everyone say, "Be willing to Change."

If you are doing things that will hinder you from going the distance, you need to be willing to change. Being stubborn and trying to do things the way you want may not be the right way. You might discover things this week that will help you change your actions to help you Go the Distance. Change sometimes does not feel good, but it could be an important step towards the future.

Each day we want to start our camp with prayer. After prayer we will dismiss you to your sports. Everyone will meet back here for the halftime rally. Let's pray.

PRAY TO OPEN CAMP

Be Willing to Change

Julian Edelman – receiver, New England Patriots

Julian Edelman is not very tall; in fact, he is only 5' 10" tall. To play football in the NFL you usually need to be either big or fast or be exceptionally good at your position. Julian Edelman was not big, and he was not exceptionally good at his position- but he was fast and quick. He was a good quarterback but not a great quarterback. On April 26th in 2009 Julian Edelman's ability to Go the Distance changed in an instant. The New England Patriots drafted him to play professional football--in that moment, his chance for going the distance in football changed.

Let's go back a bit ... Julian was born in Northern California and played high school quarterback at Woodbury High, and his senior year he helped his team win all 13 games on their schedule with no defeats. When he graduated from high school he played quarterback for the local junior college and set the record for most yards rushed by a quarterback. After a year, there, he went on to play quarterback at Kent State. His senior year at Kent State, he led the team in passing and rushing and set the school record for most all-purpose yards.

It was clear that Julian loved football and was good at it, but to Go the Distance and play in the NFL he would have to change.

In 2009 he was drafted in the 7th and final round by the New England Patriots. Not as a quarterback, but more as a great athlete who could run and catch and was fast. If he was going to make it as a professional football player, he would have to change positions-- many times!

In 2009 he was used as a receiver and was leading all rookie receivers before he broke his arm.

In 2010 he was used mainly as a punt and kick-off return specialist. His 94-yard punt return was the longest ever in team history.

In 2011 he was again a return specialist but also was used as a defensive back in multiple games.

In 2012 he became one of only a few players to score a return touchdown and a receiving touchdown in back to back games.

In 2013 he became the 3rd player in Patriot history to catch over 100 receptions in a season

In 2014 he added one more position to his list....

Let's watch and see what he did- UW embedded Video

In 2015 he won a Super Bowl with the Patriots and scored the winning touchdown on a reception.

Julian Edelman knows to Go the Distance you must be willing to change and that change could happen in an instant.

Incorporate the Theme

Design a drill or exercise that emphasizes change to be successful (change of direction, change of teammates, or change of restrictions). Increase the odds of success by making a change. When the desired outcome has been accomplished in the drill bring the kids together and make the point that to Go the Distance sometimes you must be willing to change. Being persistent in a method or strategy is good most of the time, but sometimes you must be willing to change. Continue to look for teaching moments throughout the week where either a child changed what he was doing to bring about a desired result or where a child needs to change. Be the leader in their life by either encouraging the decision they made or encouraging them to change.

Tell a life story about a time when you had to change your attitude or actions in order to continue on in a successful manner. If possible share about a time when this change was initiated by God or influenced by a decision to please God.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some good reasons to change?
(If you are doing something bad, or if a new direction is better)
2. Is change always good?
(No, you need to know why and what are the possible outcomes if you change)
3. If a person is always changing their mind, is that good?
(Probably not, because people think they cannot trust them)
4. Why can you trust God if He asks you to change?
(He knows everything about you and He loves you)

HALF-TIME RALLY

Song: This Is Amazing Grace

Song: Greater

Introduce the memory verse and motions at this time.

Song: Flawless

Bible Passage: Acts 9:1-18

Interactive Ideas

- » Have the kids close their eyes for part of the story to emphasize their hearing of what you say.
- » Draw the correlation to Saul being blind and hearing what God was saying to him.
- » Bring a child up and blindfold him or her for the portion of the story when Saul was blind.
- » Utilize the terms “mother tongue” and “Aramaic” in different parts of the story. Lead the kids in questions like “his mother tongue was.....? or Aramaic was called what...?”

Just like our sports story today our Bible has a story about a man who also changed and by doing so was able to “Go the Distance” for God. His name was Saul of Tarsus. Now in the days of the Bible people did not have two names like we do today. A person had one name and to identify him from someone else who had the same name the second part of his name was where he was from. So Saul was Saul of Tarsus because Tarsus was his hometown.

Let's play a little game today. Let's change your name to be like Saul. So I am (insert name) of (insert city) What is your name?

(Have a few kids answer out loud.)

(Or, have each child turn to someone and introduce themselves with the formula.)

In chapter 9 of the book of Acts, we are introduced to this man Saul.

Fast Facts

- » Saul was raised in Tarsus, a city that is located in what is now Turkey.
- » Saul's parents were devout Jews.
- » Saul spoke Greek (like English today) but his mother tongue was Aramaic (like Jesus).
- » Saul was probably about the same age as Jesus.
- » Saul was sent to Jerusalem probably at the age of 13 to study under the great teacher Gamaliel.
- » Saul probably had seen or heard of Jesus during his time in Jerusalem as a young man.
- » Saul thought Jesus was a false prophet, not the Messiah He claimed to be.
- » Saul hated the followers of Jesus because they were saying Jesus was God and was alive.
- » Damascus was 100 miles to the north of Jerusalem.
- » Some Jewish Christians had fled to Damascus because of persecution by guys like Saul.
- » Saul was on the way to Damascus to arrest these Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem for judgment.
- » Saul thought Jesus was dead.

Read Acts 9: 1- 2

Sounds like a pretty mean guy to me, “breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples.” Let me give you some background on Saul because for the next five days at camp we are going to follow his life and see what things he did to “Go the Distance.” Maybe we can pick up some hints to help us “Go the Distance.”

As we know Saul came from Tarsus, a city that was in what we now call Turkey. If you hear on the news about the country of Turkey, you should remember, Saul of Tarsus lived there.

His parents were very religious Jewish people and Saul was a good Jewish boy that had a very good mind. He got the best grades in school. He was probably the smartest boy in his school.

If I asked you who the smartest boy or girl in your school was could you tell me?

Saul was super smart. He spoke three languages: Greek, the common language of the world (like English today), Latin, and his main language Aramaic. The main language a person grows up hearing at home is called their “mother tongue.”

In fact he was so smart that when he was 13 he was sent off to Jerusalem, a city far away, to study under one of the greatest Jewish teachers of the time, Gamaliel. **(GA- May Lee- EL)**

Under the leadership of Gamaliel, Saul grew into a top religious lawyer. He knew all the rules or laws a Jewish person followed and he did not like anyone who broke those rules or did not follow the Jewish laws.

He did not like change. He wanted everyone to follow the rules that had been in place for hundreds of years.

When Saul was growing up in Tarsus and Jerusalem another boy was growing up in a town called Nazareth.

Do you know who that was? (Jesus)

Yes, Jesus and Saul were probably about the same age. When Jesus was about 30 years old He began to do miracles and teach people about God. Saul probably heard about Him or even possibly heard Jesus speak. Jesus spoke Aramaic just like Saul did.

Jesus was telling the Jewish people that the rules were different now. He told them that all the things they were taught before should be understood a different way.

Do you think Saul liked this? No, of course not. He thought Jesus was telling lies.

Do you think Jesus would tell lies?

No, Jesus is God and God never lies. He never did anything wrong in His whole life, ever! But one day a group of Jewish leaders convinced the Romans that Jesus was a trouble maker and needed to die. They took Jesus and killed him on a cross.

Well after Jesus was crucified on the cross, Saul probably thought that the people who followed Jesus would forget about Him and go back to obeying the rules the old way. But that did not happen.

Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples encouraging them to teach that the old rules did not apply anymore. Even more people began to change and do things the way Jesus had taught them. Saul did not believe Jesus was alive. He believed that this was a trick.

That really made Saul mad, so he got the authorities in Jerusalem to give him permission to find these disciples of Jesus and put them in prison and even kill them for changing their beliefs. If he could put them in prison or kill them then things would go back to what Saul thought was the right way. That is what he thought. So just like the Bible said, he was on his way to Damascus to arrest some of these disciples who had run away from Jerusalem to get away from Saul.

So this is where our story really gets exciting.

Read Acts 9:3-4

Just as he was arriving on the road to Damascus a light from heaven exploded! It was so bright that it knocked Saul to the ground and struck him blind.

This brings us to our first **key point** today:

Change can happen in an instant.

Change doesn’t have to take a long time. You could decide today that tomorrow morning you are going to get up before your Mom wakes you and clean your room. You could decide you are going to do that every morning from now on when you get up. I don’t think many of you would decide this, but you could. Change can happen in an instant.

(Possibly use the blindfold now or have the kids close their eyes for the next part of the story.)

So our story continues, Saul is blinded and then he hears a voice, not just any voice, a voice speaking in Aramaic.

The voice says, “Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?”

Who was speaking from heaven? (Jesus that's right) "Who are you Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," He replied.

Jesus, the one that Saul thought was dead, was alive! If this was true, everything Saul thought was right was wrong. The disciples of Jesus were right, Jesus is the Son of God! Saul had to change if he was to "Go the Distance" for God the right way.

Saul's life was dramatically changed in an instant that day under a bright light on a dusty road. God met Saul there and Saul literally changed the direction he was going. Because God changed Saul's direction, it became a change that lasted the rest of his life. It was permanent.

This brings us to our **second key** point of the day:

Change will be permanent if God does it.

A blind, humble Saul was led into town to meet the Christians he went to arrest, and then three days later a man named Ananias came and prayed for Saul and his eyes were opened and he could see again. For the next 14 years he learned how to Go the Distance God's way. Tomorrow we will pick up his story about 17-20 years later.

Application



As you grow up there will be times in your life when you need to change the things you are doing, just like your coaches shared with you about times when they needed to change in their own life. Maybe you are not as bad as Saul, because you are not trying to hurt people like he was. But maybe you are doing things that would not be pleasing to God. Maybe you are being disrespectful to your parents or adults and you are talking back to them. Maybe you are being stubborn and not willing to take instruction or advice from people who God has put in your life. Maybe you are not studying and not doing your homework to the best of your ability.

Maybe the things are not bad things at all. Maybe they are just decisions that you need to make that will be the best choices and you need help making the right decision. God

will help you change to "Go the Distance" His way. That change can be instant, you can decide today to listen to God and if God makes the change, that change will be permanent.

Remember our **key points** today:

Key Point I: Change can happen in an instant.
Key Point II: Change will be permanent if God does it.

Closing

Song: Glory
Sports Flash Explanation

Prayer

Dear Jesus, help us to know when to change. We want to do the things that will please You. If we are doing something You do not like, help us to change so we can Go the Distance for You. In Jesus Name Amen.