

FCA MEETINGS



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PURSUE OVERVIEW

“Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.” — 1 Timothy 6:11

WHAT ARE YOU PURSUING?

When you pursue your goals in sports, what are you trying to achieve? Winning a championship? A spot on a team? Fans chanting your name? Breaking a record? Whatever it is, you sacrifice your blood, sweat and tears to accomplish your goals. Your passion paves the way for fulfilling your dreams.

God does the same for you. He pursues you. God loves you and accepts you as you are. Success is no longer defined by your skills. With Him, you can leave the pressure of performance behind. With Him, you’re already a winner. His sacrifice for you gives you significance. You have a new purpose when you play. Pursue the mission that He has paved for you: a relationship with Him.

FOUR STUDIES TO HELP YOU PURSUE

MEETING 1: PURSUE TRUTH

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” — John 8:32

MEETING 2: PURSUE LIFE

“The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.” — John 10:10

MEETING 3: PURSUE TEAM

“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” — Hebrews 10:24–25

MEETING 4: PURSUE MISSION

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” — Acts 1:8

IF YOU HAVE FEWER THAN FOUR MEETINGS

These four topics were designed to fit together for a complete message. It’s not recommended to completely skip any of the topics. If you need to cover the contents in fewer than four meeting times, consider these options:

- Depending on your emphasis and group makeup, you may decide to focus a bit more on one or two topics while hitting the highlights in the others.
- If you cover two topics in a meeting, choose only one “WARM-UP” section for the time.

MEETING 1:

PURSUE TRUTH

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

—John 8:32

WELCOME

STEAL THE BACON!

In this game, we’re going to divide up into two teams. One team will line up on one end of the court or field. The other team will line up on the other end. We’re going to place one ball or object (“the bacon”) in the middle. Make sure there’s equal distance between both teams and the middle.

The leader is going to make a statement that might apply to everyone or might apply to a few of you—random comments like “I had oatmeal for breakfast!” or “I have a pet fish!”

If that statement applies to you, run as fast as you can to “steal the bacon!”

The first person to grab the ball and run back to their side gets a point for their team. After each point is scored, the leader will collect “the bacon” and reset for another round.



PURSUE TRUTH

Q: Was it easy to be truthful while playing this game?

Q: Were you ever tempted to be dishonest in order to score points?

WARM-UP

PURSUE THE PRIZE

No matter the level of competition, every athlete is pursuing something. It might be simply having fun or something as serious as earning a scholarship, winning a championship or landing a big contract. As the stakes rise, the drive behind that pursuit intensifies and brings athletes closer to the prize.

Q: What athletic pursuit is most important to you right now?

Q: How much time do you spend each day working toward that goal?

Q: What would achieving your athletic pursuits mean to you?



WORKOUT

PARALLEL PATHS

Stories of pursuit can be found all throughout the Bible. In the New Testament, we find two men on parallel paths whose encounters with Jesus sent them in opposite directions.

In Luke 19:1-10, we read about a man named Zacchaeus, a tax collector who cheated the people in Jericho and became very wealthy. At that time, Jesus had gained a reputation as a great teacher and miracle worker. Zacchaeus had to catch a glimpse of Jesus, but his short stature made it difficult for him to see over the crowd. So he climbed into a tree and waited for Jesus to walk past.

“When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. ‘Zacchaeus!’ he said. ‘Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.’ Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the people were displeased. ‘He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,’ they grumbled.

Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, ‘I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!’ Jesus responded, ‘Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.’” — Luke 19:5-10

Just like Zacchaeus, sometimes we need to be willing to pursue truth and then respond accordingly. But then, in Mark 10:17-27, we see a similar encounter that produced a different result when a man, often referred to as the Rich Young Ruler, approached Jesus and asked this question:

“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” — Mark 10:17

Jesus then told him to obey God’s commandments to which the Rich Young Ruler responded that he had done all of those things. But the next words from Jesus were much more difficult to hear.

Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. “There is still one thing you haven’t done,” he told him. “Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man’s face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. — Mark 10:21-22

Both men were pursuing wealth and material success. Both men were pursuing truth. Both men received the same answer, yet each man made very different decisions.

Zacchaeus pursued truth and found a new path to fulfillment. His wealth no longer mattered in light of the treasure Jesus had offered. The Rich Young Ruler likewise pursued truth but went home disappointed, unwilling to change course, and unwilling to give up his material things.

PURSUE TRUTH

Q: Why do you think the Rich Young Ruler was unwilling to listen to Jesus?

Q: Are you more like Zaccheaus or more like the Rich Young Ruler? Why?

THE BIG PICTURE

It's not usually that difficult to identify the things we're pursuing as athletes. Victories, championships, records, scholarships and contracts are very tangible. But sometimes we need to step back to see the big picture of what we really want for our lives.

Below is a list of common pursuits. In the space provided, determine which of these things you spend the most time pursuing (1 = never, 10 = always).

- ___ Acceptance
- ___ Achievement
- ___ Community
- ___ Education
- ___ Fame
- ___ Love
- ___ Popularity
- ___ Position
- ___ Power
- ___ Relationships
- ___ Security
- ___ Significance
- ___ Wealth

Q: Review your list and look at the three things that you spend the most time pursuing. What is the driving force behind your pursuit of those things?

Q: What are you currently doing to pursue those things?

Q: How do you expect your life to change once you attain the things you are pursuing?

KNOW THE WHAT

It doesn't matter if we're pursuing big dreams, close relationships or material things, we can easily let our pursuit drive our focus, our actions, our behaviors and our priorities. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but what if pursuing those things ultimately isn't healthy or isn't good for us in the long run?

That's why it's important that we "know the what" or understand the thing that we really need in our lives. The Bible is clear about what that thing is. It is

PURSUE TRUTH

a relationship with Jesus Christ. It was Jesus who explained why that was so important while teaching His followers:

“Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.’” — John 14:6

A few chapters earlier, Jesus revealed why it was so important to pursue truth.

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” — John 8:32

Jesus means that we become free from empty pursuits, the pressure to perform, the desire to please others and the guilt and shame of our sin.

In a world where nothing seems to be certain, we can trust that GOD’S WORD is the absolute TRUTH and never changes. Here are just a few truths that we can hold onto:	
✓ God created us in His image (Genesis 1:27).	✓ We were all born sinners, separated from God (Romans 3:23; 5:12).
✓ God sent His Son Jesus to die for our sins (John 3:16).	✓ Salvation is available for anyone who repents of their sins and accepts Christ as their Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9).
✓ God has a purpose and plan for everyone (John 15:16).	✓ There is a place called Heaven where those who trust and believe in Christ will spend eternity (John 14:2–3).

While these are only a fraction of the Truths we find in the Bible, we can experience more great truths as we dive into God’s Word.

- Q: Why are material pursuits temporary?**
- Q: When you pursue material things, do you feel satisfied with what you have, or do you feel the need for something more?**
- Q: Which one of the godly truths mentioned above resonates with you the most? Which one do you struggle to believe?**

PURSUE TRUTH

WRAP-UP

PURSUE TRUTH

If you're tired of pursuing material things that don't last, consider these three steps that will instead help you pursue the ultimate truth that can only be found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

- 1. Read the Truth.** First and foremost, you must believe that the Bible is the 100% living, breathing Word of God. Then, be intentional about studying the Bible and what it has to say about God and your relationship with Him.

"For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires." — Hebrews 4:12

- 2. Pray the Truth.** Ask God to forgive your sins and invite Jesus to come into your heart and rule as Lord over your life. Then, ask the Holy Spirit for guidance every day and trust that He will guide your steps.

"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." — Romans 10:9

- 3. Reach for Truth.** Find someone who can help you grow closer to God and your relationship with Him.

"Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come." — 1 Timothy 4:8

And when you do make that decision, the Holy Spirit will give you a desire to live out the encouragement in our daily theme verse.

"Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness."
— 1 Timothy 6:11

OVERTIME

As a Huddle, go to thefour.fca.org or turn to page 1370 and go through "The FOUR." Take some time afterward to discuss each of these principles. If you haven't already committed your heart to Christ, talk to your group leader or another FCA staff member about making that game-changing decision today.



“The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.” — John 10:10

WELCOME

TWO TRUTHS, ONE LIE

In the game “Two Truths, One Lie: Sports Edition,” each person takes a turn giving three sports statements about themselves. Two should be true and one should be false. After each person shares their statements, the other group members try to figure out which one is a lie.

Q: Was it easy or difficult for you to make up a lie about yourself?

Q: How do you usually react when you find out someone has lied to you?



WARM-UP

CUTTING CORNERS

Lying and cheating to get ahead has been happening as long as competitive games and organized sports have been around—baseball players steal signs, long distance runners take shortcuts, weightlifters use performance enhancing drugs, basketball players tug on jerseys and the list goes on and on.

Sometimes the outcome can be minor and result in a “slap on the wrist.” Other times, cheating can lead to the loss of income, the stripping of achievements, and public shame. Even worse, cheating or cutting corners can cause long-term physical, emotional, relational and even spiritual damage.

Q: What are some things athletes might do while pursuing their goals that are actually unhealthy, unethical or harmful to themselves or others?

Q: How would you feel if you achieved all of your goals but ended up causing trouble along the way?

WORKOUT

LOOKING FOR LOVE

For most, if not all of us, one of the key components to having a good life is experiencing love. We desire the many aspects of love—from our family, friends, or significant others.

Relational love can be found all throughout the Bible. But perhaps no story better captures the spirit of that pursuit and its potential downfall than the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman found in John 4:10.

In those times, Jewish people did not associate with Samaritans. Yet, Jesus sat next to a well when this Samaritan woman approached to get some water. Much to her surprise, Jesus asked her if she could get him a drink. Why would He do this?

“If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.” — John 4:10

Still struggling to understand, the woman had more questions to which Jesus replied:

“Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.” — John 4:13–14

That’s when things got really interesting.

“Please, sir,’ the woman said, ‘give me this water! Then I’ll never be thirsty again, and I won’t have to come here to get water.’

‘Go and get your husband,’ Jesus told her.

‘I don’t have a husband,’ the woman replied. Jesus said, ‘You’re right! You don’t have a husband—for you have had five husbands, and you aren’t even married to the man you’re living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!’” — John 4:15–18

Just like athletes who cut corners or employ an “at all costs” mentality, the Samaritan woman found herself jumping from one relationship to the next and making objectional choices in hopes of experiencing real love and real life.

Jesus understood exactly what was going on inside her heart. He knew that despite all of her attempts, she had never found the one thing that truly made her feel life. Jesus was there to show her that true life and true love could be found in a relationship with Him.

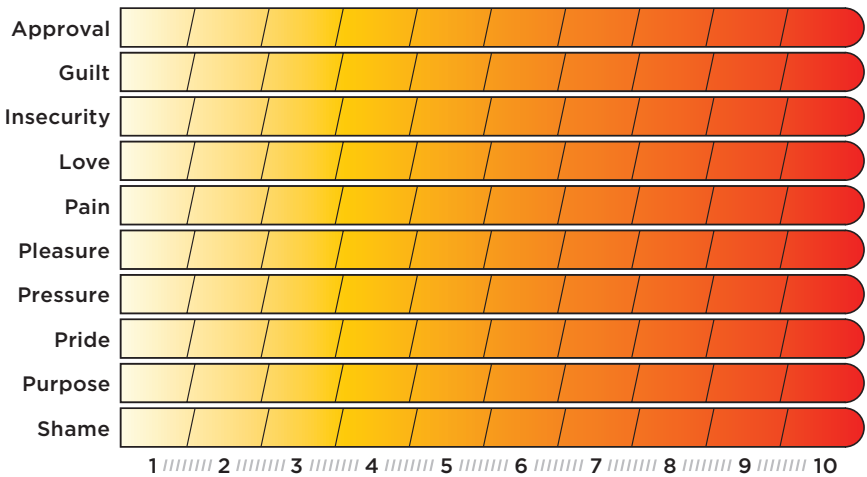
Q: The Samaritan woman was looking for fulfillment in life through relationships. In what ways can you relate?

Q: What do you think Jesus meant when He told her He would give her “living water?”

THE BURNING QUESTION

In our last meeting, we talked about the importance of knowing what you are pursuing athletically and personally. Today, let’s talk about the deeper reasons behind that pursuit. After all, that is often the burning question that goes much deeper than the “what.” Answering “the why” is what this really comes down to.

Think back to the pursuits that we discussed in the last meeting. Now, using the spaces provided below, ✓ each of the possible reasons why you are pursuing those primary things from that list (1 = not at all, 10 = major driving force).



Q: Review your list and look at the top three things that are driving your pursuits. Would you say those things are helpful or harmful to you in the long run?

Q: How do you think your life would change if you replaced those harmful motivators with ones that were positive, healthy and helpful?

KNOW THE WHY

If we are pursuing goals based on harmful motivations, then achieving those goals will never result in true fulfillment. Sure, there might be short-term value, but long-term, wrong motivations might be an indicator that we are simply trying to replace something much bigger that's missing in our hearts.

Those negative “whys” are not from God, but instead are from an enemy that doesn't want us to experience the fullness of life.

“The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy.” — John 10:10a

Satan wants us to be all wrapped up in guilt, shame, hurts, pain and pressures to perform in search of approval. He lures us with pleasures and desires that can only hurt us in the long run. And even when we have good pursuits, he uses lies and deceit to taint our motivations with selfishness, greed and pride.

Is it possible that a better life awaits us? Is it possible that there's a better path that God has laid out for each and everyone? Is it possible that there is a greater purpose than what we currently live for in this very moment?

God's Word answers that question with a resounding, “Yes!”

“My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.” — John 10:10b

Changing our “what” is a big part of understanding what Jesus is talking about, but changing our “why” is the key to truly unlocking the door to that “rich and satisfying life.”

Q: Is it possible to have healthy goals but impure motives for reaching them? Explain.

Q: What do you think Jesus means when He talks about a “rich and satisfying life?”

Q: What would that look like for you personally?

WRAP-UP

PURSUE LIFE

If you're tired of being consumed with unhealthy motivations that drive you into meaningless pursuits, consider these three things that will help you pursue life—the rich and satisfying life that can be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ:

- 1. Open Your Heart.** The first step in pursuing your new life in Christ is to be open to the possibility your motivations might be pushing you in the wrong direction.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.” —Psalm 139:23–24

- 2. Examine Your Heart.** Be honest with yourself. Take a look deep inside your heart and ask yourself those questions that deal with motivation. What “whys” are driving the pursuit of your goals? More important, allow God to examine your heart so He can reveal to you what needs to change.

“Put me on trial, LORD, and cross-examine me. Test my motives and my heart.” —Psalm 26:2

- 3. Surrender Your Heart.** Give your pursuits and your motivations to Jesus. Ask Him to give you new pursuits, and if your pursuits are right and good, ask Him to give you pure motives for achieving those things.

“We can make our own plans, but the LORD gives the right answer. People may be pursue in their own eyes, but the LORD examines their motives. Commit your actions to the LORD and your plans will succeed.” —Proverbs 16:1–3

As you get rid of the impure motives and replace them with healthy, life-affirming desires, you'll find yourself living out the truth in our camp theme verse:

“Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.” —1 Timothy 6:11

OVERTIME

Find a quiet place alone or with another person you can trust, and discuss those reasons behind your most passionate pursuits. Devise a plan that will help you better understand the “why” and how to surrender those passions to Christ every day.



“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” — Hebrews 10:24–25

WELCOME

THE AMAZING SHRINKING SHIRT

Today we’re going to have a challenge that will test your ability to work together as a team! Let’s take this T-shirt and place it on the ground. The goal is to see how many people can get on the shirt so that no body parts are touching the ground.

But we’re not done! Everyone get off the shirt so we can make this challenge a little more difficult. We’re going to fold the T-shirt in half and see how many people we can successfully get onto the shirt.

One more time! Let’s fold the T-shirt in half and try it again!

Q: What was the most challenging aspect of this game?

Q. What were some keys to successfully completing this task as the T-shirt kept shrinking?

Q. What is your definition of the word *teamwork* and how did this activity display that concept?

WARM-UP

THE NEED FOR TEAM

No matter the sport, athletes can’t achieve their pursuits alone. In team sports, there must be a group of people working together toward a common goal. In individual sports, athletes need coaches, trainers, family support and fans to spur them on. But more important, athletes need teammates who are reliable, trustworthy and skilled in their particular role.

Q: What are some examples of why teammates are so important in your sport?

Q: What are some characteristics of a good teammate?

WORKOUT

GREATEST TEAM EVER

The concept of team transcends sports and is highlighted in many ways throughout the Bible. Perhaps one of the greatest teams ever assembled can be found in the New Testament, specifically in the book of Acts. The original group was 12 men (or disciples) who chose to follow Jesus and learn the Truth from Him.

Even though they were ordinary people, they spent three years learning from the Son of God. You might say this was the greatest team ever because their leader was and still is the Greatest Coach ever.

And even though the disciples didn't truly begin to shine until Jesus left Earth, there was a reason why they were chosen to walk alongside Him throughout His ministry. Jesus had a plan for them but needed to train and disciple them before they could begin their greater mission.

Q: What's more important to you, having a great coach or having great teammates?

Q: What does it look like when you have both?

Q: What advantages do you think the disciples had as a team because of Jesus's leadership?

A SPIRITUAL DREAM TEAM

Some might argue that Jesus didn't need a team. But what He did need was a group of committed teammates who could go out and do the work of spreading His message after He was gone.

One of the best examples of Jesus and the disciples engaging in teamwork can be found in John 6:1-13. Jesus had been teaching a large group of people along the seaside and could sense they were getting hungry. There was no way they could afford to buy food for everyone, but then Andrew approached Jesus with some news. There was a young boy with five loaves of bread and two fish—but that wasn't nearly enough, right?

"'Tell everyone to sit down,' Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the people. Afterward he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted. After everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, 'Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted.' So they picked up the pieces and filled twelve baskets with scraps left by the people who had eaten from the five barley loaves." — John 6:10-13

Not only did Jesus demonstrate miraculous faith, He also allowed them to take part in the miracle and work as a team to take care of the people.

At the same time, by having disciples or a great team to follow Him, it's possible that Jesus was simply showing us the importance of having teammates to support us throughout our Christian walk.

Q: What kind of people do you usually pursue to be your friends?

Q: Would you say that your friends are helpful or not when it comes to the spiritual aspects of your life? Explain.

KNOW THE WHO

Just like athletes need to have the right teammates to achieve the greatest success, believers also need to have the right teammates helping them grow closer in their relationship with Christ. In other words, answering the question of "who" we have in our lives is essential.

The apostle Paul gives us a great example of what it looks like when we surround ourselves with the right kind of spiritual teammates.

"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." — Hebrews 10:24-25

The question then becomes "who" should we be pursuing, and "where" should we look to find them? Using the spaces provided below put a check mark by the attributes you think would be most important in a Christian teammate.

- ☐ Compassionate
- ☐ Confident
- ☐ Inconsistent
- ☐ Jealous
- ☐ Judgmental
- ☐ Kind
- ☐ Malicious
- ☐ Prayerful
- ☐ Prideful
- ☐ Trustworthy
- ☐ Truthful

Q: What were the attributes you checked and why?

Q: Which attributes did you leave blank and why?

Q: Where are some places you think you might be able to find Christian teammates with those desirable attributes?

Q: How do you think having teammates with those desirable attributes might help you grow in your Christian walk?

WRAP-UP

PURSUE TEAM

If you're ready to take the next step in your faith journey and if you understand that you can't go it alone, consider these three steps that will help you gain the benefits that come when you pursue a righteous team.

- 1. Evaluate the Team.** Decide what kind of teammates will help you grow in your faith and reach your full potential as a follower of Christ.

"Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble." — Proverbs 13:20

- 2. Draft the Team.** Find those people who can help you and ask them to be an active part of your faith journey.

"The godly give good advice to their friends; the wicked lead them astray." — Proverbs 12:26

- 3. Commit to the Team.** Be accountable to those on your team and your Christian leaders who want to help you. Stay committed to the process. Listen to their advice and follow it to the best of your ability.

"Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life."
— Proverbs 19:20

As you surround yourself with trustworthy teammates, you'll be able to be better equipped to live out the encouragement given in our theme verse.

"Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness."
— 1 Timothy 6:11

OVERTIME

In your quiet time, write down the names of some people that you would like to be your spiritual teammates. Map out a plan to draft your team and what steps you will take to commit yourself to the process of being a part of that team. Ask them to go through the Pursue Reading Plan with you on YouVersion by downloading and choosing the "With Friends" feature.



“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” — Acts 1:8

WELCOME

EVERYBODY’S IT!

Everyone spread out in an open area. When the leader yells “Everybody’s it!” start running around trying to tag others while avoiding getting tagged yourself. If you get tagged, sit down but keep trying to tag those left running around. If two people tag each other at the same time, both must sit down. Keep this up until one player is left standing.

Q: As an athlete, do you usually find yourself pursuing individual goals or team goals?

Q: What makes one or the other more satisfying?

WARM-UP

THE GREATER GOOD

So often sports can become more about “me” and less about “we,” or more about “what we get” and less about “what we give.” But competition is at its best when it involves sacrificing inward pursuits for a greater good.

We often see this dynamic in professional athletes. When they are at the beginning of their careers, the focus tends to be on filling up the stat sheet, earning a contract extension, or winning individual awards. But as athletes get older,



PURSUE MISSION

their priorities begin to shift from chasing championships to create a legacy through public service.

Q: What are some ways an athlete can be “more about me” and “less about we?”

Q: What are some examples of how an athlete can shift from inward pursuits (doing things for themselves) to outward pursuits (doing things for others)?



WORKOUT

NOBODY SPECIAL

Athletes aren't the only ones who have visions of making a legacy and working toward a greater good. In fact, the Bible has many great examples of people who experienced a paradigm shift in their lives and began to see a much bigger picture of what the future held in store for them.

In our last meeting, we talked about how Jesus put a team together that He could teach and train to take and spread His message to the world. But before they were Jesus's teammates, they were ordinary people from ordinary backgrounds.

Andrew, Peter, James and John were fishermen. Matthew was a tax collector. The other disciples' occupations apparently weren't exciting or impressive enough to even be mentioned. Yet, Jesus chose those people to accomplish His great mission.

And the results were world changing. All you have to do is read the book of Acts to see all of the amazing things the disciples accomplished. They started the Christian church, they converted thousands of people to the Christian faith and they performed amazing miracles—just like Jesus said they would do.

"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works." — John 14:12a

It was like a coach taking a bunch of underrated recruits and turning them into a championship team! And it was all because they accepted a much greater mission instead of settling for the lives they had once known.

Q: Why do you think the disciples were able to do such great things after Jesus left Earth?

Q: How does their story inspire you as a follower of Christ?

KNOW THE WAY

We all need greater purpose and meaning in our lives. Oftentimes, it's the search for that purpose and meaning that leads us down the wrong path. But everything changes when we finally understand that our mission is ultimately tied to a relationship with Christ.

That's because our walk with Him is inseparable from the calling we all receive from Him, which is the same calling that Jesus gave the disciples.

"I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." — Matthew 28:18–20

PURSUE MISSION

Jesus referred to Himself as “The Way.” He was saying that following Him was the only path to salvation, to freedom, to truth, to life and to purpose and meaning. That’s not always a popular thing to believe in today’s world of relativity, but it became very clear to the disciples that Jesus was everything He claimed to be.

And that’s why they were able to walk away from their ordinary lives and risk everything to tell the world about Jesus.

Q: Do you ever struggle to accept that Jesus is the only way to purpose and meaning? Explain.

Q: What are some things that might be holding you back from accepting God’s mission in your life?

MISSION UNSTOPPABLE

So, how did the disciples do the great things after Jesus left Earth? They did it because of what Jesus left behind for them—a powerful tool that gives them the ability to accomplish all things, great things.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” — Acts 1:8

And that’s the same way that you can embark on the most meaningful mission you could ever imagine—an unstoppable mission that God calls all of us to accept.

Q: What are some things you want to do with your life that you consider to be bigger than yourself?

Q: Does the idea of pursuing God’s mission for your life excite you, scare you or not interest you at all? Explain.



PURSUE MISSION

WRAP-UP

PURSUE MISSION

If you're ready to accept God's call, here are three ways that you can begin to pursue mission and start walking in the fullness of what He has laid out for you to do:

- 1. Trust the Mission.** Fully embrace what God has called you to do and believe that He will give you everything you need to get the job done.

"May he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen." — Hebrews 13:21

- 2. Prepare for the Mission.** Getting ready to do God's work is no different than getting ready for an athletic competition. It requires diligent preparation through consistent prayer, Bible reading and Christian fellowship.

"All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified." — 1 Corinthians 9:25-27

- 3. Commit to the Mission.** Make the decision that you will not give up even when things get tough because there's no doubt that it will.

"So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless." — 1 Corinthians 15:58



PURSUE MISSION

As you pursue God's mission, you'll find yourself living out the calling more completely in our theme verse.

"Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness."

—1 Timothy 6:11

OVERTIME

In your quiet time, ask God to help you get a clearer picture of what your mission might look like in the immediate future. Write down some ideas of how you can impact your team, your school, your family and your community when you go back home.



TRAINING TIME

31 DEVOTIONS



EVERY MORNING SET ASIDE A SPECIAL TIME CALLED “QUIET TIME” OR SPIRITUAL “TRAINING TIME.” During this time you can talk to God and let Him talk to you through the Bible and His Spirit. There are many effective methods that can be used for your daily time with God. The P-R-E-S-S method is one way we suggest: Pray, Read, Examine, Summarize and Share.

P.R.E.S.S. METHOD

PRAY . . .

Begin by thanking God for the new day and then asking Him to help you learn from what you read. Prepare yourself by:

- **CLEARING** your mind and being quiet before the Lord
- **ASKING** God to settle your heart
- **LISTENING** to worship music to prepare your spirit
- **ASKING** God for a teachable heart

READ . . .

A great way to start is to read a proverb each day (there are 31 chapters in Proverbs, so you have one per day), a psalm and a chapter out of the New Testament or Old Testament. Another way is to begin with one of the Gospels such as John or one of the shorter letters such as Ephesians or James. You might also start with the first four devotions in this section: “Pursue Truth” (p. 1236), “Pursue Life” (p. 1237), “Pursue Team” (p. 1238), “Pursue Mission” (p. 1239).

Journaling can help your spiritual development and is an effective way of building your faith, reminding you of how God is working in your life.

EXAMINE . . .

Ask yourself the following questions in regard to the Bible passage you read:

- **TEACHING:** What do I need to **KNOW** about God, myself and others?
- **REBUKING:** What do I need to **STOP** doing—sins, habits or selfish patterns?
- **CORRECTING:** What do I need to **CHANGE** in my thoughts, attitudes or actions?
- **TRAINING:** What do I need to **DO** in obedience to God’s leading?

SUMMARIZE . . .

Do one of the following to solidify the key insights in your mind and heart:

- Discover what the passage reveals about God and His character, what it says or promises about you and what it says or promises about others—your parents, friends, teammates, strangers and enemies. Write this in a personal journal.
- Rewrite one or two key verses in your own words.
- Outline what each verse is saying.
- Give each verse a one-word title that summarizes what it’s saying.

SHARE . . .

Talk with God about what you’ve learned. Also, take time each day to share with someone from your group what you gained from your “Training Time.”

A daily “Training Time” is extremely important. It is one of the keys to developing spiritually.

This is why we’ve prepared 31 devotions for you. If you commit to doing these over the next month, you will establish a powerful habit for your spiritual growth.

FCA is excited to present devotions to help you stay focused in your life with Christ. Each is written from the athletic perspective to encourage you to be like Christ in your life on and off the field or court. In life and sports, there is always the need to take a TIME-OUT to think about your purpose in living and playing for God.

WRITERS

There are many writers and editors who have contributed their time, talents and experience to writing these devotions. Writers include representatives from the world of sports. Our writing team consists of coaches, athletes, team chaplains and FCA staff—all from very diverse backgrounds.

TOPICS

Topics covered in the “Training Time” devotions were created to support this year’s theme, “Pursue.”

FORMAT

- **READY:** The Focus—a verse, passage or thought to direct your heart and mind. (It will help to turn to the Scripture reference in your Bible so you can read it within the overall context of the passage.)
- **SET:** Teaching—a story, training point or thought taken from a sports perspective.
- **GO:** Application—a prayer, question, thought or action to direct you to be like Christ.
- **WORKOUT:** Additional Bible reading to help you dig deeper and a prayer to help you connect with God.
- **OVERTIME:** A prayer to help you connect with God.

I WILL COMMIT TO ESTABLISHING THIS DAILY HABIT:

TODAY’S DATE

To receive a daily e-mail sports devotion, go to www.FCAImpactPlay.org

TRAINING TIME

1. PURSUE TRUTH

SARAH ROBERTS

READY

“They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.” — Romans 1:25

SET

In the 2012 Women’s College World Series, Alabama had just beaten Oklahoma to win the National Title. Coach Patty Gasso of Oklahoma asked me to come down on the field and address the team after this huge loss. What could I say to a team that just lost the National Title? The truth. As we sat there on the field with Alabama in a winning dog-pile beside us, the truth was spoken. The truth was that losing is hard and hurts. The truth was that, “You have shown an entire country who you praise when you win. Now, you have the chance to show an entire country who you praise when you lose.”

And they did exactly that; when they lost in 2012 to when they won in 2013, the team put Jesus front and center in their press conferences and interviews, knowing that every blessing that doesn’t turn into praise turns into pride.

As athletes, we are told that our talents and abilities in sports should be the central focus and truth of anything we do, but that is a lie! The truth is we should make a platform for Christ and Christ alone. When we pursue Christ, we will find truth; we will find truth of who God is, what God has done and who God has called us to be as Christian athletes.

GO

1. What are some truths you know about God?
2. In what ways do you believe the lies of the world instead of the Truth of God?
3. What are some ways we can pursue the Truth of God as athletes?

WORKOUT

John 14:6; John 6:47; Ephesians 6:14

OVERTIME

Lord, You are the way, the Truth and the life. Help me pursue Your Truth and not believe the lies of the world. I want to serve You and give You praise with every platform You give me in this sport. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

TRAINING TIME

2. PURSUE LIFE

SHANTA CRICHLOW

READY

“But for us, There is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created and for whom we live. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created and through whom we live.” —1 Corinthians 8:6

SET

As a high school and college track athlete, Jesus was my competitive edge. I read Scriptures before every meet and believed that being a Christian would translate into good athletic performances. When I was diagnosed with cancer and my track and field career ended with one year of eligibility remaining, Jesus was my comfort. Before, I pursued Christ for what I could get out of the relationship with Him. But I found that there’s so much more to it than that.

There’s a reason you said, “yes” to Jesus that is special and unique to you. Perhaps you said, “yes” to help you become a better player or coach, heal a broken heart, secure a good future or have eternal life. The truth is, each of our journeys began the same way. God chose us, “For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me” (John 6:44).

We pursue our sport for the many things we can get out of it (glory, fame, fun and so on). We pursue Christ because of who He is, all He’s done for us and the fact that He loved us first. We have life through Him! Pursuing life surrendered to Christ is how we say, “Thank You.”

GO

1. What first inspired you to say, “yes” to Jesus?
2. How might (or has) an unanswered prayer change(d) your relationship with God?
3. What traits of Christ inspire you to continue pursuing life with Him today?

WORKOUT

John 1:4; Colossians 1:16; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Acts 17:28

OVERTIME

Lord, thank You for teaching me how to love You well. I invite You to live each day and experience of my life with me and through me. Keep me in Your presence during the best times, the worst times and every moment in between. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

TRAINING TIME

3. PURSUE TEAM

MARK JONES

READY

“... but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”
— Hebrews 10:25b

SET

Have you ever been put down by a teammate? When we make a mental error or slack off in our effort, we expect to be yelled at by a coach. But when a teammate yells at you or even puts you down, it can really hurt! I remember this happening during little league baseball in sixth grade. I was made fun of a lot for my glasses, height, weight, among others. Plus, I simply wasn't good at baseball, which did not help. After two or three practices, I told my mom I wasn't going back. I hated quitting but not having any support on my own team was worse. A little encouragement might have been the difference between me finishing the season and me quitting.

More than once in the book of Hebrews, it says we are to encourage one another. Sharing a kind word with another could make a difference. Putting an arm around a friend who is hurting could make a difference. Even a smile, hug or handshake could make a huge difference in another's direction, maybe even their life.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says it plainly: “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”

So, let's motivate one another to do good things, let's keep getting together and enjoying others, let's encourage one another with thoughtful, kind words and attitudes and let us show others an example of Jesus by exhibiting kindness to all those around us.

GO

1. Have you ever been put down by a teammate? How did it feel?
2. What can we do if we see teammates putting others down?

WORKOUT

Romans 14:19; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

OVERTIME

Lord, Your Son's death on a cross was the ultimate kindness. Help me to live for You by showing kindness to those You bring to my life. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

4. PURSUE MISSION

ROGER LIPE

READY

“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” — Matthew 6:33

SET

Jesus uses very direct and clear language about pursuing mission. He says to pursue the Kingdom of God and to live righteously as if it's life's highest priority. He also promises that our needs will be met when we do this.

Pursuing the Kingdom of God means seeking God's authority being carried out in all areas of life. He has authority to lead us in every facet of our lives; at home, at school, with friends, on the court, field, pitch, track, mat or in the pool.

To pursue living righteously means seeking to please God with our lives. How we conduct ourselves can be pleasing to God, but only if we are in a relationship with Him through Christ. Our behavior toward our family, friends, teammates and opponents is pleasing to God when we honor Him and when we are loving toward others.

The wonderful promise of this verse is that our pursuit of living in God's authority and living in a way that pleases Him, has a reward that fulfills our needs. We can find great comfort and security in Jesus's promise.

GO

1. What do people around you pursue as their life's highest priority?
2. How would pursuing God's authority as highest priority change your daily lifestyle?
3. How could pleasing God with the way you live be your highest priority?

WORKOUT

Acts 1:8; Luke 4:18; Acts 13:47

OVERTIME

Father, I will pursue Your authority in my life as the matter of highest priority. I will pursue righteous living as the matter of highest priority. I will trust You to fulfill my needs as I stay focused on these priorities. I pray, commit and pursue in the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

TRAINING TIME

5. A REAL FRIEND

ARBOR DIGGS

READY

“There are ‘friends’ who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother.”
— Proverbs 18:24

SET

If I asked you to name one person on your team that you consider like a brother or sister, could you give me an answer? What about a teammate that is a real friend? Truth is, we all have that one teammate that instantly comes to mind. This teammate is trustworthy, genuine, supportive, a team player, loving, encouraging, uplifting and a real good listener. This teammate is a friend that walks by our side and leads us to a life full of positivity, accountability and brotherly and sisterly love. I believe this is the type of friend Proverbs 18:24 is speaking of. A friend who sticks closer than a brother or sister.

When one uses “air quotes” around a word, that usually is indicating sarcasm. Proverbs is comparing the difference of “friends” and real friends. It’s important to pursue and surround yourself with the real friends in life. The ones who lead you to Christ and stick by your side. Friendship is truly life shaping, so it is vital that we pursue Christlike friendships. Along with pursuing real friends, it’s just as important to be a real friend and a real teammate to others. Pursue being someone who sticks closer than a brother or sister. Be a real friend, not a “friend.” Be the teammate that is wise, bold in their faith and leads other to Christ. This is the type of friend God wants us to be.

Remember that question I asked in the first sentence? If that question was asked to one of your teammates, would they respond with your name?

GO

1. Describe the difference of a real friend and a “friend.”
2. How can you be a real teammate?
3. Why does God want us to pursue friends who are real?

WORKOUT

Proverbs 27:17; John 15:13

OVERTIME

God, You are a real friend to all. Let me learn from You, on how to be a real friend, and let me begin to love my teammates and those around me more. Let my friendship look like Yours. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

6. SET THE STANDARD

JIMMY PAGE

READY

“I beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.” — Ephesians 4:1

SET

When Clemson University was looking for a new head coach in 2009, Dabo Swinney shared a bold vision, “My vision is to make Clemson so good that all the other programs want to be like us.” He got the job. And he hasn’t stopped raising the bar since.

Creating a standard to live up to helps us fulfill our potential and ultimately becomes everything we’re made to be. It helps us eliminate excuses, reject shortcuts and avoid compromise.

The standards you set define what you strive to become. I’ve found it helpful to phrase the components of my standard as “I Will” statements.

- **Mind:** I will . . . Ignore the Noise: I will win the battle of the mind, crushing the lies of the enemy that attempt to discourage, focusing on what is true and right (Romans 12:1–2).
- **Body:** I will . . . Keep My Temple Pure: I will honor God by turning away from visual garbage and protecting my body from sexual sin (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).
- **Spirit:** I will . . . Keep My Eyes on Jesus: I know that I can accomplish nothing if I get disconnected or distracted from Him and His purposes (John 15).

These “I Will” statements can help you stay focused on who you want to be and how you want to behave. They form the standard that you will aspire to live up to and ultimately the legacy you leave behind.

GO

1. **What standard will you set for the things you are willing to see, for your mindset, for how you will handle negativity.**
2. **What standard will you set for how you will keep your body pure and healthy so you honor God.**

WORKOUT

Colossians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

OVERTIME

Father help me raise the bar in all areas of my life so I can live a life worthy of the call You have on my life. Help me live the abundant life of freedom and influence. In Jesus’s name, Amen!

Adapted from *Wisdom Walks: 52 Life Principles for a Significant and Meaningful Journey*, BroadStreet Publishing, © 2020.

TRAINING TIME

7. ME WITH YOU

REBEKAH TRITTIPOE

READY

"I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose." — 1 Corinthians 1:10

SET

We often see competition as war; a battle to be won over the enemy. Rivalries grow, producing "win at any cost" mentalities. It becomes us versus them, good versus evil, winner versus loser.

At its origin, the word *compete* means to "strive together"; to push to a level of play or skill that we cannot attain on our own. Competition does not exist without a partner, whether a teammate or the opposing team. The relationship is complementary, not adversarial.

Let's say there are three first basemen on the softball team. Only one can get the starting nod. Would the other two hope their teammate commits a couple errors and goes 0 to 4 at the plate? Yes, they might hope their teammate fails. Would it be good for the players on the bench? Possibly. Would it be good for the team overall? Definitely not.

This is principled in the New Testament, when there was an apparent conflict between the followers of Apollos and Paul. People took sides, creating an air of discontent and contempt. They were competing against, not striving with, their fellow believers. The result: any house divided became weaker, not stronger.

Paul addressed the situation by saying, "STOP IT!" He warned them that Christ would not be happy with or put up with those kinds of attitudes.

Whether on the court, in the home or in our churches, we are better together.

GO

1. **Do you view your teammates as friend or foe?**
2. **What would be different if you viewed teammates as allies rather than enemies?**

WORKOUT

Proverbs 27:17; Romans 14:1

OVERTIME

Father rid me of my selfishness. Let me strive with my teammates to better the performances of all. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

8. RESILIENCE

JOJO VILLA

READY

“Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires.” — Psalm 37:4

SET

Rob Labagala had a dream: to play professional basketball in the Philippines. But in college, he was given the fewest minutes of play. His team was loaded with superstars, so he was relegated to the bench. Finally, in one of the season’s last games, he was called to play with only one second left in the game. One second with the ball and he fumbled. Big time—on national television.

Rob was devastated. But he had one thing that his coaches loved in him: resilience. After mourning his blunder, Rob sought the Lord with Matthew 6:33: “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else and live righteously and he will give you everything you need.”

Rob returned to practice and began the slow, broken road to professional basketball. Knowing his limitations in height and talent, he increased his hours in practice and strengthened his mind. God impressed on him three things: pray, study and play. After a long, hard detour, Rob finally made it to professional basketball as the oldest rookie at 26 years old. Six years later, he helped his team win a championship. But that wasn’t his only victory; it was the realization that basketball was a gift with a purpose.

Rob was not defined by any of his mistakes on and off the court. He—like you and I—was deeply loved by the Lord and raised up for a purpose. And Rob’s purpose was to use basketball to inspire and serve the next generation—a passion that he lives out today.

GO

1. What is God’s purpose in giving you your talent?
2. How can you rise up from defeat or loss of confidence?
3. What keeps you from attaining your full potential?

WORKOUT

James 1:12; Exodus 9:16; Romans 5:3–5

OVERTIME

Father give me eyes to see and the heart to keep going. I trust that You who began a good work in me will be faithful to complete it. In Jesus’s Name, Amen.

TRAINING TIME

9. IMITATE ME

KELLY SCHMIDT

READY

"And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ." — 1 Corinthians 11:1

SET

My dad is 6'6", my brother is 6'3" and I'm an average of 6'0". It's not a surprise that we all played basketball in college. We were a die-hard Phoenix Suns family. I loved Charles Barkley; I had his jersey; I watched how he played and I tried to copy everything about his game. I imitated these men and I didn't even realize it was happening. I progressed at my game and got pretty good at basketball, moving on to a great college career.

But one morning, I was struck after reading 1 Corinthians 11:1. Paul's boldness really stood out to me. It takes extreme confidence to say, imitate me because I'm imitating Christ. To say something so bold, Paul had to ensure that his statement was true in his life. It made me ask myself, *Could I say this with the same confidence Paul did?* That question hit me hard.

All I could validate was me on the court, the way I practiced and prepared for the game and the way I competed. If you copy what I do and how I do it, you will get better at basketball. I have that much confidence in my game and have the skill to validate my claims. But then the question became, Can I say that with the same conviction about every other area of my life?

Finding that answer became my new goal. My new goal was to live a life worthy of being imitated by others for Christ, just like Paul.

It's easy to get caught up in our game and sport, but as Christians, we must remember that our identity is in Christ first, not second, third or last. When we imitate Christ, we can be as bold and confident as Paul.

GO

1. Who are you imitating?
2. Are you living a life worthy of being imitated by others?
3. Are you becoming more like Christ or more like the world?

WORKOUT

Ephesians 5:1-2; Ephesians 4:22-24; Romans 12:2

OVERTIME

God, I will imitate others who imitate You so that I can have the same confidence as Paul. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

10. SELFISH HEART

VOVA DEMEDIUK

READY

“Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.”
— Philippians 2:3–4

SET

I was playing lacrosse for a Polish team for a couple of seasons. We had a lot of games, but I remember one particular game like it was yesterday. We were playing on our home field. We started to score in the first minutes of the game. We scored one goal, then one more and then another. Even players who rarely scored before scored. Frankly, I was shocked because I didn’t expect them to score. In the middle of the game, the score was 6:0. My team was so happy, but I wasn’t sharing their joy and happiness because I had a terrible game, where I didn’t score at all. I thought: *Oh man! Even that guy scored. How? I play better than him. How did it happen? I don’t understand.*

That game ended in a victory for my team, but a defeat for me. I could not rejoice that win with my team because I wanted to score so much and show everyone how good I could play. But then I realized that those are my own selfish thoughts and not God’s. After that game, God showed me the motives of my heart. And I clearly understood one thing—I was a selfish one.

Thankfully, God showed me these flaws and I started to change my perspective. From then on, I changed my focus to be more God-centered and less self-centered. I now play for God and I do my best to glorify Him in all I do. It’s important that as we play our game, we are focused on God and His plan, no matter how many points we score.

GO

1. **How can you ask God to help you feel less selfish about your performance or your game?**
2. **Who or what can help you with playing for Jesus rather than yourself or others?**

WORKOUT

John 13:35; 1 Corinthians 12:14–27

OVERTIME

Dear Lord, thank You so much for my team. Please change my heart and help me to not be selfish. I want to play with my team for Your greater good. In Jesus’s name I pray, Amen.

TRAINING TIME

11. STAY THE PATH

ALICIA CARDIE

READY

“But he knows where I am going. And when he tests me, I will come out as pure as gold. For I have stayed on God’s paths; I have followed his ways and not turned aside.” — Job 23:10–11

SET

It was my last chance to make the cut. I had no way of knowing whether I would succeed or fail. I had tried so many times already and I was exhausted. Everything in me wanted to quit, to take it easy this time, but I had trained for more than that. One more time, I gave it my all and for that time, I failed.

But the thing is, in God’s eyes, I didn’t fail. God had no stake in me making that cut. He already knew I wasn’t going to make it. He just wanted to see me stay the path just as He wants to see anyone who follows Him.

Sometimes God tests us through our sport, our relationships or our health and sometimes it just feels like He tests us in every aspect of life. But He does this to refine us, to make us “pure as gold.” The only way to succeed is to persevere and follow God’s ways regardless of the outcome in our lives because His will always works out for good.

The next time you fail at something, try to remember that God has a plan for you and He wants to see you succeed in following His plan.

GO

1. When was the last time you felt truly tested?
2. What did it look like to stay the path in that situation?
3. In what areas of life do you find it hardest to stick to God’s way and what can you do to keep yourself on the right track?

WORKOUT

James 1:12; Luke 21:19; 2 Thessalonians 3:13

OVERTIME

Lord, help me to persevere in times when I’m tested. I want to stay on the path; I want to pass the test. Please walk with me through each trial and give me the strength to finish strong. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

12. SPIRITUAL POTENTIAL

REX STUMP

READY

“No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.” — Philippians 3:13

SET

Sport enthusiasts often share the great stories of last-minute victories and game-changing plays. But how often does bowling enter that conversation? Bowling doesn't get much attention, but it taught me a valuable lesson.

In today's time, technology adds my bowling score on the screen and calculates my potential high score. As a competitor, I'm now comparing my potential score to the others in my lane. The bowling alley's computer calculated the most points I could score in every turn. But despite technology's calculations and my family's encouragement, I would often fall short of my potential.

Spiritually speaking, my daily goal is to love God and honor Him with my life. God tells me that by the authority of His Spirit, I have incredible power to be victorious! There are times I am victorious and there are many times where, like bowling, my choices and thoughts go in the gutter. I leave pins standing and I fail. The Bible calls this sin.

However, as I stand there looking at my misses, my bowling ball returns and I get another attempt! In the same way, God forgives me and lets me have another chance at life with Him in His Kingdom.

With every toss of the ball and with every choice in life, I must intently refocus, forget the past (gutter balls) and look forward to what lies ahead. Even though I will fail at times, God is faithful to forgive. By the authority of His Spirit, we have the potential and incredible power to be victorious!

GO

1. **What have you done in your life that needs to be confessed?**
2. **Where is your focus today?**

WORKOUT

Hebrews 12:1–2; Ephesians 2:1–10

OVERTIME

Heavenly Father, I confess that I sin. Please forgive me. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, help me to get back up and live in a way that honors You! With Your Spirit in me, I can be victorious today! Amen.

TRAINING TIME

13. DO THE HARD THING!

MARK STEPHENS

READY

“But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, ‘How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!’”

— Romans 10:14–15

SET

As coaches, we ask our athletes to do the hard things to make them better players so that their impact positively effects the team’s performance. As athletes, we must take on our coaches’ requests and do the hard things to reach our potential. Too many athletes want to just do what is asked of them but not take any risk. However, doing the hard things is where the greatest growth happens.

In Romans 10:14–15, a great point is made: “. . . how can they believe in him if they have never heard about them . . .” Similarly, how can our teammates, classmates and even fans hear about Jesus unless we tell them? As Christ-followers, we are challenged to do something hard like share our faith to others who may not have the same beliefs as we do. As coaches and athletes, we have a unique opportunity to tell those around us about our faith in Jesus Christ and the love He has for all of us. You may think that sharing your faith is too personal, but how can we help others experience a wonderful and powerful God, a God that can save lives, if we don’t tell them. God calls us to be disciples, to empower others to share and spread the good news of Jesus Christ even if that’s hard or uncomfortable.

Be bold. Be strong. Be courageous.

GO

- 1. What are the obstacles in your way to prevent you from sharing your faith?**
- 2. How would you feel if the people you share the good news with decided to follow Christ?**

WORKOUT

Luke 10:10; Acts 1:8; Mark 2:17

OVERTIME

Lord, I want to share my faith. Lord fill me with Your Holy Spirit so I have the power and wisdom to share Your message. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

TRAINING TIME

14. UNOPENED PARACHUTE OLEG PAVLISHCHUK

READY

“But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.” —Matthew 7:26–27

SET

An athlete who is not obedient to his or her coach is likely to have a really short and unsuccessful career in sports. He or she will not play on a good team for a long time or reach any great results. It’s not about his or her attention on theory, lessons or diligence in keeping notes.

A friend of mine likes skydiving. It is a matter of life and death for him to not only take a parachute, but to be able to open it at the right moment. An unopened parachute is useless and it adds weight to the fall, making your speed much higher and the blow, if you hit the ground, a tree or something else, much harder.

An unopened parachute is a symbol of unused knowledge. It’s not about accumulating your knowledge but about using it at the right moment. There is even more responsibility on a person who listens to the Word of God but doesn’t use it. Reading the Bible and going to church is like a new spiritual height that we reach. Jumping out of a plane and opening your parachute is like practical usage of the knowledge we’ve got from reading and listening. Or in other words, it represents “a leap of faith.” If we don’t use spiritual principles practically, it looks as miserable as not following your coach’s guidance and it leads you down a dark path of problems.

Embodiment and practical usage of God’s Word is always an exciting adventure and even skydiving is nothing compared to it!

GO

1. **What brings you more delight: time when you read the Bible and go to church or time when you practically use your knowledge?**
2. **Which team would you really like to coach more: the one with talent but undisciplined players or the one with hardworking and obedient players?**

WORKOUT

Psalm 1; Matthew 7:21–27; James 1:22–25

OVERTIME

God, please help me to be not only attentive to Your Word but also to embody it in my everyday life. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

15. OUR CHARACTER

ANDREW CHERNENKOV

READY

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” — Ephesians 2:10

SET

Have you learned anything about yourself during last week? It is important to analyze your past events and experiences to be more prepared for today!

We as coaches and athletes, like to review all our trophies and medals and recall our way to success. We also like to look at the legendary teams we admire and their journeys to the championship titles. Recalling our victories or victories of our favorite teams, we can notice that it is much easier for anyone to reach the goal—a championship. Every time you step onto the field, arena or court as a champion, you face different thoughts and reality. You are already a champion and everyone expects you to keep winning during this new season as well.

The thing that everyone notices and feels is that the individual players are in the game but the whole team are winners! It takes time and resources for the real team to become best. However, each player can work on his or her character to help the team every day.

Character is like a tree and credibility is like a shadow of that tree. Credibility is an image built around the real you. But your credibility is not the real you because it is your character that tells everybody who you really are!

When you think about your character today, do you feel like it’s a credible source of a Christ-follower?

GO

- 1. What have you learned about yourself during the last week?**
- 2. What is your attitude to yourself, to other people, or to the work entrusted to you?**

WORKOUT

Matthew 14:22-33; Philippians 2:3-4

OVERTIME

Dear Lord, help me today to show the real character and be just like You as much as it is possible. Please don’t let the wrong attitude to myself, to people around me and to work entrusted to me, ruin my life. Lord, give me strength and help me trust You with all my heart. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

16. CHOOSE JESUS

ROGER LIPE

READY

“And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.” — John 17:3

SET

On the final night of His life on Earth, Jesus and His disciples were together for the final time. He was in such emotional distress, looking at His forthcoming death in the face, that He asked His disciples to pray with Him. As Jesus prayed, John the apostle overheard and wrote down Jesus’s prayer. He prayed about the nature of eternal life and how His followers would experience it.

Jesus said the way to pursue eternal life was to know the only true God and to know Jesus Christ, who represented God’s presence on Earth. If we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, we know the only true God and we have eternal life, now and forever.

The way to live eternally is to pursue a relationship with God. Jesus came to Earth specifically to make a way for us to both live eternally and to know the one true God through a relationship with Him.

GO

1. What do some people around you pursue in hopes that it gives them eternal life?
2. How would a person pursue a relationship with the one true God and with Jesus Christ?
3. What does it mean to know Jesus and to receive eternal life?
4. Share with others when and how you came into a relationship with the one true God through Jesus Christ.

WORKOUT

John 3:16; John 10:10

OVERTIME

Father, in the same way that Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, I pray and pursue eternal life. Jesus said that eternal life was in knowing Jesus and knowing You, the only true God. I commit my life to knowing You, to serving You and to living eternally with You. I pray and trust in the strong name of Jesus, Amen.

TRAINING TIME

17. PRESS ON

MARK LONG

READY

"I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us." — Philippians 3:12–14

SET

Coaches and athletes that want to win pursue their sport with passion, determination and excellence. They want to perform at their best to contribute to a winning team. They set goals, make wise decisions, play to win, stay focused and are humble and teachable. They have a prize in mind and they chase after it relentlessly.

These same attributes apply to their spiritual lives. To fulfill their God-given purpose and live out their faith, they must pursue God relentlessly. They have a central focus on the Savior and seek Him first in all they do. They realize that God is always at work around them and that He desires an intimate relationship with them. Our Heavenly Father is constantly pursuing us. Will we respond by pursuing Him?

David was a great example of someone who pursued God wholeheartedly. He said in Psalm 63:1, "You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water." David was known as a man after God's own heart.

In *The Pursuit of God*, A.W. Tozer said, "The impulse to pursue God originates with God, but the outworking of that impulse is our following hard after Him." Let's reflect on this and adjust our perspective to accomplish it.

GO

1. Are you following Jesus with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength?
2. Would others describe you as someone who pursues God?

WORKOUT

Matthew 6:33; Psalm 27:4; Deuteronomy 4:29

OVERTIME

Heavenly Father, thank You for putting the desire to follow Jesus in my heart. Forgive me when I drift away and thank You for always drawing me back to You. Out of my deep love for You and by the power of Your Holy Spirit, help me to pursue You over anything else in my life. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

18. RETURN WITH HONOR REBEKAH TRITTIPOE

READY

“He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.”

— Psalm 23:3

SET

The middle school and high school athletes worked hard. Day after day, they congregated at the cross-country office awaiting instructions. Sometimes they headed to the track for an intense workout on the oval. Other times they ran along the mountain trails near the school. Some practices were recovery days. These were often lighthearted, including a game of follow the leader or cat and mouse. But regardless of the type of workout, each was designed with the purpose of getting the athletes to the start line in the best physical shape possible.

“Remember, the goal is to return with honor,” Coach T reminded each group right before the race began. She told them:

“You will have to make decisions as you run. Will you back off when the pain won’t let go? Will you give up trying to run down those in front of you? When you feel like caving, when you feel like doing less than your best, ask yourself if this is honorable. If not adjust. But IF you run honorably throughout the entire race, you can be satisfied when you cross the line. Return with honor!”

As members of God’s team, we too have decisions to make every day. Will we act honorably? Think honorably? Will we represent a holy and just God in the most honorable way? We are told that God requires three things: to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly (Micah 6:8). If we do that, we will return with honor.

GO

1. Think of a time when you did not act or think honorably. Why did you make that choice?
2. What do we risk if we are not intentional about being honorable?

WORKOUT

Philippians 4:8; Micah 6:8; 2 Corinthians 10:5

OVERTIME

Father God, please help me hold every thought and action captive in obedience to Christ. At the end of the day, may I return with honor. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

19. STRENGTH FOR TWO

JIMMY PAGE

READY

“This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” — Joshua 1:9

SET

In Greek mythology, a hero is believed to have “strength for two.” In other words, to be heroic, you not only had to thrive on your own, but you also had to help someone else thrive too.

Over the last several years, Spartan Racing has inspired me when I see those who are strong helping those who are struggling. Shouting words of encouragement is common in many non-Spartan races, but I’ve seen racers literally carrying other competitors, bearing their burdens, and paying someone’s “burpee penalty.”

The challenge for each one of us is this—will you have the “strength for two?”

Here are three keys to developing “strength for two”:

1. **Push Beyond Your Normal Limits:** To increase capacity, you have to be stretched and tested. If it doesn’t challenge you, it will never change you.
2. **See Pain as Your Friend:** We all have to stop seeing pain as something to be avoided and instead start using it to our advantage. Let God turn your pain into progress.
3. **Face Your Fears:** We have two choices when dealing with fear. We can “Forget Everything and Run” or “Face Everything and Rise.”

Heroes have the “strength for two.” We need people who are morally strong, unwilling to cut corners or compromise, physically strong enough to help others in need and emotionally strong enough to refresh and encourage those who are down and out.

So, be strong and courageous! It’s time to develop the “strength for two.”

GO

1. **What’s one thing you will do right now to push beyond your limits? (Mind. Body. Spirit.)**
2. **What pain are you going through that you can let God turn into progress?**

WORKOUT

Romans 8:31; 1 Corinthians 9:24–27

OVERTIME

Father help me to develop the “strength for two” so I can help others when they need it most. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

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TRAINING TIME

20. TRUST HIS PROCESS

KELLY SCHMIDT

READY

“Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.” — Psalm 119:105

SET

As an athlete, I am extremely competitive and I want to succeed in everything I do. This drive to succeed made me a successful athlete and I would work harder and longer than anyone else. If I'm given a defined goal or purpose, then I'll put in everything that's needed to accomplish it. The problem I started to realize was that I wanted control and felt I could control outcomes in my own strength.

Maybe I'm the only one, but I want to know what the future holds. If I know where I'll be in five years, then maybe I can control it more. God had to teach me that He's the One in control, not me. I spent so much wasted time trying to control the future and results. If I'm being honest, I was trying to follow my will for my life and not His.

At times, my path seemed so dark that I couldn't see where it was leading to. In my struggle to see in the future, God stopped me. We all want to hold a lamp up high so we can see further, but when you shine a light at your feet, all you can see is the next step. I needed to trust God's process, knowing He will light up the next step for me. It takes faith to know that a step will then lead to the next step. As I shifted all my effort to where God had me instead of looking to the future, I started getting better in all of the small things because I knew it was preparing me for whatever God had next.

GO

1. **Do you struggle giving up control?**
2. **Who is your lamp or guiding light today? Is it God?**
3. **If we aren't in the Word, are we walking around in the dark without anything to light our way?**

WORKOUT

Hebrews 4:12; John 1:1–5

OVERTIME

God, increase my faith to trust Your will for my life. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

21. KEEP LOOKING AT JESUS STAS AGAFONOV

READY

“A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.” — Ephesians 6:10

SET

My hockey coach Mr. Andrew had always tried to encourage me. I remember one practice when he told me: “Go over there and fight. Be a man! You must hate your opponent to defeat him!” He pointed at my teammate who was head and shoulders above me and 40 pounds (20 kilos) heavier than I was. I think you already know what the end of this unequal battle was. I was defeated, but my coach praised me for being bold.

Only years later when Jesus came into my life I realized we are not fighting against other people. We are fighting for becoming better than we were yesterday; we are fighting against all our weaknesses and bad character traits. And this is the real battle that will last for a lifetime. The good news is that through His death and resurrection, Jesus already gave us victory over our old nature and we can live out this victory every single day!

Stop looking at your own strengths and start looking at Jesus’s cross in the beginning of every new day!

GO

- 1. What are the struggles and battles you are facing in your life today?**
- 2. Do you usually rely on your own strength or on the strength of God?**
- 3. Try to remember moments in your life or in the lives of other people when God gave you victory.**

WORKOUT

Romans 6:10, Hebrews 12:1–3

OVERTIME

Dear Lord, thank You for Your cross, death and resurrection, and for giving the victory to us! We can live it out every single day, focusing on You! Thank You Jesus for giving us strength for every day. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

22. THE HIGHEST GOAL

ALICIA CARDIE

READY

“Let love be your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives—especially the ability to prophesy.” — 1 Corinthians 14:1

SET

I think nearly every kid in sports dream about making the Olympics someday. To earn a spot to compete at the highest level, representing an entire nation, pursuing the glory and honor that comes with winning a gold medal—it’s an awe-inspiring feeling. And for many, it becomes an all-consuming goal.

But God doesn’t tell us to set the Olympics as our highest goal. Actually, as Christians, we’re already in a sort of divine Olympics: we’ve been given gifts of the highest level by God Himself, we’re representing His entire Kingdom and we’re pursuing His glory. To drive that whole pursuit, God tells us that love is our highest goal. Not money. Not a medal. Not fame. But love.

As we train and compete every day and simply go about our lives, we face hundreds of decisions and what we choose will paint a very clear picture of what we’re striving toward. It becomes evident in how we act in our sport, how we relate to others and what we do with our time. And every day, above all else, we should be choosing love.

GO

1. What was or is your biggest goal in sports growing up or right now?
2. What kind of decisions do you make every day? What do these decisions tell others about what you value?
3. How can you choose to make love your highest goal this week?

WORKOUT

Matthew 20:25–28; Ephesians 5:2

OVERTIME

Lord, thank You for giving me a spot on Your team and the ability to represent You well. Show me what it looks like to set love as my highest goal and help me to move closer to it every day. I want to pursue a love like Yours above all else. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

23. EYE BLACK

JAKE HANNON

READY

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free.” — Luke 4:18

SET

As a baseball player, there was no feeling like putting on eye black before a big game. When I smeared it on my face, I was focused on winning the game. I felt invincible—like I could do anything on the field. All nerves, problems and distractions went away. I was ready to be the superstar I knew I could be.

As athletes, when we are focused and playing our best, everything comes to us naturally. We go with the flow and step up and shine. But what about when we step off the field? Are we really focused when it comes to the rest of our lives?

As Christians, God has given us our own “eye black.” The Bible says that we are *anointed*. The original meaning of this word is “smeared.” When God would anoint someone in the Bible, leaders would smear oil all over their face. This oil represented the Holy Spirit. This represented the power of God to bring health and healing. The Bible reminds us that we have the same Holy Spirit in us that was in Jesus to enable us to pursue living our entire life focused on Him and His mission.

GO

- 1. How does your life look like off the field? Do you feel like you are focused on God when it comes to your personal life?**
- 2. What does it mean to be “anointed” by Jesus?**
- 3. How can you pursue a godly life outside of sports?**

WORKOUT

1 Samuel 16:13; 2 Corinthians 1:21–22; James 5:14

OVERTIME

Lord, thank You for anointing me to do Your work on and off the field. Help me to find ways to stay focused on You as I practice my calling outside of sports. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

24. 3D FAITH

SARAH ROBERTS

READY

“When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.” — Romans 1:12

SET

I met Caren Nelson when she was a college soccer player. She was a stud athlete who worked extremely hard, but she knew something was missing. She found herself in our FCA soccer Bible study and in turn found what she was missing—that is, a personal relationship with Jesus.

She approached her faith like she did her sport. She went all in seeking the Lord through prayer, His Word and in church. She is now serving on FCA staff in Austin, Texas, and is pouring into coaches and athletes, including my daughter. She just sent my daughter her college soccer jersey with a note that read, “Throughout my career I needed people to believe in me a lot more than I ever believed in myself . . . and Chloe Roberts, I believe in you. I believe in the Chloe who loves Christ and is so much more than a soccer player.”

Caren is what we call a 3D Christian. The three dimensions that represent a 3D Christian are the ability to ask Him to SAVE, to SEARCH and to SEND us. We can all be tempted to stop short at salvation and be content with having Jesus be our Savior, but He wants to be our Lord too. That means asking Him to search our hearts, change our ways and teach us His ways. And when we do this, we obtain this ability to encourage others in their faith through The Holy Spirit that lives in us.

GO

1. **Who in your life has encouraged you as an athlete and as a Christian?**
2. **Where is your walk with Christ today? Are you asking him to save you, search you or send you (to do His good work)?**

WORKOUT

Romans 10:9; Psalm 139:23

OVERTIME

Lord, I ask that You are not just my Savior, but my Lord too. Search my heart, teach me Your ways and use me to be a light on my team, in my school and my home. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

25. APPROACHING GOD

REX STUMP

READY

“Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” — Matthew 6:9–10

SET

I love going down south because everyone respectfully addresses me as “Sir.” Not dude or buddy, but sir. Do we always respectfully address our coaches, teachers, parents or even God?

When you pray, do you pray like you are going to a museum? Do you stand in awe of what you see, proclaiming, “Wow, look at this! God you are awesome, mighty, powerful and loving.”

Do you pray like you are going to a funeral? “God, I really don’t want to be here.” Do you pray like you are going to a concert? “God, entertain me. Help me be happy.” Do you pray like God is your waiter? “God can You bring me . . .”

I admit that sometimes when I pray, it’s like going to the grocery store. I have things I need or others need and I jump right into asking God to respond to my requests. There is nothing wrong with that, but prayer is way more than getting things we want or need from God.

Jesus reminds us that we should start prayer with a focus on God, not ourselves. In prayer, we come into the presence of the Creator of the universe, who is our Heavenly Father. Our Heavenly Father is everything to us that a perfect Father should be; a Father who loves, guides, protects and provides. God is also a Holy Father. There is no evil in Him. He always does what is right and good. He does not suffer from selfishness, bad judgment or arrogance.

The next time you spend time in prayer, respectfully admire Him with words of praise and thanksgiving.

GO

1. **Respectfully describe God.**
2. **How should you change the way you approach God in prayer?**

WORKOUT

Psalms 69:13–16; Matthew 7:7–11

OVERTIME

Heavenly Father, You are all-powerful and all-knowing. You are the Almighty Creator. You are Holy and Just. You are love and full of grace! Amen!

TRAINING TIME

26. THE BEST COACH

ANDREW CHERNENKOV

READY

“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.” — Luke 9:24

SET

A coach plays a special role in an athlete's life. He or she helps to come through joyful and frustrating moments to reach something more than an athlete could even dream of. A coach leaves an imprint on an athlete's heart.

I used to play many different sports, so I had been coached by different coaches. Each of them had different approaches in coaching and I knew that I was not able to reach my full potential by myself because I didn't know everything and I was not skilled enough at that moment. One coach emphasized that I had a basketball talent and I shouldn't only use it to achieve personal success. He told me: “I used to be a player on a team just like you. And I am sure that only when you play together with your team, you realize the power of a teamwork.”

When I was a part of a varsity team, I decided to use my talents and my vision of the game for my team to get a championship. I was standing there on a pedestal and received not only a trophy for a top scorer but a University diploma—it was our fifth championship in a row.

Jesus is the ultimate champion who fulfilled His mission. God the Father gave Jesus a game plan. He was born to die and to become a champion for you, me and everyone else.

GO

1. Who do you consider as your best coach? Why?
2. If you could share all of your personal issues with the best Coach ever, Jesus Christ, which issues would you share with Him?
3. In a prayer, ask God, Your Head Coach, to guide you and give you a game plan for your life.

WORKOUT

Ephesians 2:5; Proverbs 3:5–6; John 1:12; Matthew 20:25–28

OVERTIME

Lord please help me to live out God's victory that He obtained for me. Help me realize that when I am obedient to You we can do amazing things together. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

27. WEAK OR STRONG?

ALICIA CARDIE

READY

“If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won’t do it, because I don’t want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message.” — 2 Corinthians 12:6

SET

I vividly remember going to a church service early in my freshman year of college and hearing a sermon that troubled me as an athlete. It was about how Christ is strong in us when we are weak. *But I’m an athlete*, I thought. *Aren’t I supposed to be strong already?* I felt that I had stumbled upon a big dilemma for Christian athletes.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul makes an interesting point about strength. He had qualifications. He had status. He had accomplishments—just like an athlete. He even says, “If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth.” Talk about having some confidence in his strength.

But the point is that he doesn’t boast his strength or abilities because his own human strengths are not what he wants to get credit for. Likewise, we don’t need credit for our strength as athletes. It’s okay to feel and become strong, but what we delight in should always be the light of Christ that people can see in the way we compete and live, whether everything is going right or not. That’s what God wants to see and rewards.

GO

- 1. How does knowing God wants you to focus on Him first and not your physical capabilities change your perspective as an athlete?**
- 2. Can you think of any instances where your desires to honor God and to be a strong athlete might conflict? What would you do in that situation?**
- 3. What are some ways you can let Christ shine through you in your life?**

WORKOUT

2 Corinthians 12:10; Psalm 73:26

OVERTIME

Lord, thank You for the talent You’ve given me to play sports and to become strong, but help me not to be prideful of my own strength. I want people to see You in me, so let Your strength be what people see. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

28. THE POSITIVE 2

JIMMY PAGE

READY

“Of the twelve who had explored the land, only Joshua and Caleb remained alive.”

— Numbers 14:38

SET

Belief is a powerful force. Every team needs positive players and optimistic coaches who have an unwavering belief—a belief that they will fulfill their potential, belief in each other and belief that they can overcome adversity. When there is doubt and a lack of belief, this fuels fear, negativity and complaining.

In the book of Numbers, we find the story of Moses and the Israelites as they are preparing to enter the Promised Land. They were delivered from 400 years of slavery and oppression and Moses sent out 12 spies to scout out the land. Ten came back with a negative report based on fear. Two came back with a positive report rooted in faith. The Positive 2, Joshua and Caleb, remembered God’s promise and His mighty power to save and deliver His people.

In the end, the ten negative complainers were struck down with a plague and died immediately. The faithful, Positive 2, along with a new generation, entered the Promised Land.

Keeping a positive attitude and remaining optimistic takes work; it’s a mental battle. The negative critic ignores what’s possible and instead focuses on the problems. The positive coach focuses on the power and promises of God and confronts the challenge head on! When you hear the negative report from the naysayers, make sure they can hear your positive voice loud and clear!

Let’s be like the Positive 2. Let’s rest on the promises in God’s Word and rely on His great power over our circumstances.

GO

1. Are you a positive force on your team? Or, are you a complainer?
2. How can you turn around the negative current of complaining and doubt?

WORKOUT

1 John 4:14; Romans 8:31; Philippians 4:13

OVERTIME

“Lord, help me always be one of the Positive 2, both on the field and off. Help me to know Your promises and trust in You no matter what. Help me to always believe that You are bigger than my problems and will work all things together for my good and Your glory.” Amen.

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TRAINING TIME

29. FEAR OR FAITH

SARAH ROBERTS

READY

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.”
— 2 Timothy 1:7

SET

My dad was my high school basketball coach and after every game, we would watch the game’s film. He had the same complaint every time, “Why are you not taking the shot?” He finally got me a poster to hang in my room with the quote, “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.” The reality was I was scared to miss. I was scared to let the team down. I feared failure. I feared being a failure.

But what I didn’t realize then was that failure is an event but never a person. Yes, we are going to fail. Yes, we are going to fall short. But just because we fail, doesn’t mean we are a failure. Imperfection is what makes us human. We serve a God who knew we fall short so much that we needed to be sent a Savior to not only save us from our sins but to help us overcome our fear of failure. Galatians 2:20 says, “My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

It is through Christ that we have power, love, self-discipline and the confidence to take the shot, make the catch and walk in faith never in fear.

GO

1. How has fear stopped you in your sport?
2. How do you handle failure as an athlete, student or just a person in general?
3. How does our faith in Christ help us in our fear and failures as athletes?

WORKOUT

Psalm 56:3; Isaiah 41:10; Romans 8:31

OVERTIME

Lord, I confess that sometimes I fear failure, but I am asking You to strengthen my faith. I know through You I have all I need to accomplish what You want and be who you called me to be as an athlete and a person. Amen.

TRAINING TIME

30. RITUALS

MARK STEPHENS

READY

“Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray.”

— Mark 1:35

SET

Successful athletes and coaches set pre-competition rituals, like listening to music or eating food, that they do before a practice or game. They prepare their bodies, minds and hearts to give their all to be the BEST they can be.

Similarly, great leaders like Jesus have daily rituals or habits they do to ensure they have the BEST day they can have to honor the Lord with their lives. One of Jesus’s daily rituals is prayer. He got up early before the sun rose so He could talk with His Father intimately and without any distractions. He shared His concerns and burdens; He shared His excitement and opportunities for the day, but He also listened for God’s voice and His will.

When you think about everything you do from when you roll out of bed to when you begin your day, are you setting yourself up for a successful day? I encourage you to evaluate your personal daily routines so you set yourself up to have the best day possible. When I look at everything I do before I get to work, I have more than a two-hour morning routine. There are many things I do during that time, but prayer, reading the Word and exercising are nonnegotiable for me.

As competitors, it’s important to strive for the best so we win games and become better players. As Christians, it’s even more important to strive to be the best Christian and to have the best relationship with God that we can. Beginning and ending our day with God is the prime way we can ensure that we are setting ourselves up for success.

GO

1. What are your pre-competition rituals?
2. Specifically, what does your morning routine look like minute by minute before you get to school or work?
3. What is one change you want to make this week?

WORKOUT

1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 4:13

OVERTIME

Lord we have one life and desire to honor You minute by minute, show us how to do that. We love You. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

TRAINING TIME

31. SHIELD OF LOVE

ARBOR DIGGS

READY

“But you, O LORD, are a shield around me; you are my glory, the one who holds my head high.”

— Psalms 3:3

SET

Once on a rather hot summer day, I went for a run. Halfway in, I quickly began to realize I was becoming dizzy, tired and weak. The heat was getting to me and getting to me fast. I frantically scanned the area for something that provided shade so I could escape from the exhausting heat. To the left of me was a mighty oak tree, providing at least six feet of coverage. Once I reached the base of the tree, I collapsed and leaned my head back, allowing the tree to hold all my weight. I then opened my eyes and realized I was in complete shade; the tree was acting as a shield to the unending summer heat.

Let’s face it, our lives are filled with moments of exhaustion: school, essays, projects, workouts, practices, games, social media, family conflict, drama, relationship problems and so on. We need somewhere to run, somewhere that will shield us from the things beating us down. God is that place. He is our shield of protection. He promises that He will be there, ready to hold our head high and provide protection from all sides. Just like that tree I sought out for shade and protection, God is sturdy, strong and a place we can rest under for all our days.

When we rest in the shadow of His shade, we are resting in His glory and protection. We can lean our head back, smile and let His unending shield do what He promised.

Pursue a life in the shadow of the Cross.

GO

1. What does it mean that God is a shield around us?
2. Has there ever been a time you have felt His protection?
3. What things do you need protection from?

WORKOUT

Psalm 5:12; Psalm 18:2; Psalm 16:8

OVERTIME

God, I need Your protection and glory to surround me. Not just on the days I need it, but always. Amen.

WARM-UPS



THE TEAM BUILDING “WARM-UPS” ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES have icons that match the icons for the “Life Topics” in the front of the Bible. You can also use these “Warm-ups” with any of the “Athlete Topics” to kick off or enhance your group discussions.

WARM-UPS

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WARM-UPS

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WARM-UPS

SEE ME, SEE YOU

Get with one other person. It would be best if you know your partner fairly well. Read the questions below. First, answer the questions as they apply to you. Then answer them as you see you partner. If you do not know your partner well, just guess. After you have responded to both sets of questions, compare responses with each other. See how well you know each other.



ME			QUESTIONS	THEM		
Yes	No	Don't Know		Yes	No	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Am I patient?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do I think of others first?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Am I well-liked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do I enjoy life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do I worry a lot?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Am I trustworthy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do I take risks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do I need to be part of a group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Am I quiet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do I like to be the center of attention?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



WARM-UPS

BEING THERE

Get in groups of around four and share where you would like to be right now.

You'll have to travel in your mind, but

that's okay. Picture yourself stepping into your very own 22 century teleportation device. Would you program yourself to go somewhere else in your hometown, city, state, or country? Would you travel the world or take a trip to somewhere in the universe? You can go anywhere you want, but you can only go there once. Where would you go?

Now consider this: Your use of the teleportation device is only one-way. There's no return trip. So wherever you go, you'll stay for the remainder of your life. Does that change your destination choice?

If you could take one thing with you, what would you take?

If there was room for one more person to go with you, who would you want to join you?



ROOTED

The Bible declares: "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). Money can play a powerful role in your life—both positive and negative.

The same is true for success. What keeps you rooted?

In your group, answer and discuss the following questions:



My attitude toward money is best expressed by the following motto:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Save, save, save. | <input type="checkbox"/> It's a necessary evil. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spend, spend, spend! | <input type="checkbox"/> It's a source of arguments. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> There's never enough. | <input type="checkbox"/> It's a source of fun. |

My feelings about getting ahead can be summed by the following statement:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Look out for number one. | <input type="checkbox"/> Keep a balanced life instead. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What else is there in life? | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't neglect your family. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It's a high priority. | <input type="checkbox"/> It's not worth it. |

My idea of a successful person is represented by the following type of person:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare professional | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual guide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scholar | <input type="checkbox"/> Politician |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technological genius | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional athlete |

WARM-UPS

TRYING TO FIGURE IT OUT

If you could know one thing about the future what would it be? Take a look at the list below and check only one.



- ☐ What kind of work I will do
- ☐ What I will look like when I'm old
- ☐ When Christ will return
- ☐ How healthy I will be
- ☐ Whom I will marry
- ☐ How much money I will make
- ☐ If I will stay in touch with my school friends

Get in groups of four and share your response, and discuss answers to the following questions:

What do you most want to ask God about your life?

Which relationship would you most like for God to make new?

- ☐ My relationship with my parents
- ☐ My relationship with God
- ☐ My relationship with myself
- ☐ My relationship with my friends

ICE CREAM OF THE MONTH

Get in groups of around four and share your favorite ice cream flavors and combinations. Whether it's a single, double, or triple scoop, places like Baskets of Robins and Bob and Terry's can make your wildest frozen fantasy a reality. If you've got the funds, they've got the flavors.

Choose up to three of your favorite flavors—from plain vanilla to banana-rama-extravaganza. You can write them on each scoop, if you like.

Compare your favorites with other members of your group.

Now think of three words that distinctively describe you. Whether you write them down or not, share and compare your responses.



WARM-UPS

CUT IT OUT

Get into groups of around four, and provide something round that can be cut into pie pieces like a cookie cake, pie, cake, or simply a sheet of paper that can be cut with scissors. Imagine that the round object you have is the face of a clock. Picture the 12 hours on a clock face. Consider the 12 hours to be 12 free hours you have on a rare day off. It's a day that, besides resting, is totally yours.

The first person should consider the number of hours in their day they will spend doing something for himself or herself, and then cut that section out of the object. The second member of the group will cut out the amount of time he or she will invest in others. The third person will cut out a section that represents the amount of free time he or she will spend with God. Then, discuss the questions below. If you need to reuse the object for each person, reassemble it and do so.

What do you spend most of your time doing? If you could add more time to your day, what would you do?

How much of your day is spent learning more about God and His purpose for you? How much time do you spend serving Him?



A BIT FIT

Get together in groups of around four. If you are wearing a fitness-tracking device, discuss why you have it? What do you like about it? What would you like to change about it?

What impact could wearing a fitness-tracking device have on the person who wears it? Could it influence anyone who is not wearing one?

Why do you think so many people are jumping on the bandwagon to track their fitness?

Do you think anyone wears a wristband to make a point? What point might they be trying to make?

Could someone become obsessed with it? If so, how?

Could it become a status symbol?

What measurement is most important to you? (You might be able to tell by considering the one you check most.)

- ☐ Steps
- ☐ Miles

- ☐ Calories
- ☐ Time

- ☐ Calories



How does what you consider most important to you impact the way you spend your time?

What causes you the most stress? How do you de-stress?

What issues concern you most? Are they global or personal? What can you do, if anything, to deal with these issues?

WARM-UPS

BUZZER-BEATER

Get together in groups of around four and share how there's almost nothing more exciting in any competition

than a last minute victory. A shot made just before the buzzer sounds to win a basketball game—especially when a championship is on the line—is the best! But for the losing team, it's the opposite. There's almost nothing worse than losing at the last second.



What last minute “buzzer-beater” decision have you made that turned out to be one of the best decisions you ever made?

What “buzzer-beater” decision have you made that turned out to be one of the worst decisions you ever made?

Are you aware of your stress level being higher when you're under pressure? Are you better or worse under pressure?

How do you usually react in a crisis? Are you one of the first to offer help or are you one of the first to run for help?

FACTS AND FICTION

Get together in a group of four. Here's a chance to share some interesting facts about yourself—and a piece of fiction.

One at a time, complete the four sentences below. Read through the four phrases first before quietly choosing the one to be a work of fiction. Then share the four statements, keeping a straight face throughout. Let others in the group try to guess which the fictitious statement. When everyone has guessed, reveal the fictitious response then complete the phrase with a true piece of information. Take enough time so everyone has a chance to share.



When I was five years old, I wanted to grow up to be a _____.

When I was ten, my hero was _____.

My favorite thing to do when I am not in school is _____.

One day, I hope to change the world by _____.

WARM-UPS

WHO AM I

Gather in groups of around four and discuss the various roles you play at home, at school and at other places. From the list below, check the different roles you fill in your life. After sharing your answers with the group, take turns answering the questions that follow.



I am a/an . . .

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sister | <input type="checkbox"/> Employee | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brother | <input type="checkbox"/> Musician | <input type="checkbox"/> Skier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student | <input type="checkbox"/> Writer | <input type="checkbox"/> Pet owner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Boyfriend | <input type="checkbox"/> Actor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athlete | <input type="checkbox"/> Girlfriend | <input type="checkbox"/> Fan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Son | <input type="checkbox"/> Babysitter | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth group member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Club member | <input type="checkbox"/> Driver |

1. Which role is most fun?
2. Which role is most challenging?
3. What role do you fill that is most rewarding?
4. Which role is most frustrating?



WARM-UPS

MUSICAL SCORE



For an athlete, the word *score* brings to mind points for a basket, touchdown, hit, run, goal or other numeric value assigned to an individual's or team's performance. For a musician, the score contains the musical notes and lyrics needed to either play or sing a musical piece, whether the notes are to be played on a flute or bass drum, or sung by a soloist or choir. Scores are also important to gamers and people involved in lots of other activities.

Think about scoring in athletics. Which sport has the simplest scoring system? Which has the most confusing and would be hard to explain to someone who knew nothing about the sport? If you could choose one word to score your spiritual growth, which would you choose? Consider the ones listed below, or choose your own.

Why would you choose it, and what score would you give yourself?

Thinking about music as it relates to your personal discipleship, are you more like a musician down in the orchestra pit or a vocalist on the stage. If you're a vocalist, are you a soloist or a member of the choir? Use the continuums below to mark where you are as a soloist (Lone Ranger Christian) or member of the choir (Accountable to others).

	SOLOIST	MEMBER OF THE CHOIR
ace		
basket		
distance		
game		
goal		
lap		
par		
point		
run		
set		
time		
touch		
touchdown		
other: _____		

WARM-UPS

SUNSCREEN OR SUNBURN

Get into groups of up to eight and discuss the last time you were out in the bright, hot sun for an extended period of time. How long were you outside? What were you doing?



Was it your choice to be outside, or did someone else make the choice for you?

How does your skin react to prolonged exposure to the sun? Did you burn, tan, or was there no visible change to your skin?

What is your opinion about sunscreen?

Think about times when you are forced to make a decision. Are you quick to state your opinion, or do you avoid expressing your thoughts?

Rate yourself from 1 to 5 for each category below. A 1 means you avoid expressing your thoughts, so you “screen” yourself. A 5 means you are quick to state your opinion, regardless if you get “burned” for it. You may rate yourself differently depending on the topic. Then discuss why you rated yourself the way you did and give examples.

	SUNSCREEN			SUNBURN		
Grades	1	2	3	4	5	
Faith	1	2	3	4	5	
Politics	1	2	3	4	5	
Dating	1	2	3	4	5	
Family	1	2	3	4	5	
Sports	1	2	3	4	5	
Religion	1	2	3	4	5	
Friends	1	2	3	4	5	

WARM-UPS

OUT OF EGYPT

Gather in groups of around four. Have someone read Exodus 3:1-14, the account of Moses and the burning bush. After reading the Scripture, discuss the following questions.



1. What is your first reaction to what you just heard?
2. Did these words of Scripture help you have a better understanding of who God is? If so, what do you understand better now? If not, what questions do you have?
3. Thinking about Moses and his encounter with God, which of the following can you most relate to right now? Share why.
 - ☐ I need to feel God's presence right now.
 - ☐ I'm dealing with some temptations, failures, or bad choices. I need to be closer to God.
 - ☐ I'm hurting, and I need to be reminded that God cares about me.
 - ☐ I need things in my life to change. I need to be reminded that God is my Rescuer.
 - ☐ I really want God who is bigger than I can understand. I've been tempted to make up a god in my own image who is far too small.
4. What is your "Egypt" that you need God to deliver you from?
 - ☐ Painful past
 - ☐ Problems with parents
 - ☐ Toxic relationship
 - ☐ Anxiety
 - ☐ Loneliness
 - ☐ Depression
 - ☐ Fear of the future
 - ☐ Bad attitude
 - ☐ Addiction that has you captive

WARM-UPS

A COOPERATIVE SPIRIT

Get into groups of around four and discuss the following: Are you more likely to compete or cooperate in each of the situations listed below?



	Compete	Cooperate
Playing a game of pick-up ball with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working with a group on a school project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing a board game	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussing an issue in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing on a school sports team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Driving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making a decision as a family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

IF IT COULD GROW ON A TREE

Apples grow on apple trees, and oranges grow on orange trees. That's Biology 101. So it would be strange to see an apple growing on an orange tree or vice versa. As the creation account in Genesis reads, "Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good" (1:12b). It's good that trees bear the fruit God intended them to bear.

The common phrase, "If money grew on trees..." is a way of saying that we wish money could be as easy to obtain as picking an apple off of a tree.

Get in groups of around four and complete the statement, "If money grew on trees . . ." with the first thing you would do with your unlimited source of finances. Don't limit your choice to tangible objects. Dream big. After all, money is no object.

If you couldn't have a money tree, what kind of tree would you like to have? What one thing would grow on it?

Now think of someone you care about. What would you wish for them?



WARM-UPS

SHORTS AND STUFF

Bermuda Shorts (your grandparents wore them, your parents wore them and you may even wear them because they keep coming back in style) came on the international scene during World War I when British military personnel sported them to deal with the warm, tropical climate. Territories and countries across the globe are associated with products and services.

In groups of around four, look at the following list and check each item that appeals to you. Some items may be unfamiliar to you, but others in your group may be familiar with them. Discuss reasons for your choices.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Belgium waffle | <input type="checkbox"/> French fries | <input type="checkbox"/> Irish potatoes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> British Sterling® | <input type="checkbox"/> Fiji Water® | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese steak house |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Columbian coffee | <input type="checkbox"/> German shepherd | <input type="checkbox"/> Mongolian beef |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cuban sandwich | <input type="checkbox"/> Greek yogurt | <input type="checkbox"/> Norwegian salmon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Egyptian cotton | <input type="checkbox"/> Guinea pig | <input type="checkbox"/> Polish sausage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French bread | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian bread | <input type="checkbox"/> Russian dressing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French dressing | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian dressing | |



WARM-UPS

GETTING HELP

Get in groups of around four. Look at the following situations, and determine what kind of help you would need to deal with each based on the level of stress the situation would cause. Mark each as stressful, very stressful, or as a full-blown crisis.



	STRESSFUL	VERY STRESSFUL	FULL-BLOWN CRISIS
How I spend my time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People I don't get along with	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curfew	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Violence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking a test	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not having enough money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting up in the morning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eating alone at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving a speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bad grades	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being asked to pray for someone or something	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting into college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excelling in extracurricular activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sharing in small groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Driving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wondering what everyone is doing over the weekend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Death	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race relations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting in shape	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Holidays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

WARM-UPS

MAYBE-MY-MOJI

Get together in a group of four. After looking at the emojis, pick the one you feel most strongly about. Share why you feel the way you do.



Now pick the emoji that has the least interest to you. Share why you picked it.

Now go look at the rest of the emojis and explain why you would or would not use them and why.

Which emoji best represents your relationships right now? Is that where you want your relationships to be? If not, what emoji would you like to represent them?



WARM-UPS

I AM COMPETITIVE . . .

Get with one other person. Does your partner know how competitive and cooperative you are? How would the people who know you most classify you?

Look at the following list of activities. Which ones are you more likely to compete? Which ones are you more likely to cooperate? Take turns with your partner going through the list and selecting *Competes* or *Cooperates* for each situation.



Competes

Cooperates

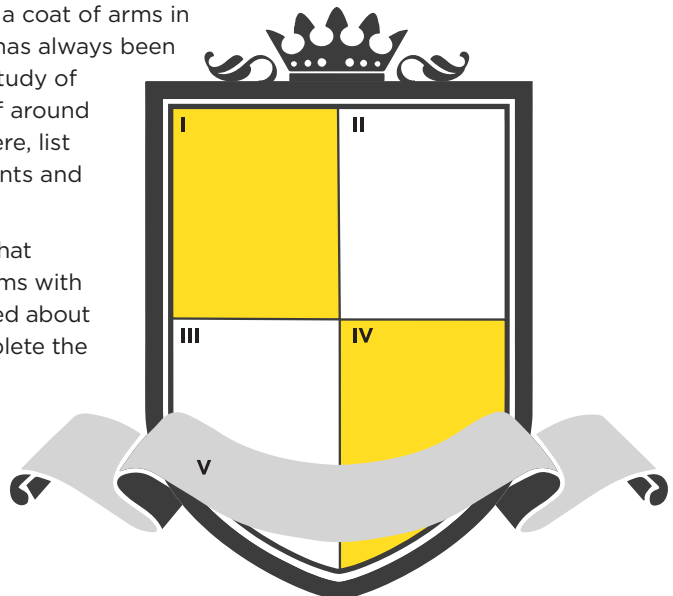
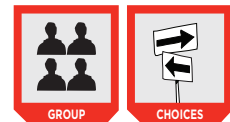
<input type="checkbox"/>	Playing a board game	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Playing a game of pick-up ball with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on a school sports team	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Working with a group on a school project	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussing an issue in class	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Driving	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Using social media	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Making a family decision	<input type="checkbox"/>

SHIELDED

Throughout history, families have used symbols, usually in the shape of a shield, to represent their family heritage. Though a family may not post a coat of arms in their home or property, there has always been an interest in genealogy: the study of family history. Get in groups of around four. Using the coat of arms here, list five strengths about your parents and yourself on the shield.

After you share the strengths that make up your family coat of arms with your group, share what you liked about what you heard and then complete the following statement:

If I could add another strength that I have seen in you, it would be:



WARM-UPS

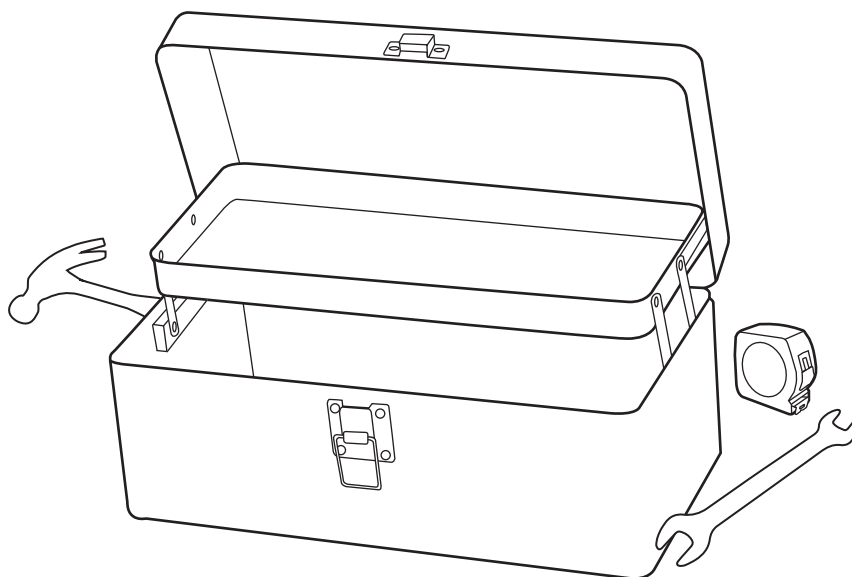
WHAT'S IN YOUR TOOLBOX?

Handy people have handy tools. Painters have brushes, rollers, and more. Window washers have cleaning supplies, rags, and those squeegee things. They keep up with their tools, because without their tools, it's impossible to do their jobs. Certain tools are necessary for certain jobs.



As a group, consider the old-school toolbox below.

The best way to organize a toolbox is to put in the top the tools you use most. Then, you put larger tools or tools used less frequently in the bottom.



What tools, or skills, do you have? Which ones come easily to you or are the ones you use most frequently? These can be physical, mental, emotional or social. List the easier or more used skills in the top tier of the toolbox.

Which tools don't come as easily to you or are seldom used? List these skills in the bottom of the toolbox.

The right tools are required to do the right job—especially when the job is critical. Do you have the right tools to help you in a crisis? If not, what do you need to add to your toolbox?

In what tool or tools do you place most of your trust?

WARM-UPS

DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Some people just seem to be more difficult than other people. Whether it's true or not, you can almost guarantee that at some point in your day-to-day activities you are bound to encounter someone in a less-than-perfect situation.



Ask a member of the group to read the first statement below and briefly describe how he or she would likely respond. Invite others to respond. Read each statement, allowing several responses for each. After allowing time for group members to respond to all the statements, ask, "How are our responses a result of the things that cause us stress? What if we imagined ourselves—or someone we care deeply about—in the other person's place? Would we respond differently? If so, how?"

If I were to encounter someone who chews with his or her mouth open, I would likely . . .

If I were to encounter someone who is boring me with endless conversation, I would likely . . .

If I were to encounter a server who gets my order wrong, I would likely . . .

If I were to encounter a driver who cuts me off, I would likely . . .

If I were to encounter a telemarketer who won't take no for an answer, I would likely . . .

If I were to encounter a person who flirts with me, I would likely . . .

If I were to encounter a cashier who talks on the phone while waiting on me, I would likely . . .

If I were to encounter a homeless person begging for money, I would likely . . .

If I were to encounter a person who cuts ahead in a long line, I would likely . . .

If I were to encounter someone who is being rude to an elderly person, I would likely . . .

If I were to encounter someone whose political views are the opposite of mine, I would likely . . .

If I were to encounter a person who seems very shallow, I would likely . . .

WARM-UPS

HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

Get in groups of about eight. Discuss how sometimes we control our situations while sometimes our situations seem to control us. Then look at the situations below and consider the level of stress each causes you. For each situation, what stresses you most. If what stresses you most isn't an option, share what does.



EVERYDAY STUFF

Having unreliable (or nonexistent) transportation
Feeling that I don't have enough time to do everything
Feeling that I have no direction in life

FAMILY

Dealing with parents
Getting along with siblings
Having restrictions and rules

FRIENDSHIPS

Fear of rejection
Trying to read their mind
Being ignored

EXAM TIME

The feeling of doom that hangs over me
Procrastinating when I really need to study
Drawing a blank for an answer I should know

ATHLETIC TRAINING

Having a coach who is too demanding
Feeling I'm not good enough to compete
Being disciplined in my training

ATHLETIC COMPETITION

Sitting on the sidelines
Wondering if I can play my best
Seeing a teammate make a bad play

WARM-UPS

WHEN I WAS TEN

Get in groups of around four. Use the following questions to talk about the person you were when you were ten years old. As you complete each statement, remember do so as a ten-year-old you. Make sure everyone has a chance to respond before moving to the next statement.



- My first pet: _____
- My favorite subject in elementary school: _____
- The person I went to when I got hurt: _____
- The chore I dreaded doing most: _____
- My first big trip: _____
- My favorite room in the house: _____
- The fun thing we often did as a family: _____
- My favorite thing to do on a summer day: _____
- The friend who got in trouble with me: _____
- My favorite uncle or aunt: _____
- The best Christmas present I received: _____
- My favorite thing to eat: _____



WARM-UPS

GAP YEAR

Get into groups of up to eight. Discuss your plans for life after high school. Depending on whether you'll graduate this year or in a few years, your plans may or may not be set. But even set plans can change at the last minute.



How ready are you now for life after 12th or senior year grade?

In what area are you most ready?

- ☐ Academically
- ☐ Socially
- ☐ Athletically
- ☐ Emotionally
- ☐ Spiritually

Why did you check the area you indicated? In what area are you least ready to move forward?

On a scale of 1 (least) to 10 (most), how stressed are you about life after high school?

Some students take a gap year after graduating before heading off to college or the military or to start a career. What if you took a “spiritual gap year” right now? How could you begin investing today and for the next year to be more like Jesus? One year from now, what would be the evidence that you have grown in your faith?

BOX SEATS

Get together in a group of four and discuss the greatest event you would like to attend but will likely never have the chance to do. Maybe it's a national championship, a concert, or an opportunity to see a living legend or hero in person. What would you be willing to sacrifice to do so? How much would be too much? Where would you draw the line?



Now imagine you actually gain entrance to that once-in-a-lifetime event. You're not only there in person, but you're in a box seat—the best seat in the house! And it gets even better: You have two box seats. Who would you take with you? Why?

Now imagine you are sitting in your box seat beside your plus one waiting for the event to begin when you're informed that a mistake has been made. You have only one box seat instead of two. What do you do? Honestly, do you stay or give your dream away to your plus one?

Tough call. But it gets even tougher. Imagine looking at that one empty seat and realizing that it represents your life's goal, your purpose, all that is most important to you? Who or what do you imagine sitting in it?

WARM-UPS

LIFETIME GUARANTEE

If you could guarantee three things in your life, which three would you choose from the list below? Get together with one other person and share your choices with each other.



- ☐ Financially independent so you never have to work a day in your life
- ☐ Secure and rewarding job guaranteed for life with benefits
- ☐ An attractive appearance that always gets you noticed in a crowd
- ☐ Stress-free life without pain, struggles or tension
- ☐ Deep, satisfying relationship with God
- ☐ So popular that everybody wants to spend time with you
- ☐ Romantic relationship with the person of your dreams
- ☐ Close family with no hassles, unconditional love and lots of support
- ☐ Good health and a long life
- ☐ One deep friendship with someone who will always be there
- ☐ Success, fame, and recognition in your chosen field



WARM-UPS

WHAT'S A PALINDROME?

A *palindrome* is a word that reads the same backward and forward. For example, the woman's name HANNAH spelled backwards is still HANNAH. And if HANNAH happens to be your SIS, well, it's the same either way you spell it. Her MOM and DAD would be proud of her either way. One of the best palindromes is RACECAR, even if it is REDDER than the other cars. (Go ahead and spell them backward.) What other palindromes can you come up with? Some others are printed upside down—but not backward—at the end of this activity.

Had you heard of palindromes before now? Would you have "believed in" palindromes if you had not seen a few for yourself?

Do you believe that seeing is believing or that believing is seeing? What's the difference between these two perspectives?

What do you want to see happen most in your relationship with God?

As a growing Christian, what do you have the most trouble believing?

In what way are you going the wrong way—living backward—as a Christian?

What can you praise God for as you continue to move forward in your walk with Christ?

More palindromes: redivider, deified, civic, radar, level, rotor, kayak, reviver, madam, and refer



LIFE ON AN ISLAND

Use masking tape to mark off four two-foot-by-two-foot squares on the floor. Tell students that everyone has to get both feet completely inside one of the squares and remain there. Anyone with a foot on a line or outside a square is out (use more squares if needed). When everyone is in a square, pull up the tape of one of the squares. Allow 30 seconds for the students from that square to squeeze into the other three. Call out all students whose feet fall on or outside the boundary. Continue until there is only one square. Then discuss some or all of the following questions.



1. Imagine you are marooned on a deserted island with nothing but the clothes you are wearing. What do you think your chance of surviving would be?

0%

25%

50%

75%

100%

2. If you could have just one thing with you on this deserted island, what would it be?

3. What do you think your chance of surviving would be if you had this one thing?

0%

25%

50%

75%

100%

WARM-UPS

4. If you could have just one person with you, whom would it be?
5. What do you think your chance of surviving would be if you were not alone?



6. How would you try to get off the island?
7. Would you rather live forever alone on an island than escape? Why or why not?
8. Would you like to always live where you live now? Why or why not?
9. If you could choose any place in the world to live, where would it be? Why?

YOU JUST CAN'T SEE IT

Get together in a group of around four. Blindfold all but one member of the group who will serve as the leader and assure everyone else is safe. The leader will give simple signals to the blindfolded members of the group such as stand up, sit down, turn around, take three steps, hop on one foot, touch your toes, wave, bend at your knees and so on. Repeat, allowing each person to give signals while the rest of the group is blindfolded. Discuss how it felt to do simple things while blindfolded.

- Did being blindfolded impact the way you moved? If so, how?
- Were you more concerned about yourself or about someone else in the group?
- How did you know everyone was participating?
- How do you know you weren't the only person wearing a blindfold?
- Is there something to learn about your relationship with God from this activity?



THIS IS YOUR COUNTRY

Get together in a group of four. Discuss what your country would look like if you created it. Would it border the ocean? Where would the beaches and mountains be, if any? Where would the big cities be and would there be lots of them. Where would the farmland be and what percentage of country would be devoted to it? Where would the major populations live? So many decisions.

- Where would you live? What kind of people would live nearest you? Who would live the farthest away?
- Based on the design of your ideal country, what does it reveal about your likes, dislikes, comfort zones, and prejudices?
- On closer examination, do you need to make any adjustments, or do you like your country just the way it is?



WARM-UPS

WITH GRATITUDE

Giving thanks is a great thing to do—even if you're not staring face-to-face with a turkey on your dinner table. Take a few minutes to say thanks to God. Look at the list below and choose the things for which you are thankful. There is no limit on your choices or your gratitude.



Share with the group some of the things for which you are thankful.

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplishments | <input type="checkbox"/> Faith | <input type="checkbox"/> Mind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appearance | <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Nationality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calling | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Car | <input type="checkbox"/> Future | <input type="checkbox"/> Pets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Character | <input type="checkbox"/> Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Reputation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Church | <input type="checkbox"/> Heritage | <input type="checkbox"/> School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courage | <input type="checkbox"/> Hobby | <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of purpose |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity | <input type="checkbox"/> Home | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual gifts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Job | <input type="checkbox"/> Talents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emotions | <input type="checkbox"/> Memories | <input type="checkbox"/> Wisdom |

Now that you've expressed your gratitude, from the verses listed below, choose the one that best expresses your gratefulness to God. Say it out loud and then share why you made your choice. Listen as others read their verses and share.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; His faithful love endures forever.
— 1 Chronicles 16:34

I will thank the LORD because he is just; I will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High. — Psalm 7:17

Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. — Psalm 100:4

Let them praise the LORD for his great love and for the wonderful things he has done for them. Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and sing joyfully about his glorious acts. — Psalm 107:21-22

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. — Philippians 4:6

After group members have shared verses, close with a prayer of thanksgiving.

WARM-UPS

WHO'S YOUR BUDDY?

Assume one of the following identities. You don't have to keep it a secret, and it's likely others in your group will choose the same identity you choose.



Now that you've chosen who you will be for this activity, meet as many people as you can. Pretend that you are meeting them for the first time as the new person they have chosen to be. Introduce yourself according to the identity you have chosen.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scientist | <input type="checkbox"/> Exchange student | <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing impaired |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seamstress | <input type="checkbox"/> History teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quadriplegic | <input type="checkbox"/> Millionaire | <input type="checkbox"/> Police officer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minister, pastor or priest | <input type="checkbox"/> Girl scout | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor or nurse | <input type="checkbox"/> Chef | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional athlete |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soldier | <input type="checkbox"/> Boy scout | <input type="checkbox"/> Sailor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musician | <input type="checkbox"/> Model | |

Now here's where all of these new identities come into play. You've been selected to participate in an experiment in which you and three others will live in tents for three months in a remote area. You will be provided with a bed and enough clothes to get you through the adventure. Food, water, and personal hygiene will be available, complements of the great outdoors, but you'll have to hunt and gather them. What three people do you choose for your camp?

When you have formed your group, discuss what each person brings to the group.



WARM-UPS

HYDRATION STATION

Make four posters. On the first poster list and number the following responses: 1. Ten, 2. Water, 3. Go home and shower, 4. Good friends. On the second poster list and number the following responses: 1. Seven, 2. Sports Drink, 3. Hang out with friends, 4. Close family. On the third poster list and number the following responses: 1. Five, 2. Soda/Tea, 3. Eat, 4. Peace with God. On the fourth poster list and number the following responses: 1. Two, 2. Nothing, 3. Do something else, 4. Peace with myself.



Place the posters in opposite corners or areas of the room. Then ask the following questions, one at a time, instructing students to select the corresponding numbered answer that best represents their response. Tell students to go to the poster that has the answer they have chosen, share answers, and stay with their group until you ask the next question. At that point, students will move to find the response that best represents their response.

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being least and 10 being most, this is how important I consider hydration. (10, 7, 5, 2)
2. What will you usually find in my water bottle? (Water, Sports Drink, Soda/Tea, Nothing)
3. What do I like to do after a practice or competition? (Go home and shower, Hang out with friends, Eat, Do something else)
4. What do I really want most in my life now? (Good friends, Close family, Peace with God, Peace with myself)

ESCAPE GAME

Get in groups of around four and discuss any personal experience you have had



with or information you've heard about escape games. You may have escaped, or nearly escaped, from one of these games, room or experiences that have popped up over the last few years. Some people love them and some people . . . not so much.

Why are these "escape" experiences popular? Why do people like them?

Why might some people not be fans?

What might you learn about others during an "escape"? What might you learn about yourself?

The greatest escape has already happened. It occurred when Jesus escaped death. How does Jesus's "great escape" give you confidence for today and hope for the future?

WARM-UPS

MIX IT UP

Get with one other person. Determine if either of you knows what an anagram is. Here's a hint: The words circle and cleric are anagrams. Can you figure it out?



An *anagram* is a word formed by rearranging the letters of another word and using the same letters only once. Exact same letters; different words. Got it?

Sometimes, anagrams can even be fairly accurate descriptions of each other. Some are funny. Match the anagrams in the left column with its pair in the right column.

Iceman	Twelve plus one
The eyes	I'm a dot in place
Eleven plus two	They see
Dormitory	Dirty room
Decimal point	Cinema
Astronomer	Moon starrer

(Answers: iceman/cinema, the eyes/they see, eleven plus two/twelve plus one, astronomer/moon starrer, dormitory/dirty room, decimal point/i'm a dot in place)

Was it stressful to figure out the anagrams? Could you believe the words actually formed other words—words that made sense of each other?
What causes you stress in life? Why do you think that is?



WARM-UPS

PAY ATTENTION

Have a member of the group stand in front of the others. Instruct everyone to closely observe the person. Direct them to look at clothes, hair and other details. Then ask the person to step out of sight and change five observable things. (Or tell the group to close their eyes while the person makes the changes.) Examples of changes can include switching a watch or jewelry from one hand to the other, threading a belt the opposite way, untying a shoe, changing hair and so on.

Challenge the group to identify the five changes. Allow other volunteers to change five things about their appearances then challenge group members to identify the changes. Share that sight is not the only way to understand our surroundings, but it is often the sense that people turn to first and depend on most.



1. What is something you tend to notice first about a person?
2. Do others comment more on your physical appearance or on your personality?
3. In a group setting, do you tend to be the life of the party or an invisible guest?
4. How easy is it for you to see the good in people?
5. If you had the power to do so, what one thing would you change about yourself?
6. Do you typically change to fit in with your friends, or do your friends try to change you?
7. Do you see yourself as self-conscious or confident?

'TIS THE SEASON

'Tis the season . . . for allergies. Get in groups of about eight and talk about your allergies, if you suffer from any. Go ahead and complain about the itchy watery eyes, sneezing, and drowsiness. Hopefully, you don't have life-threatening allergies. Those are serious business.



What do you believe to be the source of your allergies? What kind of problems do your allergies cause? Who worries about them most: you, your family, or your doctor?

Have you been diagnosed? Can you avoid the triggers?

It seems that every season is allergy season; you can't avoid them. Strange question: Is there anything or anyone you'd like to be allergic to? In other words, what or whom would you like to avoid at all cost? Why?

WARM-UPS

TREASURE HUNTERS

Cue the scene from a movie in which an actor (or actors) discover a treasure for the first time. Show as much footage leading up to the discovery as you have time but pause at the high point of the discovery. Consider *Goonies*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and *National Treasure*, among others.

- Describe how you think the characters felt when they saw the treasure for the first time?
- Do you see the Bible as a treasure? Check the response that best describes how you feel about personal Bible study.
 - ☐ I'd rather not study the Bible on my own.
 - ☐ I probably wouldn't be able to learn anything from studying it myself.
 - ☐ I'm stressed out by it because I don't know how to do it.
 - ☐ Personal Bible study is one of my favorite times of the day.
- What is one treasure you've found in the Bible? Share it with the group. If you can't think of a treasure you've found, share one treasure you would like to find.



GROUP



BELIEFS



DISCIPLESHIP

CATCH IT IF YOU CAN

Get with one other person. Match the following “catches” with the worst possible way to make the catch.

Compare answers with members of your group. (Remember: Find the worst possible way to make each catch.)



GROUP



AWARENESS



RELATIONSHIPS



CHOICES

CATCH

- A butterfly
- A thief
- A runaway dog
- A runaway train
- A cat
- A mouse
- A baseball
- A fly
- A fish
- A game
- A person you really like
- A bear
- A cold
- A nap
- Your parents' attention

“CATCHING” METHOD

- Ignoring them/it
- Find a nice quiet place
- Stay outside underdressed in subfreezing temperature
- Use a trap with “teeth”
- Compliment them/it
- Watch on the TV
- Use a hook
- With a flyswatter
- With a glove
- With cheese
- Maybe a dog will help
- Call Superman
- Employ a dog catcher
- Activate your alarm system
- Use a net

WARM-UPS

GO AHEAD AND SAY IT . . . OR NOT

Get together in groups of around four and be amazed (or totally bored) by this fact: The longest sentence in the English language is believed to be almost 14,000 words. That doesn't even seem possible. There are several one-word sentences like, "Go," "Stop," "Eat," and more.

The longest verse is found in Esther 8:9. The shortest Bible verse in English is found in John 11:35. Look it up.

Are you a talker or a listener? Do people seek you out to listen to them or to hear what you have to say?

What are the benefits of talking?

What are the benefits of listening?

Jesus says, "Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't'" (Matt. 5:37). There's something to be learned here. How do Jesus's words relate to you, your relationships with others, and to Him?

Oh, and the shortest verse in the Bible? It's "Jesus wept."



I BELIEVE

Ask a student to step out of the meeting area. Then have the rest of the group suggest professions (teacher, preacher, welder, cook, coach, etc.) or animals (birds, sea creatures, livestock, wild, etc.), and assign one of them as the student's secret identity. Ask the student to rejoin the group and select three other students. These three students will each ask a leading question that will give a hint about the secret identity. For example, if the identity is an octopus, the first student might ask, "How do you like living underwater?" The second might ask, "What's it like to change colors in order to blend into your surroundings?" And the third might ask, "Do your arms tend to get stuck to things?" Then the student who left the room will try to guess his or her secret identity based on these questions. Reveal the identity after the student guesses. Repeat with other students.

How do clues help us find answers?

What do you believe about your identity in Christ?

What questions have God already answered that can help you live a life that is pleasing to Him?



WARM-UPS

SUPERTEAM

Gather as a group and think about what each of you have to offer. What is your greatest asset? It could be a natural talent, acquired skill, personality trait or resource you could use to help others. If you have trouble identifying a strength, group members may be able to point out something. Try to recall a time when you remember making a positive contribution.

Have each member of the group share what he or she has to offer. If possible, have each person write the word or phrase they share. (This will be helpful in recalling what was shared.) It's okay if more than one person shares the same thing.

After everyone shares, have members group themselves with others who have shared identical or similar things. Discuss shared strengths.

Then have members find others who have expressed qualities that are most different from their own. Members can pair up or gather in smaller groups. Discuss the strengths you saw in the variety.

Discuss the potential in the group and what may come from combining forces.

Who would be best in a crisis?

Who would be a good leader?

Who would be most valuable in helping new members feel welcome?

Who would you want to partner with if you found yourself in an unfamiliar or uncomfortable situation?

Consider the talents, skills, personality traits and resources represented. What type of “superteam” (or “superteams”) might your group become? What need (or needs) might you be able to meet? What could you do to make life better for others? What do you believe it takes to be a “superteam”?



WARM-UPS

WISH LIST

Find a partner. Read through the wish list and choose the three things you desire most. After making your choices, note what neither you nor your partner chose and discuss why the things didn't make your lists. **Did you have any in common? Why did you make your choices?**



- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Success | <input type="checkbox"/> Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal peace | <input type="checkbox"/> Job security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good looks | <input type="checkbox"/> Popularity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wealth | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong faith |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Close family | <input type="checkbox"/> Strength |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Romance | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendship |

MOUNTAINS AND BEACHES

Get together with one other person and take a minute to picture yourself in the mountains: sitting on a fallen tree trunk, thick trees overhead, lush undergrowth all around, in the distance other mountain peaks, scurrying squirrels and chirping birds chipping away at the things that usually bother you.

Now, imagine yourself on a beach: sun on your face, sand between your toes, the sound of the tide and the call of seagulls drowning out the worrisome things that were once on your mind.

Both have something to offer; both are an escape from the pressures of school. Wouldn't it be nice if during every season you had a week off to go somewhere and get away? Where would you choose to go each season?

Where would you rather be right now: at the mountains or on a beach? Why would it be a good place for you to be right now?

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> mountains | winter | <input type="checkbox"/> beach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mountains | spring | <input type="checkbox"/> beach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mountains | summer | <input type="checkbox"/> beach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mountains | fall | <input type="checkbox"/> beach |

Do you tend to like the same place all the time, or does where you want to be depend on the season you're in? Where do you feel closest to God?

What season are you in with God right now? Does it feel cold? Does it seem to be warm and growing? Would you describe your relationship with Jesus as winter, spring, summer or fall?



WARM-UPS

BLESSED

Get into groups of up to eight and read the Beatitudes as recorded in Matthew 5:3-10. Discuss each type of “blessed” person and the positive results of being that kind of person. Talk about what each beatitude means in real, day-to-day life. For example, “What does it mean to be ‘poor in spirit’ when I’m trying to get along with my family?” or “What does it mean to me to be given ‘the kingdom of heaven?’” After everyone has time to discuss, have each group member rate how he or she is doing with living out that beatitude. Use a scoring system of 1 (“I’m having a hard time”) to 5 (“I think I’ve got this one down”). Then share examples of people who live out each.



1. “Poor in spirit” means

A great example is

How I rate myself:



2. “Those who mourn” means

A great example is

How I rate myself:



3. “The gentle” means

A great example is

How I rate myself:



4. “Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” means

A great example is

How I rate myself:



5. “The merciful” means

A great example is

How I rate myself:



6. “The pure in heart” means

A great example is

How I rate myself:



7. “The peacemakers” means

A great example is

How I rate myself:



8. “Those who are persecuted for righteousness” means

A great example is

How I rate myself:

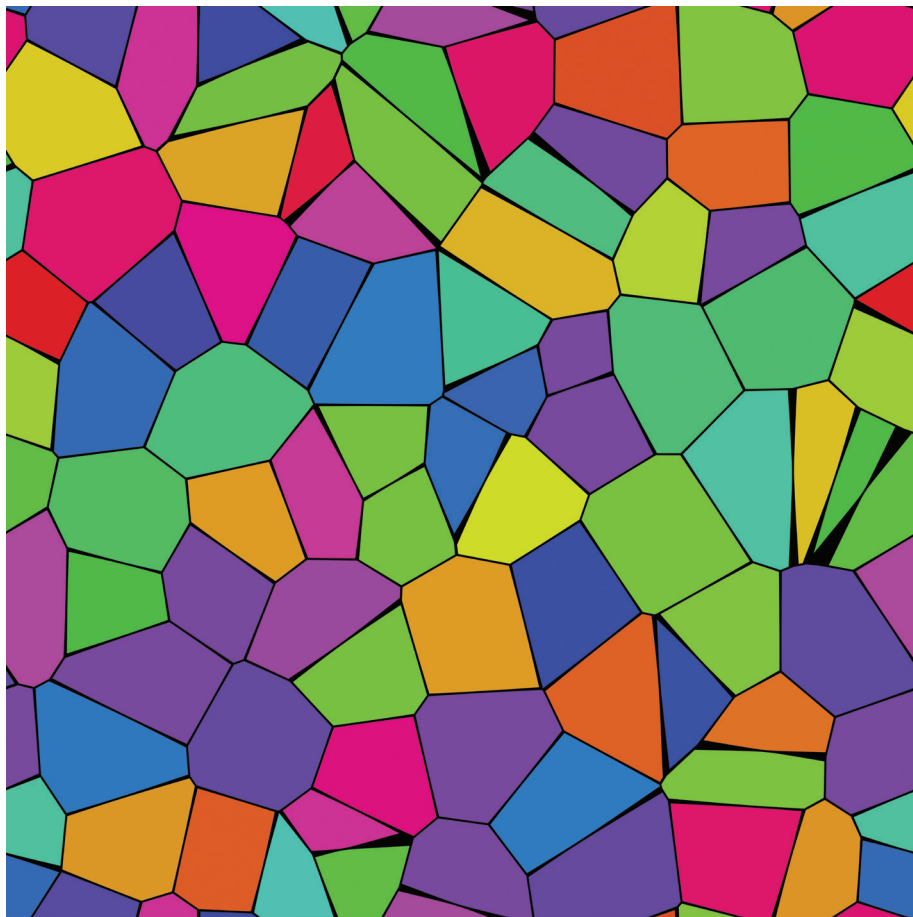


WARM-UPS

STAINED GLASS

Get in groups of about eight. Look at the illustration of the stained glass and share what you see. What do the images represent to you?

What is the meaning of the glass? Don't worry. There aren't any wrong answers.



Did all of you see the same thing? Were there any way-out-there views?

Who in your group did you think most like?

In a crisis, is it good or bad to team up with someone just like you? Why or why not?

If you were to design a stained glass that depicted a crisis-free life, what would it look like? What colors and shapes would you use? Would you include any specific images?

WARM-UPS

MY LIFE IN A SONG

Get together in groups of around four. Read the statements. Place an X somewhere between the two extremes to indicate how you feel. Think of a song that best describes how you feel about each area of your life. For each, briefly explain why you marked each statement as you did and why you selected that song.



GROUP



STRESS



ISSUES

In my **EMOTIONAL LIFE**, I'm feeling . . .

TERRIBLE

GREAT

This area of my life would best be summed up by the song: _____

In my **FAMILY LIFE**, I'm feeling . . .

TERRIBLE

GREAT

This area of my life would best be summed up by the song: _____

In my **ATTITUDE TOWARD
SCHOOL OR WORK**, I'm feeling . . .

TERRIBLE

GREAT

This area of my life would best be summed up by the song: _____

In my **SPIRITUAL LIFE**, I'm feeling . . .

TERRIBLE

GREAT

This area of my life would best be summed up by the song: _____

In my **CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS**, I'm feeling . . .

TERRIBLE

GREAT

This area of my life would best be summed up by the song: _____

As I look toward **THE FUTURE**, I'm feeling . . .

TERRIBLE

GREAT

This area of my life would best be summed up by the song: _____

GOOD TO KNOW

Get together in groups of around four, and share answers to the questions below. It will not only be good to know more about each other, but you might even get to know yourself a little better.

When I was younger, I wanted to be a . . .

Even though it's work, I really enjoy . . .

If I could revisit a place I've been before, it would be . . .

I really don't care if I ever take another bite of . . .

My easiest class is . . .

My most challenging class is . . .

The funniest thing that ever happened to me was . . .

My favorite uncle or aunt is . . .

When I need some time alone, I . . .

I am happiest when . . .



GROUP



AWARENESS

WARM-UPS

STRESS POINT

Get together with one other person and go through the list below. Share what stresses you out in each situation. Suggestions are provided to help you get started, but they may not be right for you. Be honest about your own experiences. After you share what causes you stress in each area, share what you do to relieve that stress.



Major tests and exams	The feeling of doom that hangs over me Drawing a blank on an answer that I should know Other:
Important athletic competitions	Sitting on the sidelines waiting to get in the game Seeing a teammate make a really bad play Other:
Friendships	Fear of rejection Being used or manipulated Other:
Family interactions	Getting along with my siblings Having very strict rules and restrictions Other:
Daily frustrations	Having unreliable or nonexistent transportation Feeling that I don't have enough time to do everything Other:
Athletic training	Having a coach who is way too demanding Being disciplined to stay in training Other:

WARM-UPS

TUNE IN

Ask a student to stand in front of the group. Tell group members that the student will share some very important information. Call on another student to stand on the far side of the meeting space and listen as the student speaks. With the room fairly quiet, ask the speaking student to tell the other student standing far away about his favorite musician or musical group. Then ask the listening student to repeat what the other student said.

Next, point out that life is seldom calm and quiet. Ask the listening student to use their phone to make a call to a friend in the group. Provide a phone if needed. As they talk to the friend, have other students in the group play music from their phones. Play additional music or make more noise. Tell the remaining students to simultaneously talk to the listening student as all of this is going on.

Now, instruct the talking student to tell the listening student to give a play-by-play description of something that happened to them this week. Again, ask the student to repeat the information. Then discuss the following questions as a group.

1. What happened to the student's ability to hear as the noise level increased?
2. What are some of the "noises" in your life that sometimes distract you or inhibit you from hearing God?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 meaning "I can't hear God at all" and 10 meaning "I hear God loud and clear," how would you rate yourself? Why?



WARM-UPS

BE THE BALL

Get in groups of about eight and stand in a circle. Give one person in the group a tennis ball. Students will toss the ball underhand to others in the group as follows:



Prior to each toss, the student holding the ball must ask, "How would you like to be . . . ?" and complete the question with a word of his/her choosing (*For example: "smart," "fast," "an international flight attendant"*). The student who answers the question then tosses the ball to someone else and asks, "How would you like to be . . . ?" The last person who catches the ball and answers the question tosses the ball back to the person who started the game and asks him/her the same question.

After everyone in the group has had an opportunity to answer the question, begin a second round by asking, "What is the worst thing about being . . . ?"

After the second round, put the ball away and discuss the following questions:

What is more important: being or feeling?

What is so great about being a part of a group?

Have you ever felt like you were on the outside of a group looking in?

What is something that is happening in the world today that should not be happening?

If you could change three things in the world, what would they be? Why would you make these changes? What would it take for you to be effective in making the changes?

GETTING MESSY

Get together in groups of around four and discuss some of the messiest jobs in life. Then share which of the following positions would be the "messiest" for you, either physically or emotionally. Individually rank them from 1 to 5—messiest to least messy—and then share responses.



- ☐ The one in the group who doesn't go along with the crowd
- ☐ Farmhand in a barn
- ☐ Counselor in a school
- ☐ Trash collector in a large city
- ☐ The friend stuck in the middle of an argument among other friends

Which is worse: messy jobs or messy relationships?

How do you react when you're asked to do something messy?

What would be the most humbling experience you can imagine?

WARM-UPS

LIGHTWEIGHT

Gather in groups of around four and discuss that a lightweight can be a person who's not qualified for a position or is not up to a task. But a lightweight can also be a simple classification that helps ensure competition is fair. A boxer weighing more than 126 pounds but not over 135 pounds is a lightweight. A wrestler who weighs more than 134 pounds but not over 145 pounds carries the same classification. And then of course, there is the simple measurement of any kind of weight. Is it heavy or is it light?

Sit in chairs, and extend your legs out in front of you. Stay in this position as long as you can. Next, have one person extend his or her legs, this time place a book or other object on his or her legs, and instruct that person to hold this position as long as he or she can. Time how long the object is held before his or her legs fall. Then repeat by adding a second object and then a third. Allow others to attempt the same challenge.

How did the additional weight affect your leg strength?

How are the objects like sin?

How might your endurance represent resisting temptation?

How does a relationship with God help lighten the weight of sin?



YOU THINK YOU HAVE ISSUES?

Get in groups of about eight and discuss how you would rank the following problems. Use the column to the left to rank each from 1 (greatest) to 12 (least). After you have ranked each, swap with a person next to you and let him or her rank the same problems in the right column you, and also put your rankings in the right column.



Your Rank

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Greenhouse effect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Loneliness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Vandalism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pressure to perform |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Family problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Anger management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Racism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pornography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bullying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | The economy |

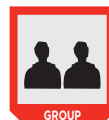
Your Partner's Rank

- | |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> |

WARM-UPS

DUNKIRK

Find a partner and discuss that during World War II, after the fall of France, Dunkirk—the seaport where allied troops evacuated as enemy troops steadily approached—became synonymous with crises. To find oneself in a serious crisis is to be in a Dunkirk. If you don't know, Dunkirk is the seaport in World War II where allied troops—after hearing that France had fallen to Germany—tried to evacuate as enemy troops steadily approached. Find a partner and discuss your “personal Dunkirks” with each other by ranking the following potential crises from 1 to 10.



- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I forgot to do an in-class assignment. | <input type="checkbox"/> My GPA just got lower. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Someone I don't even know has a health issue. | <input type="checkbox"/> Someone I care about has a health issue. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My joke didn't get a single laugh. | <input type="checkbox"/> I've just been bullied. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> An injury is preventing me from doing my best. | <input type="checkbox"/> There's no one for me to hang out with. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have a health issue. | <input type="checkbox"/> I “fouled” at my favorite sport. |

BRAVE CHOICES

Get in groups of about eight. Take a lighthearted look at some fairly easy choices. The following may be one of the easiest multiple-choice tests you've ever taken. Give yourself 1 point for every “a” answer, 2 points for every “b” answer, and 3 points for every “c” answer. Then total your score from 6 (safest choices) to 18 (bravest choices).



When I compete, I . . .

- a. Hold back.
- b. Pace myself.
- c. Go all out.

In my relationship with my parents, I . . .

- a. Do exactly what they ask.
- b. Test my boundaries.
- c. Do what I want.

When I eat out, I . . .

- a. Always eat the same thing.
- b. Sometimes try something different.
- c. Always try something new.

In a social setting, I . . .

- a. Stick with my friends.
- b. Mingle in the group.
- c. Meet as many people as I can.

WARM-UPS

THINK ABOUT IT

Get in groups of around four and answer the following questions, one topic at a time. Feel free to discuss your answers with your group. You can check more than one answer under each topic. Share your feelings about each topic and why you chose the responses you did.



I view the church as:

- ☐ Traditional
- ☐ A safe place
- ☐ Boring
- ☐ Fun
- ☐ Uncomfortable
- ☐ Always asking for money
- ☐ Uplifting
- ☐ Confusing because of all the denominations
- ☐ Friendly

I view Christians as:

- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ World changers
- ☐ Perfect
- ☐ God's people
- ☐ Just like everyone else
- ☐ Sinners
- ☐ Loving
- ☐ Hypocritical

I view the Bible as:

- ☐ Having too many pages
- ☐ Full of promises
- ☐ Inspiring
- ☐ Old-fashioned

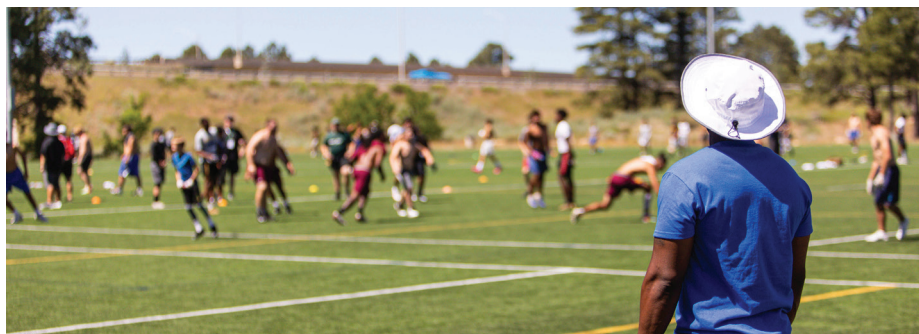
- ☐ The secret to life
- ☐ Hard to understand
- ☐ The Word of God
- ☐ Full of violence
- ☐ Irrelevant

I see prayer as:

- ☐ Positive thinking
- ☐ A direct line to God
- ☐ Magic
- ☐ Comforting
- ☐ Wishful thinking
- ☐ Powerful
- ☐ A life saver
- ☐ A daily exercise
- ☐ The key to my sanity

I think of Jesus as:

- ☐ A wise teacher
- ☐ My best friend
- ☐ One of many teachers
- ☐ A very good man
- ☐ My Savior
- ☐ A miracle worker
- ☐ A Jewish rebel
- ☐ The Son of God
- ☐ A great example



WARM-UPS

GOD'S WORD ON LOVE

One of the most familiar Bible passages about love is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Ask group members to locate it in their Bibles and read aloud as they follow along.



Read the first statement from the list below. Then ask everyone to choose a number between 1 (does not describe me at all) and 5 (describes me exactly) to rate the way they love. Take turns reading each statement and then rating it.

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love is patient.</i> I don't take out my frustrations on those I love. I'm calm under pressure and careful with my tongue. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love is kind.</i> I go out of my way to say nice words and do thoughtful things for others. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love is not jealous.</i> I'm not envious of others' abilities or possessions. Neither am I jealous with my time for those in need. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love is not boastful.</i> I don't consider myself more important than those I love. I don't brag. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love is not proud.</i> I don't think of myself as better than those I love. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love is not rude.</i> I don't make cutting or crude remarks when I don't get my way—or become silent and withdrawn. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love does not demand its own way.</i> I don't put myself first. I give those I love spiritual and emotional support. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love is not irritable.</i> I don't let little things bother me. I work to control my mouth. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love keeps no record of being wronged.</i> I don't keep score of unkind things said or done to me. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love does not rejoice about injustice.</i> I accept others but don't have to approve of all they do. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love rejoices whenever the truth wins out.</i> With compassion, I say what needs to be said, even if it's difficult. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love never gives up.</i> I'm always there for those I love—even when they upset me. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | <i>Love never loses faith.</i> I believe in those I love. I'm willing to let God shape and mold them. |

WARM-UPS

1 2 3 4 5 *Love is always hopeful.* I'm good at expecting and thinking the best about those I love.

1 2 3 4 5 *Love endures through every circumstance.* I'm committed to those I love and prepared to see things through.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Names have meaning. Some parents spend hours thinking about the name they will give their newborn, sometimes far in advance of the child's birth. Many times children are named after relatives. Some names are passed down for generations. *Sophia* means "wisdom." *Angel* means "messenger." *Jack* is a form of John and means "God is gracious."



What do you think of when you see the following names?

**Virginia
Beau**

**Georgia
Oscar**

**Stormie
Leonardo**

**Noel
Jude**

**Wilma
Dash**

**Wendy
Dallas**

A child's name might be changed when he enters adulthood—not unlike Little Bobby wanting to be called Bob or Robert. Sit in a circle. Beginning with one student, provide a new name that reflects his or her character, lifestyle or relationships. For example, if he or she is not a big talker but is aggressive in competition you might call him or her Silent Warrior. Use consensus in creating each new name. Continue until all students have been renamed.

Discuss that *Christian* means "follower of Christ." Though their new name might not have been a popular name to the pagan world it did identify them with their Lord and His call on their lives. How does the name Christian fit you?



WARM-UPS

NOW, THAT'S IMPORTANT

Get in groups of around four and share responses to the following questions.

Complete each question, and then discuss responses to each before moving on to the next.



GROUP



AWARENESS



RELATIONSHIPS



DISCIPLESHIP

My least favorite place to eat is . . .

My favorite class is . . .

The best present I ever gave was . . .

My most memorable vacation was . . .

The person who seems to always make things better is . . .

People would probably describe me as . . .

I am closest to . . .

A friend is someone who . . .

When I am hurt, I want to . . .

Church is best when . . .

To me, the Bible is . . .

I would describe my relationship with God as . . .

TALKING STICK

Get in groups of about eight. If possible, show the clip from *Yours, Mine, and Ours* in which the mother gives the children a talking stick to guide the family conversation. Then choose one of you to speak first. Then take turns

completing the following statements. Pass the talking stick around the circle, making sure everyone has an opportunity to share. If a stick isn't available, use any object that can be passed around and held. Whoever holds the talking stick commands the floor. Only that person can speak until he or she is completely finished and has passed the stick.

My favorite movie is . . .

My greatest fear is . . .

The most important thing about relationships is . . .

I was most embarrassed when . . .

The best birthday I ever had was . . .

The way I get what I want is . . .

Friendship is better than dating because . . .



GROUP



CHOICES



RELATIONSHIPS

WARM-UPS

IF THE SHOE FITS

If you have a lively group that isn't sensitive about removing their shoes, begin with a mixer. Have group members stand in a circle and then take off their shoes. After taking off their shoes, tell them to pile them up in the middle. Ask a member of the group to mix the shoes up. On your signal, group members rush to find their shoes, return to the spot in the circle where they were standing and put them on.

Talking about shoes, since Chuck Taylors hit the scene back in 1917 (recently celebrating their one hundredth anniversary), countless sneakers have been produced, bought, worn, worn out, and discarded. High tops and low tops in every color and style have hit many courts. It's been a long time since these sneakers have only served the court. Chuck would have never imagined how his original kicks have moved from functional to fashion statement.

And who could have ever guessed the nicknames these shoes would earn? Look at some of the nicknames below. You may or may not be familiar with them. But, if you had to pick, which name would describe you best?

What does this name say about you?

What word would you use to describe your walk with God? Write it down in the space below.

26.2, 13.1, 5K

Get together with one other person and share if you have a 26.2, 13.1, or other race window decal on your car. If so, why do you display the sticker? If neither of you display a window decal for a race you have participated in, why do you think some people display them? What do you think of when you see one?

Think about your walk with the Lord (your relationship with God). Would it be best described as a marathon, a half marathon, or a 5K?

Share with each other where you are and—if needed—where you want to be. Is there any preparations you need to make or disciplines you need to take in order to get from where you are to where you want to be?

Is there anything you can learn from others who are “running” with you or from those who have “run” before you?



WARM-UPS

UNBROKEN



A broken promise could result in a broken relationship. At the very least, it might create unnecessary stress. But there is One who keeps every promise He makes. Scripture is full of God's promises for you. Read the 12 promises listed below. Choose one of the promises and share why you chose it. Then restate the promise in first-person language. For example, if you chose the first promise you would say aloud, "This means that I who belong to Christ have become a new person. My old life is gone; a new life has begun *for me*."

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

"And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."

— Philippians 1:6

"Ask me and I will tell you remarkable secrets you do not know about things to come." — Jeremiah 33:3

"And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others."

— 2 Corinthians 9:8

"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength."

— Philippians 4:13

"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."

— Romans 8:28

"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened." — Matthew 7:7-8

"The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure."

— 1 Corinthians 10:13

"Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends." — Revelation 3:20

"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid." — John 14:27

WARM-UPS

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.”

— Proverbs 3:5–6

“The LORD keeps you from all harm and watches over your life. The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.” — Psalm 121:7–8

GOD’S CHILD

Gather in groups of around four and discuss the reality that God is our heavenly Father and that as Christians we are all part of the family of God. Use the following questions below to guide your discussion.



1. Which of God’s fatherly characteristics are most important to you?

- ☐ His understanding of who I am
- ☐ His power to make things right
- ☐ His willingness to give me a second chance
- ☐ His wisdom to steer me in the right direction
- ☐ His interest in my life
- ☐ His tender love and mercy
- ☐ Other:

2. Which do you consider to be the most important truth about being adopted as God’s children?

- ☐ Despite our differences, we all become one family (Galatians 3:28).
- ☐ His power to make things right.
- ☐ We become heirs of God’s eternal Kingdom (Galatians 3:29).
- ☐ We don’t have to be bound to anyone or anything (Galatians 4:1–4).
- ☐ We can relate to God as our “Abba” (Galatians 4:6).

3. Which of the following creates the biggest barrier for you in relating to God as “Abba”?

- ☐ I can’t trust someone I can’t see.
- ☐ My experience with my earthly father is bad.
- ☐ I can’t understand how Christ makes a relationship with God possible.
- ☐ I have no barrier.
- ☐ Other:

WARM-UPS

WHAT'S YOUR PRQ?

Get in groups of about eight and consider the idea of a Personal Risk Quotient (PRQ). The six questions below are a fun way to get you thinking about how much of a risk-taker you may be. After you answer all six, figure out your score. There's nothing scientific about this. It's just for fun!



1. When playing a board game, I usually . . .
 - a. Play it safe.
 - b. Stay cool and hold back a little.
 - c. Go for broke—risking everything.
2. With my parents, I usually . . .
 - a. Do exactly as I'm asked.
 - b. Test the boundaries.
 - c. Do my own thing despite the cost.
3. On a menu, I usually pick . . .
 - a. An item I know I like.
 - b. An item that's a little different.
 - c. An item I've never tried.
4. In most social settings, I usually . . .
 - a. Stick with my friends.
 - b. Mix with strangers.
 - c. See how many new people I can meet.
5. In meeting someone for the first time, I usually . . .
 - a. Let them do the talking.
 - b. Share the conversation.
 - c. Take the initiative.
6. I would prefer my life to include . . .
 - a. No risks and lots of safety.
 - b. Some risks and some safety.
 - c. Lots of risks and little safety.

Now, give yourself 1 point for every “a” response, 2 points for every “b” response, and 3 points for every “c” response. Then circle the total on the line below to get your PRQ.

MAY LIKE TO PLAY IT SAFE

I THINK I LIKE TO TAKE CHANCES

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

WARM-UPS

FORT-KNIGHT

No. The heading isn't misspelled. And it's not a game, or at least not the one you might be thinking of. Get in groups of around four and match each item in the left column with the place where it belongs from the list on the right (If a knight were listed, he wouldn't belong in a fort).



Soldier
King
Caveman
Fox
Bird
Pilot
Captain
Preacher
Teacher
Actor
Player
Joey

Den
Pouch
Nest
Plane
Cave
Ship
Church
Foxhole
Castle
Classroom
Stage
Game

Discuss the following:

Do you feel like you are where you belong? If not, why?

Are you aware of anyone who doesn't seem to belong anywhere? How can you help?

FREESTYLE

Some call it pop. Others call it soda. And some combine the two words and call it soda pop. Whether you call it a soft drink or a carbonated beverage, never before have there existed so many options to cool off and quench your thirst. And you're not limited to one taste per sip. Cherry and vanilla aren't the only flavors you can add to your favorite soft drink. New do-it-yourself dispensers with add-ins have already revolutionized the soft drink industry.

Think about your style. Do you see yourself as plain vanilla? Or maybe you like things with a little kick. If so, you might enjoy a splash of jalapeño juice in your favorite cola. Sometimes deciding what kind of concoction to enjoy can stress you out—especially if thirsty and impatient customers are breathing down your neck while you're trying to make that important decision!

From the following list of add-ins—as absurd as some may sound—choose your top three flavors. Even if you don't care for any of them, pick three. The good news is that you won't have to taste any of the bad ones.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plain vanilla | <input type="checkbox"/> Laughable lime | <input type="checkbox"/> Raw sugar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dark chocolate | <input type="checkbox"/> Jumping jalapeño juice | <input type="checkbox"/> Sea salt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Raging raspberry | <input type="checkbox"/> Barely strawberry | <input type="checkbox"/> Twisted lemon |



WARM-UPS

Share your top three and why you picked them. What do your choices indicate about your style?

Now continue ranking the flavors from four to ten, ten being the add-in that is least appealing to you.

Which flavors would you be least likely to try? Why not? Which flavor would cause you the most stress if you had to drink it to the last drop?

Can you relate any of the flavors to stressors in your life? If so, what do some of the add-ins represent for you?

What stress are you dealing with? What would it take to be free of it?

YOUR TURN

Get in groups of around four. Choose someone to speak first. Whoever speaks first will need to hold an object that is readily available from the meeting space or that someone has brought with them (a pencil, shoe, this Bible, etc.). Complete the following sentences in the following manner: Whoever holds the object commands the floor. Only that person can speak. When the first person is finished speaking, the object is passed. The object is passed before and after every statement until everyone has completed all ten statements.



1. My favorite movie is . . .
2. My greatest fear is . . .
3. The most important thing about relationships is . . .
4. I was most embarrassed when . . .
5. The best birthday I ever had was . . .
6. The way I get what I want is . . .
7. I think guys/girls are . . .
8. Dating is better than marriage because . . .
9. Marriage is better than dating because . . .
10. God's plan for dating and marriage is . . .



ATHLETE STUDIES



USE THESE SHORT ATHLETE-FOCUSED STUDIES for your personal Bible reading, team Bible studies, small-group meetings, or chapels. Read the Scripture passages carefully, and take time to meditate on the study questions. This will help you understand the Bible's message and learn to apply God's truth in your everyday life.

FUNDAMENTALS

IN THIS SECTION, WE WILL BEGIN WITH THE FUNDAMENTALS OF BEING AN ATHLETE FOR CHRIST. THE FUNDAMENTALS ARE THOSE TRUTHS AND IDEAS THAT A CHRISTIAN MUST UNDERSTAND FIRST AND FOREMOST. THESE ARE THE BASIC PLAYS AND TECHNIQUES THAT A CHRISTIAN ATHLETE SHOULD WORK ON MASTERING.

LOVE YOUR BUDDY

WARM-UP

1. How does it make you feel to be told to do something?
2. Is anything worthy of being commanded to do it? When have you been told to do something and it resulted in a lasting positive impact?

WORKOUT *(John 13:34–35)*

1. It had been a busy night. Jesus had traveled to Jerusalem for the last time. He knew His death was near. Take a look at John 13. What is recorded in this chapter?
2. If you keep turning the pages, you'll see that the events of this long night continue through chapter 19. But looking at John 13:34–35 you see Jesus's chief concern for His friends. What does He ask them to do?
3. Do the members of your team get it? Do they understand the importance of putting others before themselves? How about you? Do you love in a way that promotes others before yourself?



FUNDAMENTALS

STRENGTH AND POWER

WARM-UP

1. Which is more important to you and your sport: strength or power?
2. Power is needed for a clean and jerk, to swing a baseball bat or golf club and to break a tackle. Track and field athletes focus on power while a power-lifter focuses on strength.

WORKOUT *(Isaiah 40:29)*

1. According to this verse, who is the giver of strength and power?
2. What does God give to the weak? What does He give to the powerless?
3. There's a difference between strength and power. But both are needed for you to be the best you can be. Are you who God wants you to be? How can you be more like Jesus?

ENTHUSIASM

WARM-UP

1. How would you compare yourself to other members of your team? Are you playing at their level, beyond or behind?
2. What causes an athlete to stand out among other athletes?

WORKOUT *(Romans 10:1–13)*

1. To have zeal is to be enthusiastic. What mistakes did these enthusiastic people make?
2. What does Scripture state about those who establish their own standard of salvation?
3. How do the promises of Scripture and your faith in Christ help you to understand that your relationship with God is not based on enthusiasm alone?

FUNDAMENTALS

DO YOU KNOW HIM?

WARM-UP

1. Have you ever played on a team and never got to know the coach or players? How did that affect your chemistry with the team?
2. How does knowing your coaches and teammates help you trust them during practice and during the game?

WORKOUT *(1 John 4:7–16; Matthew 7:22–23)*

1. According to Scripture, what are the results of knowing God? What is the danger of not knowing Him?
2. What are some ways you can get to know God better than you do now?

EVERYONE PLAYS

WARM-UP

1. To what level should no-cut sports be allowed?
2. Have you ever been cut from a sport? Was the decision to cut you fair?

WORKOUT *(John 10:27–30; 1 John 2:1–6)*

1. What is the evidence that we know God and God knows us? How can you be sure you will always be a part of God's family?
2. How can knowing that your relationship with God is eternally secure influence the way you react to the uncertainties of life?

FUNDAMENTALS

GOOD CATCH

WARM-UP

1. How did you feel the last time you tried out for a sport? Were you overly confident, terribly insecure, or somewhere in-between?
2. What is your motivation when you try out for an athletic team?

WORKOUT *(John 21:1–14)*

1. What was the key to the fishermen's good catch?
2. At what point did the disciples recognize Jesus? How did they react when they knew Jesus was with them?
3. How does knowing Jesus is always with you as your companion and guide impact the way you tackle the unknowns of life? Ask Jesus for guidance in athletics and life.



FUNDAMENTALS

TRUE NATURE

WARM-UP

1. When did you do something someone basically replied, “That’s just like you”?
2. Does what you do on and off the field or court always reflect who you are?

WORKOUT *(Genesis 39:6–23)*

1. How does Joseph’s response to Potiphar’s wife reflect his character?
2. What does the reaction of Potiphar’s wife reveal about her true nature?
3. How can you ensure that you will exhibit godly character despite the circumstances?

DECIDE NOW

WARM-UP

1. Would you consider yourself a decisive person?
2. What is something you need to make a decision about—and the sooner the better?

WORKOUT *(1 Corinthians 10:13)*

1. When it comes to sin, what does the Bible say that makes your sin unique from the sins of others?
2. According to this verse, how does God show His faithfulness? What does He promise?
3. What does God provide when you are tempted? Whose way will you follow?

FUNDAMENTALS

THE ROCK

WARM-UP

1. Where does your strength come from? Is it hereditary or are you just strong?
2. When you think about your abilities, do you ever doubt you are able to do what you need to do?

WORKOUT *(Philippians 4:13)*

1. According to this verse, who strengthens you?
2. Is this a new verse to you or is it like an old friend? If you haven't memorized it, you might want to. It's a good one. Write it down and remember it.
3. Do you believe you are "able to do all things through him who strengthens" you? Name Him. He is Jesus Christ. Write what you believe in the inside cover of this Bible.

THE PEOPLE I TRUST

WARM-UP

1. Who are three people you trust with your life? Why do you trust them?
2. How can lack of trust in coaches or leadership affect a team's confidence? How can it affect individual performance?

WORKOUT *(Jeremiah 17:5-8)*

1. According to these verses, what are your two options for determining whom you can trust?
2. What are the results for a person who places his or her trust in people? What are the results for a person who places his or her trust in God?
3. How can trusting God give you confidence in other areas of your life?

FUNDAMENTALS

REMEMBER TO HAVE FUN

WARM-UP

1. What is your main motivation for participating in athletics?
2. Was there a time when you enjoyed your sport more than you do now? Or are you at the height of enjoyment?
3. What makes what you do fun? What drains the fun out of it?

WORKOUT *(1 Thessalonians 5:16)*

1. What is the simple instruction provided in this verse?
2. What can you do to not only be joyful but also spread the joy to others around you?



FUNDAMENTALS

END IN SIGHT

WARM-UP

1. How important is it to have a game plan before going into competition? What might be the result if there was no plan in place?
2. How does having a clearly defined role motivate you to do your best?

WORKOUT *(Jeremiah 29:4–12)*

1. What were some of the instructions God gave the Israelites who were exiled in Babylon?
2. How might God's "game plan" have helped them through this difficult time?
3. How might God's promises affect the way you look at life?

STANDING ROOM ONLY

WARM-UP

1. A fundamental reality of regular athletic participation is that an injury may likely occur. What kind of injury have you experienced? Do you tend to be injury prone?
2. Have you had in the past or are you now experiencing an injury that has impacted you?
3. Is it possible to avoid injuries or at least lessen the risk of having one?

WORKOUT *(Mark 2:1–12)*

1. Jesus was a local celebrity, at times to the point of standing room only. What do four friends do so they can get their paralyzed friend to Jesus? Why do you think they went to such lengths? What did Jesus think of the four friends?
2. What did Jesus do for the paralyzed man? Why did the people react as they did and how did Jesus respond? Based on this passage, what is most important to Jesus?

FUNDAMENTALS

YOU HAVE ALL YOU NEED

WARM-UP

1. What do athletes, waiters and sheep have in common? Which would you rather be?
2. What area of your life would benefit most from a little guidance? Whom would you trust most in this area?

WORKOUT *(Psalm 23)*

1. What impacts you most when you read these six verses?
2. The psalmist declares that because the Lord is his shepherd, "I lack nothing." How does God provide for you?
3. Athletes, waiters and sheep rely on coaches, bosses and shepherds. What are your spiritual needs? In what ways are you dependent on God's goodness, love and kindness?

THEY NEVER WIN

WARM-UP

1. When have you been tempted to cheat at school or on the field?
2. Have you ever suspected or known that a competitor had cheated? How did it make you feel?
3. What are some of the reasons people cheat?

WORKOUT *(Acts 5:1-11)*

1. What do you think motivated Ananias and Sapphira to cheat the church? What impact did their deaths have on other people in the church?
2. What are some ways you can resist the temptation to cheat in order to get ahead?

COMPETITION

THIS SECTION OF ATHLETE STUDIES FOCUSES ON COMPETITION. IF CHRISTIANS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE SERVANTS OF OTHERS, WHERE DOES THE CONCEPT OF COMPETING FIT? CAN A CHRISTIAN ATHLETE REALLY BE FULLY COMPETITIVE? WHERE'S THE BALANCE? GOD DESIGNED US FOR ADVENTURE AND FOR COMPETITION, BUT HE'S VERY CONCERNED ABOUT OUR ATTITUDES AND ABOUT HOW WE COMPETE.

WINNING ATTITUDE

WARM-UP

1. Would you rather play for or against a team your sibling is on?
2. Do you prefer cutthroat competition or a friendly rivalry?

WORKOUT *(Mark 10:35-45)*

1. How did the other disciples respond to James's and John's request?
2. How did Jesus explain their request in terms of service?
3. How can you show love to your competition without intentionally giving them the win?



COMPETITION

GOD WILL COME THROUGH

WARM-UP

1. What past victory or memory would you like to relive?
2. When you compare what happened then to now, do you feel encouraged, discouraged or the same?

WORKOUT *(Numbers 11:21–23)*

1. This is part of a passage that reveals the Israelite's competing loyalties between God and their old way of life in Egypt where their condition was more predictable. Why would they want to return to slavery?
2. As Moses doubted God would provide the people's needs, the Lord reminds Moses that He is still powerful and does what He promises. What was Moses concerned about (read verses 21–22)?
3. What are you most concerned about right now? When have you seen God's Word come true in your life?

ACCOLADES

WARM-UP

1. Do you have any trophies or ribbons on display? If so, which is most meaningful?
2. Are you more likely to be recognized in individual competition or as a member of a team?

WORKOUT *(1 Corinthians 9:24–25)*

1. How does it encourage you knowing that you are not alone in your quest to live God's way?
2. There are different kinds of accolades in athletics, but everyone who gives their heart to God wins. How can you rely on your Christian friends to help you focus on forever things?
3. Would you be more likely to display an individual award, group recognition or shine the light on God for empowering you to reflect Christ?

COMPETITION

THEY MAY TURN ON YOU

WARM-UP

1. Have you been in a situation when a fellow teammate became a rival competitor?
2. What causes some people to turn against each other? Is it possible to prevent a divisive situation?

WORKOUT *(1 Samuel 18:1–11)*

1. What kind of relationship did David and Saul initially have? What turned Saul against David?
2. Has a competitive spirit hurt your team relationships? If so, confess your sin to God, and ask Him to fill you with His Spirit of love and peace.

STRENGTH FROM FAILURE

WARM-UP

1. When was the last time you failed while attempting something in practice or competition? How did it make you feel?
2. How did that failure influence the way you approached future practices and competitions?

WORKOUT *(Judges 16:21–30)*

1. What conditions did Samson face in his defeat? How did his enemies respond to his situation?
2. What did Samson request of God? What final act established his legacy?
3. How does Samson's story reflect God's faithfulness? How might past mistakes and failures make you stronger?

COMPETITION

THE HUMBLE ATHLETE

WARM-UP

1. What is the first thought that goes through your mind when you excel in competition or outdo everyone else in practice?
2. Have you ever had a teammate brag about the number of points he or she scored during a game? How did that make you feel?

WORKOUT *(Philippians 2:3–8)*

1. What advice does Paul give when it comes to humility?
2. How can keeping others in mind help you remain humble in any situation?
3. How might your attitude about competition and personal achievement change if you were to follow Jesus's example?

COUNT ON IT

WARM-UP

1. Who is the most trustworthy person you know?
2. Do professional athletes tend to be more trustworthy or less trustworthy than the average person?

WORKOUT *(Numbers 23:19)*

1. How does this one verse describe God's dependability?
2. In what four ways is God contrasted to humans?
3. Is it natural for you to put your confidence in God on a regular basis? If not, in whom else do you trust?

COMPETITION

YOU CAN EXPECT IT

WARM-UP

1. Who is someone you know who has suffered for what he or she believes in?
2. What would you be willing to suffer for? Would you suffer for anyone else? If so, who?

WORKOUT *(2 Timothy 3:12)*

1. What warning does Paul give Timothy regarding persecution?
2. What form does persecution take today? Have you witnessed modern-day persecution? Have you ever felt persecuted?
3. If you follow Jesus's example, you are going to be persecuted. What instance of suffering for Christ has confirmed you're striving to live a godly life?

HOPE IT GOES WELL

WARM-UP

1. Have you ever played dirty? Where were you and who were you with?
2. What causes you to bend the rules or blatantly cheat? How critical was the outcome to you?

WORKOUT *(Isaiah 3:10–11)*

1. According to Isaiah, there are two ways to go, each with its own consequences. Picture a door labeled "Righteous" and another labeled "Wicked." Which door do you enter most?
2. A simple definition for *righteous* is right living. *Wickedness* is rebellion against God. Which kind of competitor would people say you are: righteous or wicked? Do you agree?

COMPETITION

TAKE A BREAK

WARM-UP

1. Competition can be exhausting. What would you give everything for?
2. How fierce of a competitor are you? Is it all systems go for you, or do you tend to pull back in the face of tough competition?

WORKOUT *(Matthew 11:28–29)*

1. Jesus offers comforting words to all who need a break—and that’s everyone. Where does He say to go and what does He offer?
2. Jesus promises rest to those who come to Him. The yoke He mentions reminds us that when we are with Him, He bears the weight of our burdens. What’s troubling you or weighing you down that you want to give to Jesus?

ADMITTING YOU’RE WRONG

WARM-UP

1. Do you ever find it difficult to admit to teammates or coaches that you are wrong?
2. Recall a time when nothing was more important to you than proving to someone you were right. How did you feel after you pleaded your case?

WORKOUT *(Acts 15:6–11)*

1. What requirements for salvation did some of the Jews want to put on the new Gentile believers?
2. How do you determine which faith issues are negotiable and which are not? Ask God to help you “agree to disagree” on issues that do not matter but to remain firm on the foundations of the faith.

COMPETITION

GIVE IT YOUR ALL

WARM-UP

1. What in life do you love more than anything else? About what could you say, “I love it almost as much as life itself”?
2. When was a time that more of you was required than you gave and you experienced the consequences of your half-hearted effort?

WORKOUT *(Mark 12:28–34)*

1. Jesus’s disciples weren’t the only ones who seemed to always be asking Him questions. In this passage, who is asking the question? What’s the question?
2. In verse 30 Jesus provides the answer: “*And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.*” What proclamation does Jesus make prior to this statement? What does Jesus say is the second most important commandment?
3. As you think about giving your best—your all—to God, how does acknowledging Him as the “One and only” motivate you? How might loving others as yourself influence your actions?

SHOW-OFF!

WARM-UP

1. Think of an example when an athlete—known to you or not—showed off during competition. How did it make you feel?
2. How do you feel about showing off? Could it have any impact on the outcome of a game or match?

WORKOUT *(Luke 18:10–14)*

1. What two approaches to prayer are described in these verses? What does the Pharisee’s prayer reveal about his character? What does the tax collector’s prayer reveal about his character?
2. What did Jesus say was God’s response to the two prayers?
3. How might this parable impact the way you view others? After reading these verses, will you approach your conversation with God any differently?

COMPETITION

DEALING WITH A DILEMMA

WARM-UP

1. When have you been faced with either losing or doing something unethical? What did you do?
2. What price are you willing to pay in order to win? What are you not willing to do?

WORKOUT *(1 Samuel 24:1–22)*

1. Why did David choose not to kill Saul? What would it have cost him if he had?
2. David eventually became Israel's greatest earthly king. How might his reign have been different had he killed Saul in order to become king?
3. How might God bless you if you choose to make His purposes more important than winning?

HALT THE HAUGHTINESS

WARM-UP

1. Have you ever wanted a win, position, championship or award so much that you would be willing to do almost anything to get it? What was the outcome?
2. How likely are you to take advantage of someone else in order to get what you want?

WORKOUT *(Genesis 16:1–9)*

1. To what did Hagar attribute her newfound status?
2. How did Hagar's and Sarai's roles change? How did Sarai respond?
3. Are you aware of a time when you treated someone in an inferior manner because of your position or athletic ability? If so—and if possible—go to that person and ask for forgiveness.

TEAMWORK

BEING A GOOD TEAM PLAYER IS CRITICAL TO MOST ATHLETES' PERFORMANCE. EACH OF US MUST LEARN HOW TO COOPERATE WITH OTHERS, WORK TOGETHER AND SHARE TOGETHER ALL OUR WINS AND LOSSES. THIS IS VITALLY TRUE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS WELL. NOBODY IS A SUPERSTAR; WE EACH PLAY A UNIQUE AND SIGNIFICANT ROLE ON GOD'S TEAM. SPEND SOME TIME REFLECTING ON TEAMWORK AND YOUR PART IN THE TEAM AS YOU EXAMINE THE FOLLOWING ATHLETE STUDIES.

BALL HOG

WARM-UP

1. Have you ever played on a team with a ball hog or someone who always found the spotlight? How did this one person's behavior affect everyone else?
2. In what situations do you find yourself craving attention?

WORKOUT *(Isaiah 14:12–14; Ezekiel 28:12–18)*

1. These are tough passages about Satan's downfall. What does Isaiah say about it? How does Ezekiel describe the result of his rebellion against God?
2. What demonstrations of pride have you seen? How could pride destroy a person's life?
3. How important is it to stay humble and avoid the temptation to glorify oneself above God?



TEAMWORK

TEACH ME HOW

WARM-UP

1. What skill do you need to master in order to assist your team the most or perform at your best?
2. If you were to master that one skill or find the key to a successful performance, how would your outlook and status change?

WORKOUT *(Psalm 25:4–5)*

1. The psalmist often cries out to the Lord, sometimes in praise and at other times in distress. What do the words of this psalm express?
2. Who is the student and who is the teacher in this psalm?
3. Consider making these words your prayer: “Make your ways known to me, Lord; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me.”

PARTNER UP

WARM-UP

1. When training and practicing for your sport, are you better alone, or does it help to have others around?
2. How does being with others make things better?

WORKOUT *(Daniel 1:1–19)*

1. What commitment did Daniel and his friends make to God? What test did he propose to prove God’s way was better? How do you think these four young men were able to help each other?
2. What are some challenges you face where it helps to have friends with you? Have you ever been able to help a friend keep a commitment?
3. How does Daniel’s story and the phrase “there is strength in numbers” apply to you?

TEAMWORK

TEAM OF TEAMS

WARM-UP

1. If you could choose anyone, whom would you choose to make up your team of teams?
2. What goals would you want to accomplish with this team?

WORKOUT *(Matthew 10:1–10)*

1. What was key to the disciples' ability to work together to accomplish miraculous things?
2. What might you be able to accomplish for God by teaming up with other Christians?

PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTH

WARM-UP

1. What is the best thing you have to offer your team?
2. Does anyone else seem to have what you have? If so, what makes each of you unique?

WORKOUT *(Ephesians 4:11–16)*

1. How many different positions, or roles, are mentioned in this Scripture passage?
2. Why does God gift Christians with so many different skills for service and encouragement?
3. How can you use the gifts God has given you to serve others and build up His church?

TEAMWORK

GO TO THE SOURCE

WARM-UP

1. When you need to know something, to whom do you go? Do you usually go to the same person, or does it depend on what you need to know?
2. What is something you have always been able to depend on? What makes it so dependable?

WORKOUT *(Psalm 119:25–32)*

1. Depending on what psalm you read, you could be greatly encouraged or confronted with the reality of life. How would you describe your reaction to this psalm?
2. What is the source the writer depends on?
3. Does the writer have competing loyalties, or is he conflicted and looking for the right direction?

THE GREATEST

WARM-UP

1. Every coach looks for that player whose value exceeds all others. What qualities make a player so valuable?
2. What is the greatest team you have ever been a part of? What made it that way?

WORKOUT *(Acts 15:22–41)*

1. Why did Paul and Barnabas disagree?
2. How did Paul and Barnabas's conflict have a positive impact on the early church?
3. Do you value yourself as God values you? How can your friends help you be more like the person God wants you to be?

TEAMWORK

FOR SURE

WARM-UP

1. Who's the most important member of your team? Assuming it isn't you (though it may be), what would that person be without the rest of the team?
2. How do the best players present themselves? Do they like to brag or tend to avoid the attention?

WORKOUT *(Ephesians 2:8–9)*

1. According to these verses, what did you have to do to earn your salvation?
2. What part does God play in opening up a relationship with Him? What is your part?
3. Since you are saved by grace and it's God's gift to you, who has the bragging rights? Do you need to adjust your attitude with your friends and family?

HUDDLE UP

WARM-UP

1. What have you found to be the most effective way to make decisions as a team?
2. Can you recall a time when a team huddle or meeting created the turning point in a competition?

WORKOUT *(Luke 9:10–17)*

1. What happened immediately after Jesus and His disciples found some privacy?
2. What did the disciples ask Jesus to do? How did He reply? How did everyone benefit?
3. How can you become a better team player? Ask God to help you work together with others to develop plans that honor Him and meet the needs of others.

TEAMWORK

FOR A FRIEND

WARM-UP

1. What do you know about sheep and shepherds? What does a shepherd do for his sheep?
2. What qualities make a good shepherd?

WORKOUT *(John 10:11–13)*

1. Jesus calls Himself the good shepherd. Who are His sheep?
2. What does Jesus do for His sheep? How is He better than just a hired hand? When you are under attack, who do you want to take care of you?
3. Look what Jesus does for you! What are you willing to do for a fellow team member or friend?

THINKING THE SAME THING

WARM-UP

1. What long-gone sports legend would you want to spend an hour with? What questions would you ask? What skill or information would you want to know?
2. What was the most divided team you have played on? What made it that way?

WORKOUT *(Luke 24:36–45)*

1. Why did Jesus's disciples react to Him the way they did? In what ways did Jesus try to comfort them and strengthen their unity?
2. What would it take for your team to be of one mind, thinking the same way, in order to accomplish God's purpose? Ask God to help you.

TEAMWORK

CLOSE COMRADES

WARM-UP

1. Do the players on your team get along? Are you close to your teammates? Are they your friends?
2. A comrade is a person who's become a very close friend because of experiences or difficulties you've shared. Whom would you consider your comrade?

WORKOUT *(1 Samuel 20:1–17)*

1. What prompted David's conversation with Jonathan? How would you describe their relationship?
2. How would you characterize the plan for saving David's life?
3. Pray that God will grow you into the type of person who can be a friend to all. Ask Him to reveal to you someone on your team who needs a Jonathan/David friendship.

BETTER TOGETHER

WARM-UP

1. When did you experience your time of greatest need? How did you deal with it? Did anyone help you?
2. Have you ever been there for someone in need of assistance? Who was it, and what was the situation?

WORKOUT *(Mark 2:1–12)*

1. After traveling, Jesus returned to His hometown. News traveled fast, and a crowd quickly gathered. What was Jesus doing in the house?
2. Describe the surprising events recorded in these verses. What was the obvious need? What need did Jesus address before the one that seemed obvious to those watching?
3. Who do you know in need that God is leading you to help? What is something you could accomplish for God with others that you might not be able to do on your own?

TEAMWORK

NEVER STOP PRAYING

WORKOUT

1. What is something you do that's hard to stop once you've started doing it?
2. Is this a positive thing or a negative thing? Do you plan to keep doing it, or do you want to stop?

WORKOUT *(1 Thessalonians 5:17)*

1. The message of this verse seems to be clear. What does it mean to “never stop praying”?
2. What needs to change in your life so you can remain open to God—listening to Him, talking with Him and responding to His Spirit?
3. How important is prayer to your team? What can you do to remind your teammates of the importance of prayer?

WHAT AM I DOING?

WARM-UP

1. Why do you participate in certain sports instead of others?
2. Rank the following in order of importance from one to three in deciding which specific sports to participate in:

___ What I am doing?

___ Who I am doing it with?

___ What kind of recognition I might get?

WORKOUT *(Genesis 4:1–16)*

1. Why did Cain murder Abel?
2. What were the consequences of Cain's action?
3. Is there anything you need to do to make things right with one of your teammates or another person?

TRAINING

ANY SPORT REQUIRES TIME IN TRAINING. AN ATHLETE NEEDS TRAINING TO LEARN THE BASIC RULES AND SKILLS OF A SPORT AND TO TEACH THE BODY TO ADAPT TO NEW MOVES AND SKILLS. IT'S THE SAME IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. WE NEED TO MASTER THE BASICS AND ALSO TEACH OUR BODIES, MINDS AND SPIRITS TO THINK AND ACT IN THE NEW WAYS SO WE CAN LIVE AND COMPETE AS JESUS WOULD DESIRE FROM HIS TEAM. JUST LET GO.

JUST LET GO

WARM-UP

1. What is something you have had to let go of before you could get serious about your commitment to your sport? How was holding on to it keeping you from reaching your full potential?
2. Was it difficult to let go? What were the benefits that came with letting go of it? What helped you keep your commitment to move forward without it?

WORKOUT *(Mark 10:17–30)*

1. What spiritual reward is the man seeking in these verses? What acts has he been faithful to keep?
2. What motivated Jesus's response? Why do you think the man was disappointed?
3. How does the promise in verses 29–30 help you to handle the challenges that make it difficult to commit your whole life to God?



TRAINING

HE HAS THE POWER

WARM-UP

1. No doubt, strength and power training is necessary for an athlete to be in top shape. How do you train?
2. When you train, do you train for strength, power and endurance, or to improve in another area?

WORKOUT *(John 4:46–53)*

1. An important man's son was sick and he knew Jesus could help. How sick was the boy? What did Jesus do?
2. Jesus has the love, power and authority to make lives new. Seeing the father's belief, Jesus assured him that his son would live. Look at the verses in John 4. What was significant about the timing of the boy's recovery?
3. The miracle and its timing were no coincidence but divine confirmation of God's power. How have you seen God in action? What does it reveal about His character and purpose?

CONSULT THE PLAYBOOK

WARM-UP

1. What adjustments to your training would you make if you knew you were going up against your greatest opponent?
2. Do you have a secret weapon you can use against your greatest rival?

WORKOUT *(Matthew 4:1–11)*

1. Describe the physical state Jesus was in when He was approached by the devil.
2. What three areas of human need or desire did the devil use to tempt Jesus? How did Jesus combat each temptation?
3. Do you know the Bible well enough to combat temptation? What do you need to do to be better trained in knowing and living by Scripture?

TRAINING

ULTIMATE GOAL

WARM-UP

1. What's your track record with goals? Do you usually achieve them or fail to achieve them? Do you ever adjust them along the way?
2. What result do you hope to gain from putting in the time to train? What is your goal?

WORKOUT *(Proverbs 23:18)*

1. What does this verse promise?
2. When was the last time you were disappointed? When were you the most deeply disappointed? What was the cause?
3. Is your goal to be rewarded or recognized? Will you be disappointed if what you hope for doesn't happen? Is your ultimate goal focused on you, others or God?

CATCH THIS

WARM-UP

1. What do you consider to be the greatest catch ever made? Did a professional or amateur execute it?
2. Years ago, a professional football team experienced what became known as the "Music City Miracle," and many athletes have experienced countless "miracles" since. What are the qualifications of a truly miraculous play?

WORKOUT *(Luke 5:1-11)*

1. The event in these verses occurred at the beginning of Jesus's ministry. How do you think you would have responded to what Jesus did? How would it have changed the way you invest your time?
2. Jesus performed a similar miracle at the end of His ministry. It's recorded in John 21:1-14 and worth the read. What similarities do you notice between the two? What is unique about each?
3. Comparing Luke 5:1-11 and John 21:1-14. Do you think Jesus's early training stuck with His disciples?

TRAINING

FORMING A NEW TEAM

WARM-UP

1. Have you ever played on an all-star team or other team made up of former opponents? How would you describe the experience?
2. What had to happen in order for the newly formed team to work together?

WORKOUT *(Romans 1:14–17)*

1. According to these verses, to whom are you called to share Christ?
2. Would you say you are “eager” to tell others—friends and foes—about Jesus? Is there anything you are ashamed of that is keeping you from being a witness?
3. How are you living by faith both on and off the field?

FEARLESS

WARM-UP

1. Where do you train—inside or outside? Do you train in the morning, afternoon or evening?
2. What if you were training outside in the pitch dark and your artificial light failed? Or what if, in your indoor training, the lights went out and you found yourself in absolute darkness?

WORKOUT *(Psalm 27:1)*

1. What is the promise in this verse?
2. What does it mean to you that the Lord is your “light and salvation”? How is He the “stronghold” of your life? What is your greatest fear? What or who do you dread? Tell Him about it. Ask Him to help you.

TRAINING

INSIDE YOUR HEAD

WARM-UP

1. Name three athletes whose heads you'd like to get inside and find out their thought process. Why do you want to know these three so well?
2. What would you hope to learn from seeing inside the heads of these athletes?
3. How would thinking like one of these athletes help you achieve your goals?

WORKOUT *(1 Corinthians 2:11–16)*

1. What is one thing that can give you insight into the thoughts of God? What are some benefits of understanding the blessings available to us through a relationship with God?
2. How can thinking like Jesus change the way you look at your circumstances? What are some of the ways it can change the way you view the world?

PASS THE BATON

WARM-UP

1. In a relay, would you rather hand off a baton or take it?
2. Does your preference have anything to do with your past experience? Has your hand off or take ever been the key to winning a race? Have you ever dropped a baton?

WORKOUT *(Joshua 1:1–9)*

1. How prepared was Joshua to “take the baton” from Moses? Who prepared him?
2. How did God encourage Joshua as he began his leg of the race? What specific instruction did God give him that can be summed up in two words?

TRAINING

NO FOOLIN'

WARM-UP

1. All training starts somewhere. How do you begin? Do you have any routines or rituals?
2. What is the most foolish thing you have done while training or playing? Did you know what you were doing?

WORKOUT *(Proverbs 1:7)*

1. Where does true knowledge come from? What is the difference between a person who knows the Lord and a foolish person?
2. Since the fear—the honor and respect—of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, what do you need to add to your daily “training” routine to follow God’s direction for you life?

VICTORIOUS

WARM-UP

1. For whom do things usually work out for the best: you, others or both?
2. What is something good in your life right now that you are thankful for.

WORKOUT *(Romans 8:28–39)*

1. What’s the difference between good things happening all the time (like a team who always seems to win) and God working in all things for your ultimate good?
2. Over what things in life is a Christian victorious? How then should we view failures and struggles?
3. Make a list of your struggles. Ask God to help you be victorious in these areas. As God brings you victory in an area, mark it off your list.

TRAINING

DON'T BE LATE

WARM-UP

1. We all have times when we don't feel like working hard. Describe a time when you procrastinated in your training. What impact did your choice have on your performance?
2. What are some of the physical benefits of maintaining a routine training schedule? How can it help you keep your competitive edge and winning attitude?

WORKOUT *(Matthew 25:1–13)*

1. What are some of the characteristics that describe the wise virgins in the parable? How about the foolish ones?
2. What did the procrastination of the foolish virgins cost them (v. 10)? What spiritual truth is Jesus teaching through this parable?
3. How does Jesus's warning in verse 13 challenge you to avoid procrastinating in spiritual things? How can taking Jesus's advice change the way you approach all areas of your life?

ETERNAL BENEFITS

WARM-UP

1. Are you presently involved in any training other than physical training? If so, what?
2. What is the benefit of focusing on a specific type of training?

WORKOUT *(1 Timothy 4:8)*

1. Paul was an encourager to his young friend Timothy. What did Paul tell Timothy was better than physical training? What are the benefits of this better type of training?
2. Physically taking care of our bodies has benefits. What benefits are you hoping to obtain? But godliness must take precedence. How will you honor God with who you are and what you do?

TRAINING

CONDITIONING

WARM-UP

1. What conditioning exercises do you least enjoy or struggle with most?
2. How do you cool down? How do you feel while you are cooling down?

WORKOUT *(Exodus 24:15–18; 34:29–35)*

1. How long did Moses stay with God on the mountain? How do you imagine he spent the time?
2. When Moses returned, what was their reaction? Why did they react the way they did?
3. Take a moment to be with God right now. Pray that others will see Him in you.

WORTH REMEMBERING

WARM-UP

1. What trainer or coach do you gravitate to most? Why?
2. What is the best advice he or she has given you?

WORKOUT *(Psalm 119:65–72)*

1. What caused the psalmist to rely on God's instructions?
2. Describe his attitude toward his affliction.
3. What Scriptures give you judgment, discernment and strength? Can you quote any of these verses from memory?

PERFORMANCE

ANY ATHLETE KNOWS THAT ALL THE TRAINING AND PRACTICE IN THE WORLD IS ONLY AS GOOD AS HIS OR HER PERFORMANCE IN COMPETITION. PUTTING TRAINING INTO ACTUAL PRACTICE IS THE ATHLETE'S ULTIMATE GOAL. IT'S THE SAME IN OUR WALK WITH JESUS. ALL THE BOOK LEARNING AND PREACHING IN THE WORLD IS OF NO VALUE UNLESS WE TAKE THOSE TRUTHS AND PUT THEM INTO PRACTICE IN DAILY LIFE. FOCUS IN THESE STUDIES TO PERFORM ON AND OFF THE FIELD FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

COOLING THE HOT HEAD

WARM-UP

1. When have you lost your cool in the heat of competition? Have you ever gotten angry during a practice or competition but managed to keep your cool?
2. What were the different outcomes of these two situations? In the instance when you kept your cool, what helped you do so?

WORKOUT *(Ephesians 4:26–32)*

1. Is it possible to be angry and not sin? Why does Jesus warn against remaining angry?
2. What are some of the behaviors that anger prompts? What are the consequences that result for the one who is angry and those on the receiving end?
3. What makes it difficult to live according to Jesus's command in verse 32? How can you follow Jesus's example on and off the field?



PERFORMANCE

RIGHT FROM THE START

WARM-UP

1. How does your performance usually go? Do you start off strong and then fade, or do you keep the same intensity throughout?
2. Have you ever experienced a time when your performance continued to increase and you were your very best at the end? What made this possible?

WORKOUT *(John 1:1–3)*

1. Who was present at the creation of the world? Who does “the Word” refer to?
2. Jesus (the Word) was present at creation and even before. He has always existed and has never existed apart from God. How does that impact how you see Jesus and His role in the world and in your life?
3. Jesus the Creator and Son of God became a person so you could know Him. What would it take to convince you (or someone you know) that right from the start Jesus has been on a mission to save you?

CHECK YOUR “TUDE”

WARM-UP

1. Have you ever been taken out of a game or removed from competition in order to increase the odds of success?
2. What is the one thing you love most about athletics?

WORKOUT *(Philippians 1:12–26)*

1. How would you describe Paul’s attitude—“tude”—as a prisoner? How was he able to maintain that kind of attitude under such difficult circumstances?
2. What good came out of Paul’s imprisonment?
3. How much is your “tude” affected by your performance? Do you need to adjust your “tude,” so you are able to point others to God in both the good and bad times?

PERFORMANCE

A GOOD NAME

WARM-UP

1. Name an athlete who has a good reputation. Now name one who has a bad reputation.
2. Take a couple of minutes to think of past and current athletes with both good and bad reputations. If you made a list off the top of your head, which would be longer, those with good reputations or bad?

WORKOUT *(Proverbs 22:1; Luke 6:24–26)*

1. How can a good name, or reputation, lead to better things than wealth or fame?
2. What does Jesus mean when He warns, “Woe . . . when all people speak well of you”?
3. Jesus is talking about the person who is more satisfied with himself or herself than he or she is with being who God wants him or her to be. How can you honor God with your good reputation instead of saying, “Look at me!”?

PERSISTENCE

WARM-UP

1. Have you ever faced a task that seemed impossible to accomplish? Were you on your own or did you have support?
2. How long would you be willing to wait to see the results of something you’ve chosen to take on? Would it make a difference if it wasn’t your choice but was assigned to you?

WORKOUT *(Joshua 6:1–5, 15–16, 20)*

1. Though these verses skip around, you get the picture. What were God’s instructions to Joshua and the people? What were the promised results?
2. On a scale of “not at all” to “extremely,” how would you rate the people’s persistence? Did it pay off?
3. How persistent are you when it comes to doing what God asks you to do? Do you keep at it with a passion or do you easily become bored?

PERFORMANCE

GETTING RECOGNITION

WARM-UP

1. Should excessive celebration by an athlete after a great play draw a penalty? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel that the way you celebrate a team victory or individual win is appropriate?

WORKOUT *(Acts 3:1–10)*

1. How was the lame man's motivation different from Peter and John's intention?
2. How did Peter and John give glory to God? How did the man glorify God?
3. How do you deal with your need to be recognized for your accomplishments? Is it possible to accept congratulations and give credit to God at the same time?

DEALING WITH PRESSURE

WARM-UP

1. When have you reacted inappropriately under extreme pressure?
2. What sports figure do you most respect for his or her performance under pressure?

WORKOUT *(Acts 6:8–15; 7:54–60)*

1. How did Stephen's opponents show persistence in discrediting him?
2. How did Stephen demonstrate consistency of character, even in front of his accusers?
3. Does your character change depending on the circumstances? How can you become more consistent for Christ in all situations?

PERFORMANCE

OUT IN THE OPEN

WARM-UP

1. How have you seen athletes publicly display their faith during a game? Have you ever displayed your faith on the playing field?
2. What are your thoughts about displaying one's faith during competition? Can you think of a situation when it would be inappropriate to do so?

WORKOUT *(Matthew 5:13–16)*

1. How can a Christian athlete be “salt of the earth” or “light of the world”?
2. How does what Jesus says in verse 16 influence your thoughts about publicly displaying Christian faith during an athletic contest?

YOU KNOW ME

WARM-UP

1. Everyone goes through a slump—even the most famous of athletes. It's a time when you're not performing at your highest potential. When have you experienced a slump?
2. What steps did you take to get out of your slump? How did taking those steps help you perform at a more competitive level?

WORKOUT *(Psalm 139)*

1. What does David, the writer of this psalm, say about how God understands you? How do these truths affect your confidence in God's ability to understand your challenges and struggles?
2. When you aren't on top of your game, what can you learn from these verses about the best way to tackle the problem?
3. How can following the example in these verses help you discover both your problems and their solutions?

PERFORMANCE

GOD IS WORKING

WARM-UP

1. What three people have influenced you the most? How has their influence shaped you?
2. You are an influence to others. How have you influenced others—both good and bad? Who have you influenced for good?

WORKOUT *(Philippians 2:12–15)*

1. In what practical ways can you be a positive influence? What do you need to avoid in order to maintain a positive influence? Why does that matter?
2. “Fear and trembling” is better translated today as “awe and reverence.” How do you see God’s awesome work around you?
3. What is one specific way you can shine for God this week? Ask Him to honor your request to glorify Him and to help you point others to Him.

NEED A HAND?

WARM-UP

1. To say someone is able to “walk on water” is to indicate that person can do just about anything and can do so without much, if any, criticism.
2. Coaches, athletes and other personalities have been described and portrayed as walking on water. Who would you describe in this way?

WORKOUT *(Matthew 14:22–33)*

1. This is a story about two men who walked on water. One succeeded, and the other failed. Why did Peter step out of the boat and go to Jesus? Why did Peter sink?
2. As Peter began to sink, he cried out for salvation. What kind of salvation was likely on Peter’s mind?
3. Would you cling to the boat with eyes closed, looking around to see what’s happening, or venture out to meet Jesus? When is the last time you accepted Jesus’s help?

PERFORMANCE

PLANNING THE OUTCOME

WARM-UP

1. As a little kid, what did you enjoy building? Were you good at following directions?
2. When you think back, what is something you wish you had attempted to build, assemble or put together? If you had the chance to do it now, would you?

WORKOUT *(1 Kings 6:1–38)*

1. It was almost 500 years after the people of Israel were rescued from their slavery in Egypt that Solomon built the Temple. Do you think anyone doubted the Temple would be built? Do you think there were those who never gave up hope?
2. The Bible provides specific details about the Temple's exterior and then moves to its interior. It represented God's presence among them. When you think about your "exterior," what might others see about you that glorifies God? Only you and God know your "interior," but does it also honor Him?
3. When Solomon built the Temple, it was about God, not Solomon. When you strive to do things or perform, is it more about you or your Maker? Do you need to change the way you are doing things?

THE AVOIDANCE ADVANTAGE

WARM-UP

1. What are three things you do to be at the top of your performance? What is one thing you avoid?
2. Are you the type of person that usually stays away from potentially harmful things, or do you find yourself drawn to do them?

WORKOUT *(1 Thessalonians 5:22)*

1. Though it should be obvious, what is the simple command in this verse?
2. Why is it human nature to fight doing the right thing?
3. Name the evil that is robbing you of God's best for you. Confess it to Him, and call on His Spirit to give you the strength to avoid it.

PERFORMANCE

ALL YOU NEED IS A MIRACLE

WARM-UP

1. When you were younger, did you believe in miracles? Did you ever witness one?
2. Do you believe in miracles as much as you once did? If not, why?

WORKOUT *(Luke 8:49–56)*

1. What miracles can you recall that are recorded in the Bible? Are most of them found in the Old Testament or in the New Testament?
2. Jesus was known for His miracles by this point in His ministry. Here He brings a young girl back from the dead. How did the reactions of the people differ leading up to the miracle compared to after He performed it?
3. Jesus saw right away to the girl's physical needs. Then He told her parents not to tell anyone about what He had done. Why did Jesus ask them to do this?

FAILURE TO COMPETE

WARM-UP

1. Do you tend to do better at practice or in the heat of competition?
2. What factors contribute to your having a great performance—on and off the field?

WORKOUT *(Exodus 8:16–19; 12:28–30)*

1. This plague of gnats was a demonstration of God's power so Pharaoh would release the Hebrew slaves. Look at Exodus chapters 7–11. How many plagues were there? What was Pharaoh's answer after each plague?
2. What were the Lord's instructions to Moses and Aaron? What kind of luck did Pharaoh's magicians have when they tried to create these gnats, which were likely sand fleas or mosquitoes?
3. With a hard heart Pharaoh failed to obey, until after the tenth plague, at great cost. Are you depending on your own tricks or is your dependence on God? When things plague you, always depend on God.

GAME PLAN

NO ATHLETIC ENDEAVOR IS COMPLETE WITHOUT A DETAILED GAME PLAN MADE WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE GAME! SAME WITH THE WALK OF FAITH: IT'S IMPORTANT FOR EACH OF US TO KNOW IN ADVANCE WHAT WE WILL DO WHEN FACED WITH TEMPTATIONS AND TRIALS. THIS SECTION ADDRESSES THAT TOPIC, HELPING YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WHETHER YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A BIG MATCH OR ON A NIGHT OUT WITH FRIENDS.

WANNA BE A VENDOR?

WARM-UP

1. If you were a vendor at an athletic event, what would you sell? Why?
2. What part does food play in your enjoyment and participation in sports?

WORKOUT *(Matthew 14:15–21)*

1. What influenced the disciples to view the situation the way they did?
2. What was Jesus's plan? What was the outcome?
3. Will you determine to be who God wants you to be in the midst of the pressure to perform and to meet impossible expectations? How will you do that?



GAME PLAN

ON AND OFF THE FIELD

WARM-UP

1. Is a player more valuable to the team when he or she is on the field or off the field? Why?
2. What does the phrase “actions speak louder than words” mean? How does it relate to athletics?

WORKOUT *(James 2:14–26)*

1. What does James say about the relationship between “faith” (believing) and “works” (serving)?
2. How does Scripture define faith that is dead?
3. In what specific ways will you give evidence of your eternal relationship with God through acts of Christian service?

ROOM FOR A TROPHY

WARM-UP

1. Have you ever received a trophy or other award? Where is it? Do you keep it in a special place like on a shelf or in a display case?
2. Worse, do you want an award so badly you would do almost anything to get it? How far would you go?

WORKOUT *(Luke 12:13–21)*

1. Some Bibles title this Scripture Parable of the Rich Young Fool. A brother wants what is his. How does Jesus answer?
2. Jesus’s story is a life lesson not only for the man but also for you. What does it mean to “be on guard against all greed”? What does Jesus say that life is not?
3. If “one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions,” what is most important about life? Deal with the dissatisfaction in your life. When you want Jesus most, you’ll want temporary things less.

GAME PLAN

DRAWS AND DRAWBACKS

WARM-UP

1. What has been the greatest achievement in your athletic career to date? How did you feel immediately after accomplishing it?
2. What motivates you to excel in your sport? What are some of the benefits that come from winning? What are some of the drawbacks that can accompany athletic success?

WORKOUT *(Luke 16:19–24)*

1. What might have motivated the rich man to achieve his wealth? How is his motivation most likely different than Lazarus's?
2. At his death, what hard lesson did the rich man learn? How does this reality help put worldly success into perspective?
3. What does the Bible say about misplaced value? How can you balance your physical and spiritual needs?

BLESSED

WARM-UP

1. The word *blessed* has almost become a cultural phenomenon. When was the last time you heard it spoken, saw it in print or in a post?
2. Do you think most people who use the word *blessed* know what it means? What does it mean to you?

WORKOUT *(Numbers 6:24–26)*

1. These three verses are worth memorizing. You may have heard it spoken or sung as a closing prayer. What are you in most need of from God right now: protection, a “smile” from God, grace, favor or peace?
2. God offers—blesses you with—all of these and more. What will your response to God be?
3. From whom are you seeking a blessing: coach, teammates, friends, family or God? Who can follow up on the blessing and make it come to pass?

GAME PLAN

NOTHING LASTS FOREVER

WARM-UP

1. Can you name any athletes who died before they fulfilled their potential? If so, how did you feel when you learned their lives had been cut short?
2. Has this had an impact on the way you think about your own life?

WORKOUT *(James 4:13–17)*

1. Why is it a bad idea to trust in yourself? Where should you place your trust?
2. How does living by the principle stated in verse 14 change the way you approach each day?
3. In what ways can you live to the fullest while first glorifying God?

MORE THAN CRUTCHES

WARM-UP

1. What stands out to you most about your past opponents?
2. How are your thoughts about your opponents different from those about your teammates?

WORKOUT *(2 Samuel 4:4; 9:1–12)*

1. The house of David and the house of Saul were at odds. In the midst of this, how did David honor the memory of his friend Jonathan, Saul's son?
2. David gave Mephibosheth more than crutches. How did Mephibosheth respond to David's kindness? Why do you think he responded that way?
3. How can you honor God by the way you not only treat your opponents but also those who seek to hurt you?

GAME PLAN

ARMED TO WIN

WARM-UP

1. What's the strongest attribute you can offer your team: a strong arm, great footwork or trained hands?
2. Do you tend to be your best when you are training or in real time when winning is on the line?

WORKOUT *(Psalm 18:32–34)*

1. What does God do for you? When it's game time, do you enjoy all the amazing things you're able to accomplish "on your own," or do you recognize God's goodness that allows you to do these things?
2. In what way can you approach your next competition so it's obvious to all who see that your strength and power comes from God?

REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME

WARM-UP

1. Have you ever been thankful for a loss? Have you ever known anyone who sincerely was?
2. Can you honestly think of anything good that comes out of a loss? If so, what?

WORKOUT *(1 Thessalonians 5:18)*

1. What does God's Word instruct you to do? Is it God's will for you to lose, blow out your ACL or experience an injury that sidelines you?
2. In what circumstances should you be thankful?
3. It's never God's will for you to hurt—either on the outside or the inside. He loves and cares for you. But how can you express thanks to Him when this broken world tries to break you?

GAME PLAN

GIVE IT EVERYTHING

WARM-UP

1. Do you observe a game-time regimen regarding what you eat and drink?
2. How conscious are you of what you put in your body and how you treat it?

WORKOUT *(1 Corinthians 10:31)*

1. How much of your life have you dedicated to God: just your church life, just your mind, just your body?
2. What will you need to change in order to “do everything for the glory of God”?

TEMPORARY VICTORY

WARM-UP

1. What is the greatest victory you planned for and lost? How did you respond to the loss?
2. What is the greatest victory you've won? Did you expect to win? If so, why?

WORKOUT *(Mark 4:35–41)*

1. Jesus rescued people from sickness. What rescue does Jesus provide in this account?
2. Was there ever another storm? Has the world experienced any dangerous waters since this miracle?
3. Jesus's miracles were for a certain place and time. In this broken world, strong winds and rough waters—and worse—continue. The point is that just like Jesus was in the boat, He is also with you. What storm are you going through now that you need to ask Jesus to help you with?

GAME PLAN

SOLDIER ON THE FIELD

WARM-UP

1. When have you had to make a choice to stand up for what was right or do nothing at all? Was the decision difficult to make?
2. Why can it be so difficult sometimes to do the right thing? What are some other situations that might require you to defend what's true and just?

WORKOUT *(2 Timothy 2:1–13)*

1. What is the first piece of advice Paul gives his young friend Timothy? What would taking this same advice look like in your life?
2. What does Paul say defenders of Christ will likely face? What are some ways that this reality can affect the way you live your life for Christ?
3. How do these verses help you face the challenges of standing up for the Gospel, no matter the cost?

ALL IS WELL

WARM-UP

1. How often do you make plans, and how often do you follow plans?
2. What plans have fallen through for you? Have plans ever turned out better than you expected?

WORKOUT *(John 4:1–30)*

1. Jesus had a plan to meet a woman at a well. After Jesus arrived, what happened? What stands out to you most about the encounter?
2. How did Jesus explain God's plan?
3. How have Scripture, prayer and Christian friends helped you follow God's plan for your life?

GAME PLAN

CROSS THE LINE

WARM-UP

1. Have you ever stopped short of a finish line or given less than your best? Why?
2. In what situations do you find it hard to keep your cool? Have you ever blown up? How did you feel afterward?

WORKOUT *(2 Timothy 4:1–8)*

1. What causes you to lose self-control? What is God's desire for you in all situations?
2. How can you "fight the good fight"? Is the fight in your spiritual life different than your fight during competition? Should there be a difference?

HERE'S THE PLAN

WARM-UP

1. What thoughts go through your mind leading up to a big competition or championship game?
2. Do you switch up anything about your routine in order to get ready? If so, what do you do?

WORKOUT *(Joshua 1:10–18)*

1. How did Joshua demonstrate he had a plan for crossing the Jordan River? How detailed were his instructions?
2. How did the people respond to Joshua's plan?
3. In what way can you exhibit Christian leadership? Ask God for strength and courage to daily follow His plan for your life.

THE FOUR



THE FOUR



POINT 1 / GOD LOVES YOU

God made you and loves you! His love is boundless and unconditional. God is real, and He wants you to personally experience His love and discover the purpose of your life through a relationship with Him.

Genesis 1:27; John 3:16



POINT 2 / SIN SEPARATES YOU

You cannot experience God's love when you ignore Him. People search everywhere for meaning and fulfillment—but not with God. They don't trust God and ignore His ways. The Bible calls this sin. Everyone has sinned.

Sin damages your relationships with other people and with God. The result: you are eternally separated from God and the life He planned for you.

Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Isaiah 59:2

THE FOUR



POINT 3 / JESUS RESCUES YOU

Sin does not stop God from loving you. Because of God's great love, He became a human being in Jesus Christ and gave His life for you. At the cross, Jesus took your place and paid the penalty of death that you deserve for your sins.

Jesus died, but He rose to life again. Jesus offers you peace with God and a personal relationship with Him. Through faith in Jesus, you can experience God's love daily, discover your purpose and have eternal life after death.

1 Peter 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Romans 5:8



POINT 4 / WILL YOU TRUST JESUS?

God has already done everything to show you how much He loves you. He offers you fulfillment and eternal life through a relationship with Jesus Christ. This involves agreeing you are sinful, accepting God's forgiveness and turning away from your sins and toward God.





You choose to trust Jesus when you believe and confess that Jesus is Lord and surrender your life to Him. Are you ready to place your trust in Jesus?

Romans 10:9-10; John 1:12; Revelation 3:20; Ephesians 2:8-9

THE FOUR



RECAP

-  **GOD LOVES YOU**
-  **SIN SEPARATES YOU**
-  **JESUS RESCUES YOU**
-  **WILL YOU TRUST JESUS?**

PRAYER

You can place your trust in Jesus by faith through prayer.

Prayer is talking with God. God knows your heart and is not concerned with your words as much as He is with the attitude of your heart.

Here is a suggested prayer:

Dear God, thank You for loving me and wanting the best for my life. I have lived my life for myself and done things my way, and I am truly sorry.

Jesus, I believe that You are God and have forgiven all my sins by dying on the cross and coming back to life again for me. I trust You and ask You to be Lord of my life. I surrender my life to You. You are my God, my Savior and my Lord. Let me experience Your love and Your good plans for my life!

Amen.



THE FOUR

KNOW YOUR POSITION

Too many people make the mistake of measuring the certainty of their salvation by their feelings instead of the facts of God's Word. In Jesus Christ, you have a new life. See what God's Word says about your new position on His team.

I am a **new creation** in Christ.
(2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20)

I have **everything** I need for life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3; Ephesians 1:3)

I am a **witness** for Christ and am His **workmanship**, created for good works.
(Acts 1:8; Ephesians 2:10)



I am **loved** and accepted completely in Christ. (Ephesians 1:4–6; Romans 8:39)

I am **indwelt** by the Holy Spirit.
(1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 1 John 4:4)



I am **forgiven** and **free** from condemnation. (1 John 1:9; Romans 8:1–2)

I have **eternal life** in Christ. (John 5:24; 1 John 5:11–13)

Trust God! Put your faith in His Word, not in your feelings:

“I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.”

— 1 John 5:13

Just as physical growth demands physical exercise, spiritual growth as a Christian demands spiritual exercise. To build spiritual muscle, here are four daily exercises.

1. SEEK CHRIST

Spend time every day reading God's Word and devoting time in prayer.

"They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth." — Acts 17:11b

"I praise you seven times a day."
— Psalm 119:164a

2. SHARE CHRIST

Share Jesus every day through your words and actions.

"Every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: 'Jesus is the Messiah.'" — Acts 5:42

"We are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us."
— 2 Corinthians 5:20

3. LEAD OTHERS

Lead others by serving as Christ did. Every day die to self and yield complete control of your life to Jesus Christ.

"The greatest among you must be a servant." — Matthew 23:11

"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me."
— Luke 9:23

4. LOVE OTHERS

Take every opportunity to show others around you that you love them.

". . . and to love my neighbor as myself."
— Mark 12:33b

"You must warn each other every day, while it is still 'today.'" — Hebrews 3:13a

Do these exercises and you will grow strong in your Christian life and be an effective member of God's team.

For further questions:

Contact us at 1-800-289-0909 or fca@fca.org.

Contact your local FCA office at fca.org in the "Quick Links" section.

THE STARTING LINE

YOUR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST



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THE STARTING LINE

TAKE THE CHALLENGE TO START FAST AND FINISH STRONG!

The Starting Line may be the most life-changing study you'll ever complete. It will set the foundation for your relationship with Jesus. Whether you're a new Christian or in need of a spiritual "jump start," the Starting Line will bring focus and direction as you come out of the blocks in your "run" with Christ—both on and off the field of competition. Going through this study is just the starting point of a lifelong race of adventure, sacrifice and commitment in your life with Jesus.

WHAT IS THIS?

It's a comprehensive eight-week discipleship study for athletes who are new or experienced Christ-followers and want to understand the vital basics of the Christian faith. Many people accept Christ and decide to follow Him, but they don't fully understand what comes next. This study is designed to ground you in what it means to be a disciple and live your life for Jesus.

This resource is designed to help athletes, coaches, parents, youth leaders and volunteers to experience dramatic growth in their new faith in Christ. As you engage each session, you will be equipped, encouraged and motivated to run with Jesus the race—the adventure—that God has already marked out for your life.

HOW CAN I USE IT?

The Starting Line can be utilized in three different ways:

- 1. 1-on-1:** Two people can commit to walk through this study together. In order to get the most from the 1-on-1 approach, it's best for a more mature Christ-follower to mentor a newer believer

throughout the eight sessions.

The benefit of this approach is that it allows more discussion and personal connection.

- 2. Small Group:** This study is also designed to work well for a small group that wants to interact with this material together. You can use this resource in an existing group or begin a new one. It's best to keep your group size no larger than six people to enable everyone to be fully involved. If necessary, divide the group into two smaller groups with separate discussion leaders to create a better environment for interaction.

- 3. Individually:** This study can also be used personally to help you grow in your faith and walk with Christ. If you study these eight sessions on your own, be sure you share with someone what God is showing you during your time of study.

Training for your sport requires self-discipline, enthusiasm and energy. Investing quality time into this study will yield huge results for you personally.

THE STARTING LINE

WHAT IS SALVATION ALL ABOUT?



Athletes have a strong desire to compete—whether we're trying to make the team, set a personal best, win a championship, or simply outplay our buddies in a friendly game.

1. What are some things that motivate you to compete? What does it mean to you when you're successful in winning a competition?
2. How do you feel when you lose or fail to reach your competitive goals?

For the serious athlete, the competitive spirit seems wired into our DNA—and that's because it is. God uses that very fact to draw us closer to Him. As we work for excellence in sports and other areas of life, we eventually realize that true satisfaction doesn't come from winning trophies, medals, applause, or high-dollar contracts. No achievement or award can equal the rush or deep satisfaction of discovering new life—real life in Jesus.



The Bible often refers to our new life as Christ-followers in athletic and military terms.

Read Colossians 1:12–14.

3. According to Colossians 1:12–14, what incredible things are part of the big win God has provided for us?

THE BIG WIN

Read Ephesians 2:1-9.

Ephesians 2:1-9 highlights three major differences between prizes earned on Earth and the ultimate prize our salvation gives us: a personal relationship with our God and Creator.

Difference 1:

This ultimate prize of salvation is based solely on GOD'S EXTREME LOVE for us (vv. 1-4).

4. After reading verses 1-3, how do you think people can be "dead" while they're still alive? What defined your dead life before you turned to Jesus?

Unlike our athletic accomplishments—which we achieve thanks to God-given talent—we have not earned the privilege of salvation. God knows that no matter how much we push, we'll always fall short of His standard: perfection. But God made a way to rescue us from the dominion of darkness because He longs for us to be with Him forever.

Difference 2:

We are saved by GRACE (vv. 5-7).

5. God's grace is His favor toward us who don't deserve it. How has choosing to accept God's incredible free gift of salvation in Jesus changed your life? How do you feel about your life now and looking to the future?

Even though we don't deserve God's grace because of our failures, He still offers it to anyone willing to accept Jesus as Rescuer and Redeemer.

Difference 3:

We are saved through FAITH (vv. 8-9).

6. How does someone receive God's free gift of salvation (v. 8)? According to verse 9, what has no bearing at all on your salvation?

THE BIG WIN



God doesn't stop with saving us from judgment. He also elevates us to a level of greatness on His team, lavishing us with "immeasurable riches" in His Kingdom.

Read John 3:16 and Romans 8:14-17.

7. According to John 3:16 and Romans 8:14-17, what privileges do you gain from your relationship with God? How do these gifts make you feel?

The word *suffering* seems out of place in the Romans 8:17 discussion about being glorified as God's heirs. While our salvation is assured when we accept Jesus by faith, the game is not over. We're still in the race and our enemy is hot on our heels.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

8. What life lessons from athletics are highlighted in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27?
9. How might understanding the ultimate prize God offers you and grasping the unique role He designed you to fill, affect the way you live at home?
- At practice or during competition?
 - While hanging out with friends or teammates?
 - In your school and community?
10. God has marked out a unique race and unique role for each of us. How ready are you to give everything you've got to the race He's laid out before you?

Ask God to give you a vision of the big win—the "imperishable crown" He has for you—so you'll stay motivated to discipline yourself and run your race well.

THE STARTING LINE

HOW CAN I EXPERIENCE ETERNAL LIFE?



Time is always a major factor. We live in a world of 60-minute games, 30-second time-outs, 3-second lane violations, 2-minute warnings and other time crunchers like having 2 outs and 2 strikes in the bottom of the 9th inning.

1. Describe a situation when time played a role in the outcome of a competition. What adjustments were you or your team forced to make as the clock ran down?
2. List three emotions that you've felt when under pressure. What impact did those emotions have on your ability to perform?

No one likes to think about it, but our time on Earth is temporary. Thanks to the big win Jesus achieved on the cross, however, we don't have to feel the kind of pressure that comes during the crucial last moments of competition. Instead, we can focus on the quality of our relationship with Him now and on the awesome rewards that await us in heaven.



THE FINAL BUZZER



WHAT WE DESERVE

When you break a law, the seriousness of the offense increases with the level of damage. The penalty is more severe if you steal a car than a candy bar. The seriousness also increases depending on the importance of the person you offend. Hit your sister and she'll hit you back; try hitting a police officer and you'll get more than a slap.

Read Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23.

3. According to Romans 3:23, what is true about all people? What would you say is a just punishment for offending and deeply hurting a perfect God?
4. What does Romans 6:23 say we deserve for sinning against God? God cares so deeply about us and doesn't give us what we deserve. What does God offer us instead?

WHAT WE GET

When it comes to serving Christ, there's way more to look forward to than trophies, medals and record-breaking performances. In fact, at the end of our lives here on Earth, those of us who've accepted God's ultimate gift will hear the final buzzer. In that instant, all the pressures, disappointments and pains of this life will be gone forever.

Read John 3:16-17 and 1 John 5:11-12.

5. According to John, why was Jesus sent into our world? What's the one thing we need in order to receive the unbelievable gift of eternal life?

Read Revelation 21:1-4, 18-21.

6. What will the quality of life be like in heaven as described in Revelation 21? List at least five cool things about the life God has planned for His people—His team.

As awesome as heaven will be, it's even more exciting to realize that our eternity will allow us to actually see and touch Jesus, our Rescuer and Redeemer. We'll have forever to be treasured by Him and to explore the infinite depths and beauty of God Himself.

THE FINAL BUZZER



As athletes, we go to great lengths to achieve great things in the field of competition. We do it for the love of the game and for the love of the sport. Our Creator gave us those desires because He created us in His image. He has also gone to great lengths to chase His dream and fulfill His desire—to have a close, personal relationship with each of us.

Read John 17:2-3.

7. What does Jesus say is the true meaning of eternal life (v. 3)? How soon can it begin?
8. How does it feel to realize God wants to connect with you so badly that He gave the ultimate gift, sending His only Son to give His life for our sins and to rescue us from sin?

Scripture tells us that nobody knows when we will hear that final buzzer and go to heaven, but when we do, we'll finally see God in all His glory (1 Corinthians 13:12). Meanwhile, ask God to draw you closer into a more personal connection with Him.



MISSING THE MARK

HOW DOES GOD FORGIVE ME? HOW CAN I FORGIVE?



Imagine that the game or match is on the line and your number is called. You make the free throw or you don't. You make the penalty kick or you don't. You make the hole big enough so the four yards can be gained or you don't. You make a birdie or you don't. If you succeed, you win; if you miss, you lose. You either become the hero or the "loser."

1. Describe a time when you dropped the ball, fell short, or really messed up when everybody was counting on you. What did it feel like to be the "loser"? What broke down?
2. Why do you think we feel so bad when we fail or miss the mark?

God never intended for us to be the "losers." God created us to live as heroes and champions. But in our messed-up world, we all fail and fall short of the glory God desires. Sooner or later, everyone blows it. The amazing thing is that we don't have to live in failure and sin!



MESSED UP

In living for God, it seems we drop the ball a lot. In times when we need to love, we treat someone badly. When our thoughts need to be pure, we lust. When we should tell the truth, we lie. When we should honor our parents and listen to their advice, we do our own thing. When we should give our all in practice, we give in to comfort and slack off. When we should love God and our neighbors, we ignore them.

Read Isaiah 64:5-6.

3. According to verse 5, how do our failures and sins affect God's feelings? What does verse 6 state about our best efforts to hit the mark?

MISSING THE MARK

The Hebrew word for *sin* is an athletic term that means “missing the mark.” God has a bullseye that we miss regularly. Missing God’s mark could leave us discouraged and feeling like God should kick us off His team. Thankfully, God doesn’t work that way! God knows what we’re made of and recognizes that we’re not capable of saving ourselves. Because of His deep desire to be in relationship with His children, however, God made a way.

GOD LONGS TO FORGIVE AND RESTORE US **Read Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:13–14.**

4. According to Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:13–14, only God has the power to rescue, redeem and forgive us. From what things does He rescue us? What is the attitude of His heart toward each of His people?

Once we invite Jesus into our lives, He releases us from the guilt of our failures. He redeems—buys or wins back—our freedom, totally canceling any debt we owe.

STAYING ON TARGET

Our heart’s desire not to be the “loser” helps us realize how our relationship with God works. If you blow a big play, you’re not off the team, but your relationships with your teammates and coach can be affected. Likewise, if you blow it in life with God, your wrong choices will affect your relationship with Him and your effectiveness in life.

Read 1 John 1:6–9.

5. How does 1 John 1:6–7 describe the impact of our sins? When we blow it, what do we have to do to receive God’s forgiveness and gain a fresh start?

To keep our relationship open with God and to maintain our freedom from the sinful garbage that would ruin our lives, all we’re asked to do is confess our sins. Confession means to agree with. God simply wants you to agree that you fell back into an old rut—a wrong, hurtful attitude or behavior pattern. Each time you do that, God promises to forgive you, to wash out the junk and to help you start clean. Believe it!



THE TRAPS OF UNFORGIVENESS

Just as God’s enemy and ours—the Great Deceiver, Satan—wants to mess up our relationship with God, he also hopes to ruin our other relationships and keep us from experiencing the freedom that Jesus won for us on the cross.

MISSING THE MARK

Read Matthew 6:14–15; 2 Corinthians 2:5–11; and Hebrews 12:15.

6. Look carefully at each of these three passages. What traps are set for us when we don't take the path toward forgiving those who have offended us?

Matthew 6:14–15

2 Corinthians 2:5–11

Hebrews 12:15

FREEDOM FROM THE TRAPS

God doesn't minimize our offenses or sins and we shouldn't minimize the offenses or hurts that others inflict on us. Authentic forgiveness does not deny hurt or ignore anger. It doesn't excuse a person's wrong or hurtful actions. Forgiveness does not forget, but it does make room for another's humanness.

Read Colossians 3:12–15.

7. Verses 14–15 highlight three godly traits that we need to put on like clothing if we're going to be able to forgive. What are the traits and from where do they come? How strong are these traits in your life right now?
8. Verse 13 states, "Just as the Lord forgave you." Why do you think this phrase is included? Consider the implications on the way you respond to people who've hurt you.

Read Romans 12:16–19.

9. A destructive cycle begins when we hurt people and they in turn hurt us. How do we break out of this destructive cycle (vv. 16–18)?
10. What does it mean to "leave that to the righteous anger of God" (v. 19, NLT)? Why do you think God is so possessive and assertive about vengeance belonging to Him?

We can only forgive because God first forgave us. Forgiveness doesn't come naturally. It's a process that can take some time, but once we've allowed ourselves to truly feel anger, sadness and hurt, we can move toward forgiveness. As we forgive, we take our offender off our hook and put him or her on God's. God is far more protective of us than we are, and He's far more qualified to avenge our hurts. As we release the desire for revenge, we can live in freedom, love and hope. In forgiveness, we prevent a root of bitterness from destroying our hearts, joy, relationships and effectiveness.

MASTER THE BASICS

WHAT ARE THE BASIC SKILLS FOR GROWTH?



Every sport requires players to learn fundamental skills that lay the foundation for excellence. At times, the basics can be unexciting and unglamorous. They can even be difficult to learn. But in any sport, mastering these basics is always the key to success.

1. What three basics have you mastered in your sport or your position?
2. What has motivated you to work on the basics? How has this helped your performance?



Much like fundamental skills in sports, a core set of basics will guide you in living a life focused on Christ. There are three areas of basic training essential to a successful endurance run with God.

BASICS 1

STUDY GOD'S TRAINING MANUAL—THE BIBLE

Each sport has its training manual or training program to develop excellence. For the Christ-follower, the Bible is like a rule book, playbook and training manual rolled into one. Its inspired words come from the heart and mind of God.

READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17 AND HEBREWS 4:12.

1. From 2 Timothy 3:16-17, list four benefits of reading and studying the Bible. What are some specific ways these benefits might equip you and impact your life?
2. Why do you think Hebrews 4 describes the words of God as “alive” and actively “powerful”? How does the Bible differ from other books?

The Bible has power because it's God's Words. It contains piercing truth about God, life, who we really are, our mission and destiny and the condition of our individual hearts. Its message is basically simple and yet deeply powerful. Studying the Bible may feel like studying a complicated playbook. At times, it might seem confusing and overwhelming, but it's living and active so God can reveal new insights each time you open it.

MASTER THE BASICS

BASICS 2

STAY IN CONSTANT COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR LIFE COACH—PRAY

Whether we play a team sport or compete individually, success on the field becomes increasingly difficult without a mentor, coach, or trainer to guide us. The same is true in our lives. We need to meet personally with God through direct communication—prayer.

Read Matthew 6:5–15.

3. In Matthew 6, Jesus gives us a model for communicating with God. What attitude should we have when we pray (vv. 5–6)? What should we avoid doing (vv. 7–8)?
4. Rephrase Jesus’s prayer (vv. 9–13) in your own words, noting specific things for which Jesus prayed. How might sincerely praying those things impact your life and your relationships with others?

Prayer is a powerful tool that can change your life and the lives of those around you. Prayer is about sharing your heart with God and allowing Him to speak into your life. Learn to relax and be totally open with God. Learn to slow down long enough to listen for His voice.

BASIC 3

LOCK ARMS WITH A WINNING TEAM—FIND A CHURCH

As athletes, we must depend on the support of others to reach our competitive goals. A church is a supportive team focused on serving God. From the beginning, God has always put people together with different talents, abilities, life experience and strengths.



Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–31.

5. What does Paul tell us about the importance of teamwork in the church (vv. 12–20)?
6. What attitudes should we exhibit to others in the church (vv. 21–26)? How can this build up unity and make the church more effective in impacting the world for Christ?

MASTER THE BASICS

Keep a daily routine of prayer and Bible reading just like you follow a basic training schedule in your athletic life. Start by following the PRESS method described in the first “Training Time” devotional. Learn more about your new identity under “Your Identity in Christ.”

7. How will taking time to talk with God and reading the Bible each day make you a better athlete? teammate? student? friend? son or daughter? brother or sister?



POWER UP

HOW DO I WALK IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT?



As athletes, many factors play into our success on the court or field of competition. Fitness, nutrition, rest, proper attitude and mental focus are just some of the less visible factors that determine how we'll perform. Even though these things are not as visible as skills training or weight training, they play a vital role in being game ready.

1. What does your daily fitness and nutrition routine look like? In what ways do those things empower you to perform at the highest level?
2. There's so much we don't understand about how to fully prepare ourselves for success on and off the field. Name a person who has been instrumental in helping you to improve in your sport. What advice or counsel did he or she give you?



Just as coaches teach us the finer points of our sports, when Jesus walked on Earth, He taught His disciples how to follow His lead and grow into maturity. But as Jesus prepared to leave Earth and return to heaven, He knew that His followers

couldn't thrive or carry on the mission He called them to without someone else to guide them. We still need that source of power to help give us the inner strength, courage and wisdom to keep moving forward even when no one else seems to be on our side.



POWER UP

Read John 14:16–18, 26.

3. Who did Jesus say was coming to take His place in the lives of His followers? What are some of the words Jesus used to describe this representative of heaven?



Read John 16:7–14.

4. Just as our heavenly Father is fully God and Jesus is fully God, The Holy Spirit is also fully God. Also, just as Jesus takes a unique role in our lives, so does the Holy Spirit. According to John 16, what's the Spirit's role and why is the Spirit so important?
5. Describe a time when you were with friends, teammates, or family and you could have benefited from the Holy Spirit in His role as:
 - Counselor
 - Comforter
 - Guide

Read Romans 8:12–15.

When the Bible talks about the flesh, it's not referring to our bodies. Think about cleaning up after a practice and putting on clean clothes, but carrying around your smelly sweat socks inside your fresh, clean clothes. Your flesh is like those smelly socks that still stay with you after you become totally new. Jesus made you a new creation when you accepted Him as your Savior, but you still carry around the flesh—those old habit patterns and well-worn ruts of thinking and behavior you keep falling back into when you become weak or tired.

6. According to Romans 8:12–13, what will happen to those who live “according to the flesh”? How about those who live “by the Spirit”? What do you think it means to live “by the Spirit”?
7. Romans 8:14–15 states that those led by God's Spirit are God's children, with the rights and privileges of a firstborn. How does it feel to be “adopted” by God? How does being His son or daughter empower you to keep going even in the face of difficult times?

POWER UP

We all have times when we feel like we can't live a Christian life in a world so full of temptations and distractions. But thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit, we have the power to say no to our wrong desires. The Spirit also empowers us to say yes to our deepest desires for connection to God and the great adventure He has for us.

Read Galatians 5:16–23.

8. What are some ways we can give in to our flesh and fail in our walk with God (vv. 19–21)? What will the consequence be for those who refuse to stop doing these things (v. 21)?
9. What are some characteristics that show up in our lives as we follow the Holy Spirit (vv. 22–23)? Which of these do you most need the Spirit to develop in your life?

Allow the Spirit to be your constant Guide. Tap into real power as you listen for and accept His direction, encouragement and power. Take a moment now to ask the Holy Spirit to do the following things in your life:

- Lead me in the right direction.
- Teach me how to be more like Jesus.
- Give me the courage and boldness to share my faith with others.
- Empower me to resist the urge to give in to temptations.



HEART OF A WINNER

WHAT'S THE SECRET TO A LIFE OF VICTORY?



It seems most of us are born competitors, with the quest for challenge, adventure and victory arising from deep inside us. As athletes, we're willing to give our blood, sweat and tears to defeat an opponent.

1. How do you prepare for a game or competition against a ruthless rival who wants to take you down? What motivates you to push yourself to gain the victory?

Competition gives a clear picture of the two opposing sides in the spiritual realm that are battling fiercely to win the prize. Good and evil—God's army and Satan's forces—are battling for your allegiance and your heart. Because of your value to God, you are the prize.



OUR RUTHLESS OPPONENT

Read Ephesians 6:10–12 and 1 Peter 5:8.

2. Who is our unseen adversary and what does he intend for our lives and relationships? Do you think we'll ever be free from temptation and the need to fight to retain the freedom we've been given?

Although God has already sealed Satan's fate through Jesus's death and resurrection, Satan is still "prowling around" (1 Peter 5:8), using his primary tactic of deception to take us out! He tries to get us to believe that God is not good, he puts a twisted perspective on every event, he wreaks pain and havoc in our lives and he ultimately works to destroy us. The Bible makes it clear that the devil and his demons are ruthless and purposeful.

HEART OF A WINNER

STRONG OFFENSE AND DEFENSE

To protect against enemy attacks, we need disciplined preparation, a strong defense and a strong offense. Seven strategies built around the word *PREVENT** will be our allies as we resist the enemy and the temptations from our own distorted desires (the “flesh”).

P

PREVENT STRATEGY 1 PREPARE

Read Ephesians 5:15-17 and 1 Peter 1:3.

3. What are some ways highlighted in Ephesians 5:15-17 and 1 Peter 1:3 that will help us prepare before we face the temptations that will come?

R

PREVENT STRATEGY 2 REEVALUATE AND REPENT

We must continue to evaluate ourselves. When we're wrong, we promptly admit it and turn back to truth and light. Turning away from sin and to God is called repenting. The word *repent* comes from the Greek word *metanoia*, which means to change (*meta*) our mind-set or understanding (*noia*).

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 6 and Romans 12:1-2.

4. According to 2 Corinthians 4, what is God's part in radically changing us from the inside out? What's our part? What two decisions do we need to make in order to allow God to renew our minds and transform us (Romans 12:1-2)?

E

PREVENT STRATEGY 3 ENVISION YOUR FUTURE GLORY

It's easy to get bogged down in routines and struggles. We must continually shift our focus back to the larger story in life and long for all that awaits us.

Read Romans 8:16-19.

*Adapted from *Stop the Madness* by Serendipity.

HEART OF A WINNER

V PREVENT STRATEGY 4 VALUE YOUR HEART

If we value and guard our hearts, we set protective boundaries, and we connect our hearts to God.

READ PROVERBS 4:23 AND PSALM 119:9-11, 15-16.

5. Why is it so important to guard our hearts (Proverbs 4:23)? What are some ways that we stay connected with our hearts and with God (Psalm 119)?

E PREVENT STRATEGY 5 ESCAPE TEMPTATION

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:12-13.

Sometimes temptation jumps into your lap, and there's no avoiding it. When you find yourself in a tempting situation, take off in the opposite direction as fast as you can!

N PREVENT STRATEGY 6 NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH

Spit into the wind, and you'll regret it. Eat contaminated food, and you'll pay dearly. Live in a way that leads to trouble, and you'll find it. Beware of falling back into your old ways.

Read Romans 13:12-14 and Ephesians 5:6-8, 10-11.

6. The "flesh" is old baggage we still carry—distorted desires and old habit patterns. How can we "make no plans to satisfy the fleshly desires" and "live as children of light"?

HEART OF A WINNER

T PREVENT STRATEGY 7 **TEAMWORK & ACCOUNTABILITY**

There's great power in a team of people who can lift up one another. Christianity is a team sport. The enemy would like nothing more than to isolate us and take us out!



Read Hebrews 10:24-25 and James 5:19-20.

We're engaged in a brutal competition for our hearts and our legacies. However, as children of God, we have access to divinely powerful weapons. Stay in tune with the Holy Spirit at all times, and execute the plays as He directs the action.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

7. How can we "capture rebellious thoughts" and make them obedient to Christ?

Taking one day at a time, dumping the garbage and maintaining accountability will be the core of your program for the rest of your life. God never intended us to push through hardships on our own. He designed us to lock arms and take the journey together.



RISE INTO GLORY

HOW CAN I DISCOVER THE DEEPER THINGS OF GOD?



What is it that allows some athletes to soar to the top of their sport? Many athletes have strong skills, are disciplined and strive with determination, but a few rise above the crowds into glory and greatness.

1. Describe a time when you found your authentic swing, when you were “in the zone,” or when you rose into a level of play beyond your normal experience. During that time, what was the focus of your heart, soul, mind and strength?
2. Which outside factors or internal beliefs tend to distract you from playing “in the zone” or playing out of your own glory?



In the same way that passion and single-minded focus on the goal help us find our authentic swing or get into “the zone” in sports, passion and single-mindedness will take us into God’s “zone” in a way that discipline and techniques never will.

As competitors, it’s easy for us to focus on performance, but the key to rising into the glory of our lives is not about performance. It’s about heart and soul. It’s about realizing who we really are, about connecting deeply and personally with God, and about living out of the individual glory God created within each of us.

RISE INTO GLORY

GOD'S HEART TOWARD YOU

If you're going to trust God to direct your life, then you need to understand His heart toward you. We all, at times, have doubts about whether God really cares.

Read Isaiah 49:15–16 and Zephaniah 3:17.

3. Sure, God loves everybody because He's God. But how personal is His love for each of His children—for you—according to Isaiah 49:15–16 and Zephaniah 3:17?
4. How does it make you feel that God has “written your name on the palms” of His hands where you're always before His eyes?

YOUR FAVORED POSITION ON GOD'S TEAM

God lavishes His love on His children who place their faith in Jesus. Because of nothing except God's extreme love, we've been given an incredible position that few of us understand, and even fewer live in. The enemy clearly wants to keep this hidden.

Read Romans 8:14–17 and Colossians 3:1–4.

5. What amazing privileges do each of us receive when we become children of God, with the full status of a firstborn son (Romans 8:14–17 and Colossians 3:1–4)?



GOD PURSUES US

We now know how much God really enjoys each one of us. He also longs for deep relationships and has deep feelings for us. That's a new revelation to many of us.

RISE INTO GLORY

Read Song of Songs 2:8-10.

6. The “love” or “lover” in Song of Songs 2:8-10 refers to God, and the object of His affection is you. Which words in this poem illustrate God’s love toward you? How does this compare with your current views of God?

Read Ezekiel 34:12, 15-16.

7. According to Ezekiel 34, how does God deal with us when we get lost in the fog or confused by the darkness in life? How does God’s personal promise apply to our own life issues, hurts and spiritual struggles?

God is thrilled about you and longs to see you excited about life with Him. He also wants you to rest in His arms, comforted in those times when you’re unable to pursue God because you’re tired, trapped, or struggling. In those times, He’s still pursuing!

PURSUING GOD

We also need to be pursuing God to deepen our relationship with Him.

Read Psalm 42:1-2; Matthew 7:7-8, 13-14; and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

8. Each of these passages has emotion and passion; that’s what God wants from us. What key passion do you see in each of the following verses? How is it demonstrated?
- Psalm 42:1-12 _____
 - Matthew 7:7-8 _____
 - Matthew 7:13-14 _____
 - 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 _____
9. What’s our motivation to press on through the hard things of life (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)? How do the struggles we experience now compare to the unseen reality that awaits?

God created you so that your deepest desires would be satisfied only through a close personal relationship with Him. There’s no doubt that we can get very excited and passionate about our favorite teams or winning a competition. Discovering the deeper things of God is a life-long journey powered by passion. Spend an extended time with God this week, and ask Him how He feels about you and what He enjoys about you.

TAKE THE CHALLENGE

WHAT'S MY ROLE IN THE GREAT COMMISSION?



With pride, we look back on past accomplishments. It will be even more fulfilling to look back at the end of the journey and know for sure that our lives counted for something big.

1. How do you think it would feel to be accepted into the Hall of Fame for your sport?

Read Hebrews 11:30–39 for God's Faith Hall of Fame.

If we allow fear—change, the unknown, failure, ridicule, not following the crowd, our own inadequacies, or dozens of other things—to set the course for our lives, we'll miss many rich, fulfilling opportunities. God has a spot in His Faith Hall of Fame waiting for you.



YOU WERE CREATED WITH A PURPOSE

Read Romans 8:28–30 and 2 Timothy 1:9.

2. When did God set your purpose and destiny? Each person saved by faith in Jesus has an eternal purpose. What do you think God's "holy calling" for you might be now?

TAKE THE CHALLENGE

THE GREAT MISSION

We're drawn to stories of heroic deeds and great sacrifice because Ecclesiastes 3:11 states that God "planted eternity in the human heart." We were created for a great eternal purpose and destiny, but our purpose now is to join Jesus in His mission.



Read Isaiah 61:1-3 to see Jesus's mission statement.

3. What are the key elements of Jesus's mission outlined in this passage?
Reread Isaiah 61:1-3 aloud and replace the word *me* with your name.

YOUR GREAT COMMISSION

Jesus has invited each of us to play a heroic role in His Great Mission. In the early church, people called Jesus's followers Christians (little Christs).

Read Matthew 28:18-20.

4. Matthew 28:18-20 records Jesus's final words, often called "the Great Commission." With what great task did He charge us? What needs to be our focus as His disciples?

Read Hebrews 12:1-3 and 1 Peter 3:13-15.

5. People don't end up in the Hall of Fame by sitting on the sidelines. They go for it! What characteristics of a winner do you see in Hebrews 12:1-3 and 1 Peter 3:13-15?

Every athlete who follows Jesus has a unique story; no two are the same. Your story will impact people whom nobody else could reach.

IF YOU'RE READY FOR AN EXTREME ADVENTURE

AND THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME, ACCEPT

JESUS'S INVITATION TO JOIN HIM IN HIS MISSION!

WILL YOU TAKE THE CHALLENGE?

YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

— 2 Corinthians 5:17

What good news! If you're a believer, you've become "new," and the following is already true of you:

YOU ARE A NEW CREATION

- You were crucified with Christ. You no longer live, spiritually, but Christ lives in you. The life you are now living is Christ's life (Galatians 2:20).
- You died with Christ, spiritually, and died to the power of sin's rule over your life (Romans 6:1-7).
- You've been given the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).
- Christ Himself is in you (Colossians 1:27).
- You've been forgiven of all your sins. The debt of sin against you has been canceled (Colossians 1:13-14).
- You've already been made complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10).
- You've been given a spirit of power, love and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7).

YOU ARE ACCEPTED

- You are God's child (John 1:12).
- You are Christ's friend (John 15:15).
- You are united with Christ and one with Him in spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17).
- You've been bought with a price. You belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- You are a member of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:27).
- You are holy and blameless (Ephesians 1:4).
- You are adopted as God's child (Ephesians 1:5).
- You have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18).
- You may approach God with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12).

YOU ARE SECURE

- You are free forever from condemnation (Romans 8:1).
- You can be assured that all things in your life will work together for good (Romans 8:28).
- You can never be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39).
- You are hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3).
- The good work that God has begun in you will be completed (Philippians 1:6).
- You are a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20).
- You will find grace and mercy in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).
- You are born of God, and the evil one cannot touch you (1 John 5:18).

YOU ARE SIGNIFICANT

- You are the salt and light of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16).
- You are a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life (John 15:5).
- You have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit (John 15:16).
- You are a personal witness of Christ's (Acts 1:8).
- You are God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16).
- You are seated with Christ in the heavenly realm (Ephesians 2:6).
- You are God's "work of art," created to do good works (Ephesians 2:10).
- You can do all things through Christ who will give you strength (Philippians 4:13).

Adapted from *Living Free in Christ and Victory Over the Darkness* by Dr. Neil Anderson.



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To see the world transformed by Jesus Christ through the influence of coaches and athletes.

MISSION

To lead every coach and athlete into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and His church.

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