

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 2: Accountability

HABITS

Big Idea

Accountable friendships bring healing.

Primary Scripture:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Galatians 6:1-5

Supporting Scripture:

1 Corinthians 3:11-15; Philippians 2:3-4;
Philippians 1:6

[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?)

[Teacher note: you may need to adjust the opening story to better fit your personal experience.]

Who likes football? What's your favorite team?

[Teacher note: let kids give some responses to these questions.]

Do you know what finally got me watching football? It was the 2017 Philadelphia Eagles. It's not because they won the Super Bowl that year—granted, that was pretty awesome—it was because of this video that the team released on its official social media accounts:

[Teacher note: the first half of the video covers what will be referred to in the lesson (meeting together, praying together, accountable relationships, etc.). You can decide whether to show the beginning or the full video.]

[show video]

The Philadelphia Eagles Locker Room's Binding Force (7:42)

<https://youtu.be/6bnEY13vAok>

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

With to be such a big part of their identity. Yet, I kept finding myself surprised by how much these players seemed to be the real deal.

I loved seeing their faith in action, how they built each other up, and how they supported each other. It blew me away and continues to amaze me whenever I see people in positions of influence going out of their way to prioritize Jesus.

Watching a group of professional athletes not only train their bodies but also train their hearts is something that I find both challenging and encouraging, which brings me to our theme passage for this series we’re in:

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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)

What stands out to me is Paul's words, “I run with purpose in every step.” Did you notice that the players we just saw in that video had purpose in their steps? Just like athletes need to be disciplined to succeed in their sport, followers of Jesus need to be *spiritually disciplined* to run the race for an “eternal prize.”

Today, we’re in the second week of a series looking at some of the *spiritual* disciplines needed to run a race for an “eternal prize.” We’re looking at six different disciplines that are intended to be memorable within the acronym “H.A.B.I.T.S.”

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- **H** – “H” stands for “Hanging Out with God” (we talked about this last week).
- **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 *habits* that can make all the difference in how each of us runs the spiritual race of following Jesus.

SCRIPTURE ► (What does God's Word say?)

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Today, we will look at the “A” in H.A.B.I.T.S., which is **Accountability**.

What does accountability mean when we apply it to the Christian life? Being accountable as a Christian means being willing to *account* (or accept responsibility) for your actions to God and Christian friends as you run the race of following Jesus.

Now, this is where things get a little tricky. On the one hand, as Christ-followers, we know we are forgiven for all our sins. There is literally nothing we could do to cause God to love us any more or less than He already does. So, why should we worry about being accountable for our actions? I mean, if we're going to be forgiven anyway, why does it matter?

Well, this is a question that people have been asking for thousands of years! The Apostle Paul (the guy who wrote the passage we just read a minute ago) also tackled this question in the same letter of 1 Corinthians. Let's read what he said:

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11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ. 12 Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. 13 But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. 14 If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. 15 But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15 – NLT)

In this passage, Paul used the metaphor of buildings and foundations to explain the value of how we live our lives as Christians. No matter what, the builder is saved, but if the builder wastes time by building their life poorly, those things will simply cease to exist; they won't last. But if someone runs the race well and uses their life to build things of eternal value, those things will last.

So, how can we make sure that we're building our lives with components that will last? That's where accountability comes in. Check out what we're told in Galatians 6:1-5:

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1 Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. 2 Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. 3 If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important. 4 Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. 5 For we are each responsible for our own conduct. (Galatians 6:1-5 – NLT)

Do you see what Paul, the author of Galatians, was getting at? Together, we are to help each other just like we saw the 2017 Philadelphia Eagles do. Those players helped each other run the spiritual race. They ran well through their accountable friendships, which helped them all take responsibility for their spiritual lives.

INSIGHTS ► (What might this scripture mean?)

As we're trying to wrap our heads around what it looks like to be engaged in accountable friendships, I think there are three essential lessons that we can learn from this passage:

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1. Accountable friendships bring healing.

Let's look at the passage we just read again:

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1 Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. (Galatians 6:1a – NLT)

There is healing power when we let someone else know about our struggles. Hiding our hurts and our failures from those closest to us creates stress and anxiety within us. At some point, I imagine we have all experienced the struggle of hiding something from others, because we feared they would find out how flawed we are in our Christian lives. But hear this: there is incredible healing power in sharing your flaws with a close, trusted, Christian friend who can hold you accountable.

Why does being vulnerable produce healing power?

Because trusted friends can demonstrate God's love, forgiveness, and acceptance in tangible ways. As they pray with you about these issues, you will find healing spiritually, in that you will have removed barriers between you and God, but also healing in a genuine physical sense. Anxiousness, fear, stress, and all these other emotions that accompany hiding our sins take a real toll on our bodies, don't they? Releasing this sin to God and accountable friendships allows our bodies to release the anxiousness and fear that upsets our stomachs, causes headaches, and keeps us awake at night. It heals us.

And did you notice the words "gently and humbly" in that text? It's not there by accident, because the second important lesson we learn from the Galatians 6 passage is:

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2. Accountable friendships require humility.

For powerful healing to be the outcome of accountable friendships, both friends must be genuinely humble. Helping someone see where they need to change their behavior requires humility from everyone involved. If you're the person whose actions need to change, you have to be humble enough to hear that your friend genuinely cares about you.

And if you're the person who is bringing a concern about your friend's behavior, you also need to be humble. You should never mention a concern about a friend because you think you're better or more holy than your friend, right? Of course not! Who are we to judge someone else? That's why that first verse includes this warning:

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And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. (Galatians 6:1b – NLT)

The moment you start thinking, "I'm such a good Christian I would never do that..." is precisely when you're most vulnerable to making the same mistakes. Healing from account-able friendships can only happen if everyone involved tries to stay humble. Otherwise, it just turns into a bunch of people judging each other. And nobody wants that!

The essence of humility is when we think of others as better than ourselves, which means looking out for them as much as we look out for ourselves. Check out this passage from the book of Philippians:

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

And it's this idea of looking out for one another that leads to the third important lesson we learn from Galatians 6:

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3. Accountable friendships are a team sport

Can you imagine what would happen if the quarterback tried to win a football game without any teammates? Do you think he would win the game? Or what would happen if the entire team decided they didn't need their coaches anymore? It might work for a little while, but things would fall apart quickly.

As you know, teammates and coaches are essential in any sport. Take running, for example. The best runners have a coach, a mentor, and a training buddy when prepping for a big race. Why? Because there are days when they just don't feel like running. What does the training buddy do when the runner doesn't want to run? They tell them to run anyway! They remind them why they're training. They remind them of the trophy they're going after or the milestone they want to hit. Their main job is to ENCOURAGE the runner to push on!

It's the same with our spiritual lives. A friend committed to being your accountability partner will encourage you to keep pressing forward even when you don't feel like it. They'll encourage you to attend church and youth group, participate in your small group, pray, and read your Bible. They'll celebrate your wins and grieve with you when you lose. Their encouragement builds you up to keep going, and your encouragement builds them up when they need help!

You see, having accountability friendships isn't just about helping each other recover after you've messed up. They can also be a strength, a benefit, and a support to help you achieve what you want to achieve and to help one another live the lives you want to live!

ACTION ► (How can we live this out?)

So, now that we understand the habit of accountability better, what are some ways to practice this habit? I have a few ideas to help you get started:

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1. Choose your accountability friendships carefully:

I can't stress this enough: don't pick just *anyone* to be your accountability partner. If you're serious about finding someone or, say, a small group of close friends to help you run your race well, there are a few characteristics you might want to look for in *whom* you choose:

- **Make sure they're someone who shares your values.**
I know this might sound like a no-brainer, but if you're looking for someone to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus, you want to make sure that person also wants to grow in their relationship with Jesus. If not, you will feel like you and your accountability partner don't quite see eye to eye because you won't.
- **Make sure they're someone you can trust.**
Part of accountability is being honest with each other, even if your honesty means sharing something you aren't proud of. If you're ready to share on that level of vulnerability, you want to make sure the person you're sharing with is someone you know isn't going to tell their friends about the things you share.
- **Make sure they're someone you will listen to.**
One of the main reasons for being in an accountable friendship is that you need someone who will tell you the truth no matter what, even the truth you might not want to hear. In those situations, it is easy just to dismiss what the other person says or tune that person out entirely. When you choose a friend to be accountable with, make sure they are a person you are willing to listen to, even if you don't necessarily like what they're saying.

The second thing that we can do is:

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2. Choose to commit to accountable relationships:

We often don't love the word *commit*, right? We may love it when others *commit* to do something for us. But when we are the ones who are asked to *commit*, it gets a little iffy. And that's because commitment means agreeing to follow through on whatever we've agreed to do. Commitment to something that can be difficult to do is a huge challenge. But it's precisely what I'm asking you to do today: I want you to lean in, go all in, double down, and put your nose to the grindstone. However you want to describe it, I'd love for you to commit to engaging in accountable friendships.

Accountability is hard work. It requires being honest with yourself and with others. It requires being vulnerable. It requires listening to others and taking to heart what they're telling you about yourself and your behavior. And then it often requires you to adjust your attitudes and actions. So, accountability is not easy. And I'd even say that not everyone is ready for that kind of hard work. So, before you choose someone or a group of close friends to hold you accountable, you might ask yourself if you're truly ready for this sizeable commitment.

If you're not ready, it's okay. But I can't say that choosing to avoid accountability forever is okay. So, instead of just saying, "I'm not ready" and forgetting all about it, let me suggest that you still start looking for that person (or those people) whom you can trust with your vulnerability. Then, when you think you've found them, tell them you're interested in an accountable friendship, but that you're struggling with whether or not you're ready for it. That way, you can start heading toward accountability at your own pace.

For those who feel you are ready, I want to challenge you to take the leap and commit. Don't do this halfway. Remember, you can't kind of win a race. And you can't sort of win a football game.

Listen, I can't force you to be in an accountable friendship, and I wouldn't want to even if I could. Still, I can tell you that if you're looking to take the next step in your relationship with Jesus, adding this spiritual discipline, this habit to your life, might be the very thing you need right now. Like I said, accountability isn't easy. But it is so very worthwhile. Accountable friendships have the potential to help you get closer to being the best possible version of yourself. If you let Him, God will use those friendships to shape you into the person He is creating you to be.

Before we head to our small groups to talk about what we just learned, I want to leave you with this bit of encouragement from the book of Philippians:

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6 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 – NLT)

This is such great news! God isn't done with any of us. We are all still works in progress, and God promises He will continue to work in and grow us. Thankfully, God has given us the gift of accountable friendships to help us continue growing into the people He is creating us to be. And today is a great day to start using that gift of accountability that He's so graciously given to us for our benefit.

[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 sports or team activities do you enjoy participating in or watching, and why?
2. Can you share a time when working together with others helped you achieve something you couldn't have done alone?
3. How would you describe the difference between a friendship and an accountable friendship?
4. Do you think all friends would make good accountability partners? Why or why not?
5. Why is it essential to choose accountability partners who share your values and whom you can trust?
6. What values would you say are most important to have in common with an accountability partner?
7. Why do you think humility is critical to an accountable friendship?
8. What steps can we take to ensure our accountable friendships are centered on healing and growth rather than judgment?
9. How can we, as a group, pray for and encourage each other throughout the week?