

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 3: Running the Race

HABITS

Big Idea

Bible Study help us get to know God better.

Primary Scripture:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Supporting Scripture:

Joshua 1:8-10

[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?)

What's your favorite water sport?

[Teacher note: let kids give out some responses.]

Has anyone here ever tried surfing? Yeah, surfing is one of my favorite sports... to watch. Let's watch this video about someone who loves Jesus and surfing.

[show video]

Bethany Hamilton - White Chair Film - I Am Second (3:17)

<https://youtu.be/37I1WfdFNQE>

Bethany Hamilton is the picture of discipline, isn't she? She excels in a sport that takes incredible work and practice, even though she lost her arm. And what's even more remarkable to me is that she applies that same discipline to her spiritual life. We understand that to excel in sports, it takes discipline, practice, and habits that build skills, endurance, and knowledge. The same holds true for people who follow Jesus:

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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)

Paul said he disciplined his body “like an athlete, training it to do what it should.” Just like an athlete has to be disciplined before they ever show up to a surfing competition if they want to perform well, believers need to be spiritually disciplined to follow the ways of Jesus well. This is why we've been focusing on the spiritual disciplines needed to run the spiritual race before us. Today, we're in the third week of our series on six helpful habits needed to run our best race. And we're using the acronym “H.A.B.I.T.S.” as our guide.

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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 *habits* we need to have in our lives. These habits, these spiritual disciplines, can make all the difference in how you run the spiritual race.

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

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Today, we will look at the third habit, “B,” for **Bible Study**.

Bible study is one of those “no, duh” habits, right? Even if you have attended church only a few times, you've probably heard that Christians need to study the Bible. But have you ever really thought about why we need to study the Bible? And if it's such an obvious discipline, why do so many of us struggle to maintain this habit regularly? It's because there's a big difference between knowing something is important and following through with it in our actions.

If you struggle with this, you might find it encouraging to know that you're not alone. This is a struggle that people have been wrestling with for thousands of years.

I'd like to read a passage that's part of a letter written a little over nineteen hundred years ago from the Apostle Paul to a young pastor named Timothy, whom Paul was mentoring.

Before we read it, you might find it helpful to know that many scholars believe this letter was the last letter the Apostle Paul wrote before the Roman government executed him for preaching about Jesus. Paul likely wrote it from a prison cell, knowing that his execution was soon approaching. So, these are some of his last words. And it's *what* he chose to write about that I find incredible. Let's read 2 Timothy 3:14-17:

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14 But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. 15 You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. 16 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. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17 – NLT)

Wow! Have you ever felt so engrossed in a movie or a story that it felt like one of the characters was speaking directly to you, even if just for a second? That's how I think about this passage. I know the Apostle Paul wrote it to a young pastor named Timothy, but when I read it, I just can't shake the feeling that we were all meant to hear this message, too.

And if that's true, and I believe it is, we should take a few minutes to unpack what Paul was saying here. So, here are a few key insights that stand out in a way that will be helpful for us as we consider the habit of Bible study:

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INSIGHTS ► (What might this scripture mean?)

1. God's Word points us to Jesus: The Bible is full of stories. Most of us remember stories like Noah and the flood, Jonah and the big fish, and Daniel and the lion's den; yes, those stories are awesome.

[Teacher note: if you've been following The Coleader Roadmap, you might reference the REWIND: Old Testament series that you recently finished.]

They teach us some great lessons. But did you notice what Paul said in verse 15? Let's look again:

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15 You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:15 – NLT)

He said all those stories worked together by pointing to one person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. One of my favorite ways to read the Old Testament is to try and see how each story points to Jesus. Let me show you what I mean:

[Teacher note: feel free to use a different list of stories here, especially if you feel like others may be better known by your students.]

- The story of Noah and the flood points to Jesus, because it's about how a broken world was made new. Jesus did that, too!
- The story of Jonah and the big fish points to Jesus by showing us that God wants to redeem people whom others may see as beyond redemption.
- The story of Daniel and the lion's den points to Jesus by reminding us that God is always faithful, even in the direst circumstances.

And the list goes on and on. Paul wanted Timothy and us to know that the Scriptures—all of them—point us to Jesus.

A second important truth Paul pointed out in his letter to Timothy was that:

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2. God's Word shows us the truth: Of course, the Bible tells us all kinds of true things, like how God loves us and how Jesus died to redeem us. But I think Paul might have been giving us a bigger picture in verse 16:

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16 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 – NLT)

Paul told Timothy (and us!) that when we allow ourselves to dive into the Bible, we will learn a lot about God, and at the same time, about ourselves. We'll start to recognize God's goodness and His perfect plans for our lives, and in that process, we'll begin to realize that there might be parts of our lives that don't align with how God is calling us to live.

At first, that sounds like a bit of a bummer. But I want to challenge you to see it from a different perspective. Instead of seeing it as how the Bible points out all the ways we mess up, I've started viewing it as how it allows us the opportunity to become more like Jesus. And the only way we can be more like Jesus is if we have a way to know what's true and what's not. Thankfully, that's precisely what the Bible does if we let it.

And the last truth Paul wrote to Timothy that I want to call our attention to is this:

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3. God's Word prepares us for the best possible future: If I told you that I could tell you everything you need to know about your future, you'd want to know, right? Of course, you would! And that's what Paul said Scripture does. Let's check out verse 17:

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17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (2 Timothy 3:17 – NLT)

Reading the Bible won't tell you what college you will attend or who you might marry one day. But the Bible does tell us something equally important about our futures: each of us was made by God for the express purpose of doing *good things*. And while that may not sound like much at first, imagine what our world would be like if every time someone had to make a decision, they took a step back and asked themselves, "Which of these choices will lead to the most *good*?"

I'm sure if everyone in the world asked that question for every decision they faced, there'd be less fighting, less war, less poverty, less hunger, less bullying, less sexism, less racism, and less intolerance. And all of these outcomes sound pretty awesome, right? Yeah. That's what Paul said: it can happen when we allow Scripture to become an integral part of our lives. We have the opportunity to take all the good that God has created and bring that good as a reality into our world.

I don't know about you, but if the Bible can help us do all of that, then I want in. I want to experience that. I want what Paul said that the Bible can offer us. But here's the thing: it will take some work on our part. Unfortunately, these good things don't just happen simply because we *own* a Bible. And they definitely don't happen immediately after we download a Bible app on our phones.

ACTION ► (How can we live this out?)

If you want the Bible to change your life, it requires building a habit of Bible study. And yeah, I know. The Bible is a BIG book. And some of it is very difficult to understand. But if you're serious about this—and I hope you are—then I have a few ideas about actions you can take to get started:

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1. Commit to reading your Bible every day.

The bottom line is this: it's impossible to allow the Bible to make a difference in your life if you don't know what it says. And you can't know and understand what it says if you don't read it.

Thankfully, your generation has more ways available to read the Bible than any other generation in human history. You can read it using a reading plan in the Bible app on your phone. You can even listen to it using the same app. Don't like that specific app? No problem, because there are literally thousands of Bible reading apps out there. There are also Scripture reading accounts you can follow on social media. Or, you can open a physical Bible and read the words printed on the pages!

Look, I don't want you to think this is the easy part, because it's not. Reading your Bible every day takes A LOT of commitment. But it is essential and beneficial to your life as a follower of Jesus!

One of my favorite Old Testament stories is about this guy named Joshua who suddenly found himself leading the nation and army of Israel. If I had been in his shoes (or sandals?), I would have had no idea where to start, and neither did he! That's why the story of Joshua began with God sending him an angel to give him instructions on how to lead the army. But the angel didn't tell him to study battle tactics or to train his soldiers for war. Check out what the angel said:

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8 Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. 9 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 1:8-10 – NLT)

Isn't that incredible? The angel told Joshua that if he wanted to succeed in what God had called him to do, he needed to read and know the Scriptures. And the same thing is true for us. We can't possibly understand what God has in store for our lives if we don't commit to reading and understanding the words that He's given us.

But that doesn't mean we have to do this alone, and this is the second action you can take:

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2. Read your Bible with other people.

One of my favorite things about the Bible app you can download on your phone is that it allows you to work through a Bible reading plan with others!

Something I know about myself is that if I set out to read the entire Bible in a year, there's pretty much no way I will follow through if I'm trying to do it by myself. But if I have a few trusted friends trying to do the same thing, I suddenly have people encouraging me to keep going. And those are the accountability friends we talked about last week. When I'm not alone and have people encouraging me forward, I am more likely to follow through, even as I encourage them to do likewise. And I get the bonus of having people to talk with about what we're all reading. I can say something to them when I'm confused or when I read something new and meaningful that I didn't know before.

If you are going to start reading the Bible, I would highly recommend reading it with other people. I bet you can even find a few people in your small group who might want to start reading the Bible together! So, go for it!

One of the best reasons of all for reading the Bible with other people is that when you read something confusing, you'll already have a group of people whom you can share your questions with, which leads to the last action we can take to help set ourselves up for Bible reading success:

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3. Don't stop asking questions until you find answers.

Let me let you in on a little secret that really shouldn't be a secret: no one knows everything about the Bible. There isn't even one person alive who is close to knowing everything. Sure, some people spend their entire lives reading, studying, and memorizing the Bible, but do you know what? They still have questions. And so do I! And I think it's okay for you to have them, too.

But what do you do when you have questions? This will sound simple, because it is, but when you have questions, you should ASK YOUR QUESTIONS!

I used to think that if I found something in the Bible that didn't make sense to me, it was because I wasn't spiritual enough. I felt that if I could only be more like Jesus, I would be able to understand. And even worse, I felt like somehow my questions would be offensive to God, that He would roll His eyes at me, or that He would be mad at me for asking.

Thankfully, I can tell you that I was SO WRONG! God is not offended by your questions. Seriously, anyone who tells you that they already understand everything about the Bible is not just wrong (and arrogant), they are missing the point. When we're willing to admit that we don't know everything and start asking questions, we begin to learn and understand more about the Bible.

Here's an important question: whom do you ask when you have questions about the Bible? Well, fantastic Bible resources are available online, like BibleGateway.com and BlueLetterBible.org. Or, you can go to your local library. Or, you can ask me or your small group leaders. And, as I said, we don't know everything about the Bible by a long shot, but I'll make you this promise: if you ask me a question that I don't know the answer to, I'll do everything I can to partner with you, so we can find out the answer together.

Let me ask you this: have you ever gotten an answer to a question you've asked but weren't satisfied with the answer? If this happens to you about a question you have about the Bible, don't give up! Keep asking, and keep asking, and keep asking! There's almost always an excellent chance that someone else has the same question you have. If you're willing to ask the question, you might be able to help someone else find the answers they're looking for, too!


And the last thing I want to leave you with is this: don't beat yourself up if you miss a day of reading the Bible. Don't beat yourself up if you miss a few days or even a few weeks, because being perfect at reading the Bible every day is NOT the point of building a habit of Bible study. The point is to know God and His ways better. So, whatever you do, if you miss a day or a few days, don't give up. Just pick back up where you left off. I promise you no one here is keeping score. We just want you to get the most out of this incredible gift that God has given us by forming the habit of Bible study.

[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. Have you ever watched a sport or activity and thought it looked easy until you tried it? What was it?
2. If you could pick any sport to be instantly great at, which would it be and why?
3. What's one discipline or habit you've mastered, like playing an instrument or a fitness routine? How long did it take you to consider yourself "good" at that discipline/habit?
4. What similarities do you see between athletes training for a competition and Christians growing in their faith?
5. Think of a time when you found Scripture to be encouraging. What was that situation?
6. Have you ever tried reading the Bible daily before? How did it go? What did you learn? Are you still reading it every day? If not, why not?

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7. How might reading the Bible every day make an impact on how you:
 - a. See the world around you?
 - b. Interact with your friends?
 - c. React to stressful situations?
 8. How can we, as a group, encourage each other to read our Bibles more often (or even daily)?
 9. How can we, as a group, pray for and encourage each other throughout the week?