

# SERIES OVERVIEW



Running the race well for God means building spiritual habits; this series will walk students through six critical spiritual disciplines to grow in. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 provides the backbone of the series by calling students to run with purpose in every step.

## **Week 1: Hanging Out with God**

A habit of prayer helps you run the race of being a Jesus follower.

## **Week 2: Accountability**

Accountable friendships bring healing.

## **Week 3: Bible Study**

Building the habit of Bible study teaches you more about God and His ways, helping you run the race of being a Jesus follower.

## **Week 4: Involvement in Church**

Church involvement means working together to put others first.

## **Week 5: Tithing**

Giving reveals the heart of the giver.

## **Week 6: Shared + Sacred Practices**

Baptism and Communion are ways to honor and celebrate what Jesus has done in our lives.

## Coleader Teaching Format

### CAPTURE

#### **Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?**

Goal: To captivate students' interest and encourage them to actively engage and learn.

*"The tongue of the wise makes knowledge appealing..." Proverbs 15:2*

### SCRIPTURE

#### **What does God's Word say?**

Goal: To foster a deeper understanding of Scripture among students.

*"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right." 2 Timothy 3:16*

### INSIGHTS

#### **What might this Scripture mean?**

Goal: To present key insights in a way that resonates with teenagers.

*"The teaching of your word gives light; so even the simple can understand." Psalm 119:130*

### ACTION

#### **How could we live this out?**

Goal: To assist teenagers in implementing God's Word into their daily actions.

*"But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves." James 2:17*

### DISCUSS

#### **What can we learn from one another?**

Goal: To foster meaningful discussions and encourage active participation among students.

*"As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend." Proverbs 18:15*

Each teaching comes with two teaching options: (1) an outline, and (2) full manuscript that is flavored with illustrations, humor, photos, videos, object-lessons, and/or stories. All scriptures are NLT unless otherwise noted. Feel free to customize to your own translation preference with blank slides and Word doc.

# Teaching Guide

## Week 1: Hanging Out With God

# HABITS

### Big Idea

A habit of prayer helps you run the race of being a Jesus follower.

### Primary Scripture:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Luke 11:1-4

### Supporting Scripture:

Luke 5:16; John 10:27

[Teacher note: please refer to Coleader Teaching Format for a better understanding of the five teaching sections used. Also, our prayer is that you will feel tremendous freedom to adapt this content to best fit your unique context. No one knows your students better than you, so make this content *your own*.]

### **CAPTURE ► (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)**

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Who is your favorite athlete? Why?

[Teacher note: pause to allow students an opportunity to answer.]

One of my favorites is Jessica Long. She is a 37-time world swimming champion. She has more medals than just about everyone! When she gets in the pool, she just makes swimming look so easy. She's also a Christ-follower; she grew up in a Christian family and pursued God despite all the challenges of being a global star. She's had incredible success, which is only that much more impressive when you see the challenges she has overcome. Adopted from an orphanage in Russia by American parents, she was born with a condition that required both of her legs to be amputated below the knee when she was a toddler. Check out this Super Bowl commercial from a few years ago made by Toyota about her life:

[show video]

Toyota Super Bowl Commercial 2021 Jessica Long (1:10)

<https://youtu.be/Pr3jR2keirk>

Here's what's wild to me: if you were to watch one of Jessica's races—and there are a lot to choose from on YouTube—you would see that they aren't that long. Depending on the distance, swimming races usually last seconds or minutes. But we can all agree that nobody just wakes up one morning and says, "Maybe I'll go win a world championship today!" That level of success doesn't just happen, does it? Of course not. She trains for hours, day after day, year after year, so that in those seconds, she can be the absolute best she can be.

For the next few weeks, we will dive into a potentially life-changing series called HABITS, where we'll look at some of the essential habits you and I need to build into our lives to be the best we can be at following Jesus. Each week (for 6 weeks), we'll look at a different spiritual habit and how we might pursue that habit to enhance our spiritual development. Every week we'll return to this passage in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

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24 Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! 25 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. 26 So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. 27 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 9:24-27 – NLT)

I love Paul's words, "I run with purpose in every step." Interestingly, the Bible is full of examples where following Jesus is compared to running a race. I think it's because being a world-class athlete and Christ-follower both take significant *discipline*. In fact, discipline is just another way of saying *habits*. But when it comes to the disciplines (or habits) it takes to grow in our relationship with Jesus, we're most likely not talking about swimming practice, protein shakes, or weightlifting.

Instead, the disciplines we need to grow in our relationship with Jesus tend to be more *spiritual* than *physical*. To help us remember the six habits that we're going to be talking about, we've created this memorable acronym using the word H.A.B.I.T.S.:

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- **H** – "H" stands for "Hanging Out with God."
- **A** – "A" stands for "Accountability" (or helping each other keep our commitments).
- **B** – "B" stands for "Bible Study."
- **I** – "I" stands for "Involvement in Church" (or youth group).
- **T** – "T" stands for "Tithing" (or sharing your resources like time and money to help grow God's Kingdom).

**S — And the S stands for “Shared + Sacred Practices” (These are practices that Jesus specifically commanded. Particularly, baptism and communion)**

These are some of the important *habits* we need to have in our lives to run the race well. And these habits, these spiritual disciplines, can make all the difference in how we follow Jesus.

### SCRIPTURE ► (What does God’s Word say?)

So, let’s jump right into our first habit. Today, we’re going to look at the letter H in H.A.B.I.T.S:

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#### **Hanging Out with God.**

What do I mean by that? Think of it this way: many of us are trying to build a deeper relationship with God, but relationships take time, right? Strong relationships are mutual, with communication and spending time together flowing both ways. Nobody likes a one-sided friendship.

Have you ever met someone who only wants to take? They take your time and attention but don’t seem interested in listening to you or giving you their time. Those kinds of relationships aren’t very much fun, and sometimes, they’re harmful.

[Teacher note: If you are following the Coleader Year 1 Roadmap, and you recently used the **LIFE IN COMMUNITY** series, you might want to use this next paragraph to make reference to what we learned during that series.]

God wired us for deep relationships. He designed us this way, and I believe our desire for deep relationships can be *partially* satisfied through the imperfect relationships we have with people. But it is only *fully* satisfied through a relationship with God. And just like your relationships grow stronger through time and communication with one another, our vrelationship with God is fueled through hanging out with Him. And “hanging out with God” is a great way to describe the on-going connection called **prayer**.

One of the best examples of how to pray comes from Jesus. There are dozens of passages in Scripture that talk about Jesus praying. If we were to read them all today, which would take too long, we would see some patterns emerge. In fact, the people who followed Jesus noticed the patterns, too. And, one day, this happened:

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1 Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” (Luke 11:1 – NLT)

You typically don't make a request like that unless you think they will have a good response. Thankfully, Jesus had an incredible response to the disciples' request, and it's one that is still very helpful, even 2,000 years later:

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2 Jesus said, "This is how you should pray: "Father, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. 3 Give us each day the food we need, 4 and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation." (Luke 11:2-4 – NLT)

What an incredible response to the disciples' request! Yet I wonder why the disciples would even ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. I'm sure part of it was because He was God in their midst, so He knew everything. But I think there was more to it than that, and it's worth exploring deeper.

### INSIGHTS ► (What might this scripture mean?)

The disciples grew up with a pretty rigorous Jewish religious education, and prayer was a big part of what they learned from a very young age. But there was something about Jesus that made them realize that this guy would know what He was talking about when it came to prayer. And they were absolutely right.

And even though Jesus' answer wasn't very long, I think that when we take a closer look, we'll find that there's a lot that we'll find helpful as we try to build our own daily habit of prayer.

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#### **1. Prayer is a Pattern:**

If you read any of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John), you won't have to read for very long before you come to a passage like this:

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16 But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer. (Luke 5:16 – NLT)

The word *often* stands out to me. The Gospels are full of stories about Jesus doing remarkable things like healing people or walking on water. But it's also full of stories showing how Jesus regularly took time away from the crowds to spend time in prayer, just hanging out with God. It sure seems like prayer was one of Jesus' habits. That's why the first verse of the passage we're looking at is so important:

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1 Jesus was in a certain place praying. (Luke 11:1 – NLT)

As I said, Jesus developed a regular habit of prayer. But even more than that, it appears that He had a pattern of favorite places to go to for prayer, like going out to the wilderness. So, we learn that Jesus liked praying out in nature. As another example, Jesus loved to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, and that was how Judas knew where to find Him when he betrayed Jesus. How so? Because He probably *knew* Jesus went there regularly to pray.

Some studies have been done on faith in young people in America, specifically asking the question, *what is present in the lives of young people who have faith that lasts?* One research study claimed that one of the keys they had seen in young people who grew up with devoted faith was the habit of praying several times a week or more. In other words, research tells us something that the Bible agrees with, namely, that **a habit of prayer helps you run the race of following Jesus.**

The best part? Prayer doesn't have to be long and complicated. The prayer Jesus taught His disciples was super short and to the point. In other words, setting aside a few minutes a day to connect with God is a spiritual discipline that will make a huge impact based on a small investment.

Now that we've talked about where and when to pray, let's dive into the question of how to pray:

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## 2. Prayer is Praise:

To see that praise is a big part of prayer, we only need to look at the opening of Jesus' prayer:

Father, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. (Luke 11:2b – NLT)

Jesus opened with praise. Praise is critical, because it acknowledges who God is and reminds us of all God has done for us. Praise shifts our focus from our fears and concerns toward the God who is more powerful than anything we face.

Praise is also one of the easiest things to forget. If you're anything like me, I tend to want to skip straight to asking God for stuff, but He isn't my spiritual Santa Claus waiting for my wish list. He's our Heavenly Father. He wants to know us. He wants us to know Him. When we praise Him, we take time to know Him and acknowledge His power.

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### 3. Prayer is Repentance:

If you don't know the word repentance, it's a Bible word for apologizing and asking for forgiveness. Look at what Jesus said in His example of prayer:

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4 forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. (Luke 11:4a – NLT)

It would be awesome if we all suddenly became perfect when we started believing in Jesus, right? But that's just not how things work. We all continue to mess up. So, we must ask for forgiveness, not because we're afraid of God, but because we know that God is the only One who can make us whole again.

When someone does something wrong that affects me negatively, I often feel they should apologize. Repentance just takes it a step further. Not only are we asking for forgiveness when we do wrong, but we're asking for the ability to offer forgiveness to others, just like God does.

Now, forgiving others doesn't mean I always let things go back to the way they were. For example, if someone is dangerous, abusive, or a bad influence, I can still forgive them, but I also need to be wise about how I let them—or don't let them—back into my life.

If you're having trouble figuring out how to forgive someone while maintaining healthy boundaries, I'd encourage you to talk with your small group leader or me. We'd love to help you work through it.

We see another element to Jesus' prayer in that...

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**4. Prayer is Asking:** This is the part we're probably the most familiar with, but we can still learn from Jesus' example:

3 Give us each day the food we need 4 ... And don't let us yield to temptation. (Luke 11:3-4b – NLT)

Jesus modeled asking God to provide for our needs and to give us wisdom. Let's look at these two for a moment:

First, Jesus tells us to ask God for the food we need. It's okay to ask God for whatever practical necessities we need to live. Nothing is too small to go to God about. If you are worried about something, then ask Him. Maybe it's food; perhaps it has to do with school or your family or a relationship; whatever the need is, bring it to God.

Second, Jesus tells us to ask God's help in avoiding temptation. He wants us to ask for the wisdom we need to follow Him. Our asking should not just be about what we want or feel we need; it should also be about what God wants and needs for us. An example of something God wants for you is that He wants you to live a life that is honoring to Him, following Jesus' example in our behavior and purpose.

So, pray for what you need, but remember that part of prayer includes asking for wisdom to avoid temptation. You want wisdom to have the heart of God and wisdom to honor God in all you do.

*[Teacher note: This session includes 5 insights, while most lessons on the Coleader Roadmap only have 3-4. If you are looking to shorten this session for the sake of time, or if the habit of personal prayer time is new for your group, you might consider cutting Insight #5 and skipping straight to the ACTION section below.]*

Finally...

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**5. Prayer is Listening:** Jesus spent hours in prayer, listening to God, hearing what God wanted to tell Him. It was a critical part of His spending time with God. There was one point in His ministry when He was at the Temple, speaking to the crowds, and He said:

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27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27 — NLT)

Listening is perhaps the most abstract part of prayer, but it is so important: God wants to speak to you. He wants you to hear His voice. But how do we do that? I think there are two significant ways. The first is through reading His words in Scripture. The more we know His words, His Bible, the more we know how God will want us to respond to the things we pray about, and the more we will know His heart. The second way we hear God is through silence. Spending moments, minutes, or more of your prayer time in silence allows God to work in your heart and conscience. This silence allows God to guide you to His answers.

Most of us don't do silence very well. We constantly live with noise, whether it's our earbuds, screens, or something else to distract us. I can't even wait for a few moments in the grocery line without pulling out my phone to occupy myself. But silence is a big part of the prayer.

Here's my advice: start small. Take some time to pray and read Scripture, and then spend a few minutes in silence, inviting God to let you hear His voice. As you develop this spiritual muscle, it becomes easier to listen, embrace stillness, calm yourself, and open your heart and mind to God's words.

**ACTION ► (How can we live this out?)**

So, now that we understand the habit of prayer a little bit better, what are some ways we can start putting the habit of prayer into practice? I have a few ideas to help you get started:

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**1. Find a time and place.**

Two of my most-used excuses for not praying are:

- 1) I didn't have enough time, and
- 2) I couldn't find a place that was quiet enough.

I don't want you to have to rely on those excuses. Making time to pray doesn't happen by accident, and quiet spaces won't magically appear.

You must choose a time that works for you and not let anything else get in the way of that time. Maybe for you, the best time is 15 minutes before you head to school. Or perhaps it's 10 minutes right before you go to bed. Whatever you pick, I always find it easier to keep that time reserved for prayer.

As far as a place, this can be pretty tough for some of you (especially those of you who share a room with a sibling). But don't get discouraged. If members of your family are also Christ-followers, I'd encourage you to ask them to help you find a space where you can pray (and especially listen) in quiet.

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**2. Set a daily reminder.**

You know how I said that making time to pray doesn't happen? I'll add to that by saying this type of "free time" doesn't like to stay free. For example, if you've committed to spending 10 minutes praying every morning before school, what happens on that morning that you have a chemistry test that you haven't studied for? Yeah, finding reasons to fill your prayer time with other stuff is surprisingly easy.

Here's what I'd suggest: once you've decided on a time, set an alarm or a reminder to go off every day at that time. And then, whenever you hear that alarm, you know to stop what you're doing and spend time praying. Over time, you might get to a point where you won't need a reminder, but having one when you're first starting is super helpful.

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**3. Write your prayers in a journal.**

I always struggle knowing what to pray for. Or, I start praying, suddenly lose focus, and think about other things. If those types of things happen to you, too, I suggest you get a journal to write out your prayers. Writing my prayers helps me accomplish a few things:

- First, it helps me to slow down. I tend to think way faster than I write, so writing helps me slow down and focus more on the prayer I'm offering God.
- Second, one of the cool things that writing in a journal does is that it allows you to look back at your previous prayers to see how God has been answering your prayers. There's something extraordinary about knowing that you've been praying for something specific and then realizing that God has answered your prayer.
- Third, when you first get your journal, writing the dates at the top of each page for the next month ahead of time can help you turn prayer into a habit. Because if there's one thing I want to avoid at all costs, it's a blank page (that's why Snapstreaks are so effective!). So, I go out of my way to pray every day.

Plain and simple, if you don't currently have a set time of prayer, I want to challenge you to start building that HABIT today. Don't put it off. But also, don't beat yourself up when you find consistency challenging. When you realize you've missed a few days, don't worry about making up for what you've missed. Just resolve to jump back into it.


If you do (and I hope you do), I think you'll find that your relationship with God will be that much stronger, and that's what I'm so very excited about in this series on habits—the next five weeks could dramatically change the course of your life.

*[close in prayer]*

### DISCUSS ► (What can we learn from one another?)

[Note: These discussion questions are designed to be used in a small group setting.]

1. What is something you do every day without fail, like a personal daily "training" routine?
2. Who is an athlete you admire, and what is one trait of theirs you would like to emulate in your own life?
3. Can you think of a time when being disciplined helped you achieve something important? How did you feel?
4. Where is your favorite quiet place to go when you need to think or escape noise?
5. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being easy and 10 being incredibly difficult), how easy/difficult do you think it would be to set aside a time and a place to pray daily? What are the obstacles standing in your way?

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6. How can you practice listening to God's voice in your daily life? How can you make space for silence?
  7. Would it be helpful for us as a group to hold each other accountable by texting in a group chat each day to remind each other to spend time in prayer? How can we do this in a way that is encouraging instead of discouraging?
  8. How can we, as a group, pray for and encourage each other throughout the week?