

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 6:

**Shared + Sacred
Practices**

HABITS

Big Idea

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

Primary Scripture:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26;
Matthew 28:18-19

Supporting Scripture:

Matthew 3:13-17; John 14:15; Colossians 2:12

[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*.]

[Introductory Teacher notes regarding this message: This message focuses on baptism and communion. As you know, Christian denominations and churches vary in degrees on the meaning, symbolism, and practice of these rites. We've categorized these as "~~sacraments~~" in that Jesus commanded the rituals to be undertaken by His followers, giving them priority of significance. Some might bristle at the word sacrament, and we understand that you might classify these rites using a different word. So, adapt the wording to match your context.

If your church only offers baptism and communion to congregants within the context of church membership, again, you may need to adapt the message to reflect your church's membership or confirmation process.

We've attempted to take an evangelical middle-of-the-road position on baptism and communion. It might fit your perspective right out of the box, but we realize it may take some revision to match your setting. So, as you review the manuscript, we encourage you to edit the content freely to match your denominational or church's theological positions and practices for baptism and communion. If you don't know these, please check with your church leadership.

Also, please direct specific attention to the Action section, particularly the third action regarding communion. We've created this content to include sharing communion with your group following the end of the message and before going to small groups. This will be fine for some groups, but due to your church's positions and practices, others may be unable to serve communion in a less than entire congregational setting. Or you may choose not to close your service this way. Again, if you're unsure, check with your church leadership. Do whatever you need to make the message work for your group!]

CAPTURE ► (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)*[show slide]*

Is anyone here a fan of college sports? What's your favorite team and sport?

[Teacher note: pause to allow students to give out some answers]

As we wrap up our HABITS series, I want to share a video featuring an athlete named Colt McCoy. Some of you may recognize his name from being an NFL quarterback for thirteen seasons. He's done well, but he made this video just as he was finishing his college football career. In college, he played for the Texas Longhorns, set far too many records, and won too many awards for me to list, but so many that the Longhorns retired his number. What blows me away, though, is what his actual passion was – and is:

[show video]

Colt McCoy - More Than Winning (3:14)

<https://youtu.be/pti3E8s1FNq>

[show slide]

To excel in his sport the way he did, McCoy was incredibly disciplined. He trained, he worked out, he was coached. But for him, it was all about God giving him a platform to share Jesus Christ with others! With his team, with fans, and with others, McCoy is someone who proclaims Jesus. This is precisely what we're going to be talking about today. But before we jump in, let's take one last look at the passage from 1 Corinthians that we've been using as our guide for this series:

[show slide]

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)

We saw the incredible purpose McCoy had with every step, both on the field and spiritually. We've been spending these past weeks looking at six spiritual disciplines (or habits) essential for followers of Jesus to run the race well. These habits enable us to run with purpose in every step as believers. They can all be found in the acronym "H.A.B.I.T.S."

[show slide] "H.I.T.S." stands for "Hanging Out with God."

- **A** – "A" stands for "Accountability" (or helping each other keep our commitments).
- **B** – "B" stands for "Bible Study."

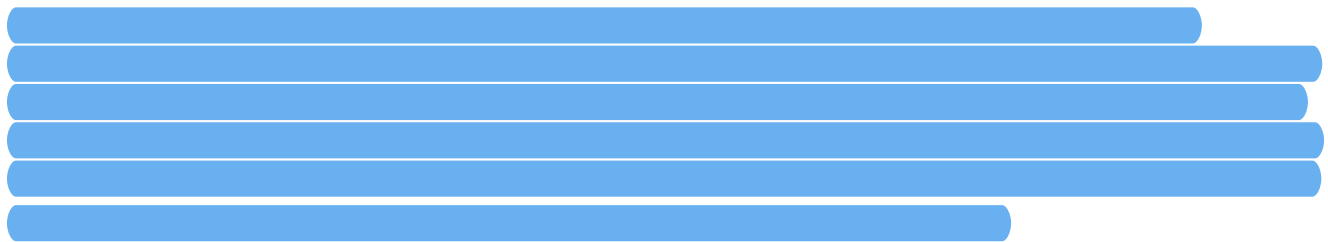
- **I** – “I” stands for “Involvement in Church” (or youth group).
- **T** – “T” stands for “Tithing” (or sharing your resources like time and money to help grow God’s Kingdom), which we talked about last week.
- **S** – *And the S stands for “Shared + Sacred Practices” (These are practices that Jesus specifically commanded. Particularly, baptism and communion)*

These are *habits* we must have in our lives. These habits, these spiritual disciplines, can make all the difference in how each of us runs our spiritual race as we follow Jesus.

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

[show slide]

Today, we will examine our sixth and final habit, “S” for **Shared + Sacred Practices**



Today, we will look at two specific worship practices that Jesus commanded us to observe: baptism and communion. Even though these spiritual disciplines are essential, they can become so common in the church that we risk seeing them as “something we’re supposed to do” without considering what they represent and why they’re so important.

So, to get us rolling, we’ll look at what Jesus said about each practice. Both passages we’ll look at are important because they happened immediately before something significant happened in Jesus’ life.

The first happened at what is called, “The Last Supper.” It was the last meal Jesus shared with His disciples before He was arrested, tried, and crucified. Although the Apostle Paul wasn’t at The Last Supper, in later years, he wrote an incredible description of what happened in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26:

[show slide]

23 For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread 24 and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it." 26 For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26 – NLT)

The second passage records what Jesus said to His disciples after His resurrection from the dead. These were the last words He spoke to the disciples before He ascended into heaven:

[show slide]

18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:18-19 – NLT)

We'll dive into these passages a little deeper in a moment, but I think it's important to recognize that Jesus chose His words very carefully in both moments. The best analogy I can think of is that it's like when you're sitting in class, and right when the bell rings, the teacher says, "You'll want to read chapter 9 for your test tomorrow!" We all know what will be on the test at that moment, right? Yeah, everything in chapter 9. And we know that because the teacher thought it was so important, they said it one last time before everyone left the classroom.

The same logic applies here. In both passages, Jesus was about to be separated from His disciples, and He most likely wanted His final words to be meaningful. In the case of the Last Supper, He chose to tell them about communion. And in the case of Jesus ascending into heaven, He chose to tell them about baptism.

Now, since some of us may not have ever experienced communion or baptism, and to make sure that we're all on the same page, let's define each:

[show slide]

Communion is when followers of Jesus gather and share a meal, usually with bread and grape juice (or wine), to remember and honor the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross. The bread symbolizes Jesus' body, which was broken as a sacrifice for us, and the juice represents Jesus' blood that was shed to forgive our sins.

Baptism is when a follower of Jesus publicly proclaims their faith in Jesus. In many traditions, this happens when the baptized person is immersed fully in water. Some Christian traditions baptize babies by sprinkling their heads with water. Some churches baptize by pouring water on a baby's or adult's head. Some churches wait to baptize children until they reach a certain age. So, among our Christian tribe, there are many modes of baptism. We practice baptism by immersion as we believe it's the best way to symbolize dying to our old life by going under the water. When the person comes back up out of the water, it represents rising to new life by joining Jesus in His resurrection.

As you can tell, these **practices** involve a lot of important symbolism. And since the **practices** of communion and baptism are so important, we need to explore more closely to get a better understanding of how we can allow these **practices** to become habits in our spiritual journeys.

INSIGHTS ► (What might this scripture mean?)

The first thing that jumps out to me about both baptism and communion is that:

[show slide]

1. Jesus led by example: We just read the Apostle Paul's account of Jesus taking communion with His disciples at the Last Supper, but there's also an account of Jesus' baptism in the Gospel of Matthew:

[show slide]

13 Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" 15 But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him. 16 After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." (Matthew 3:13-17 – NLT)

In this passage, Jesus also made it clear that baptism was a requirement, but the biggest takeaway is that Jesus didn't ask any of us to do anything He didn't do. In many ways, Jesus went out of His way to make sure that we knew He didn't consider Himself above what He expected His followers to do. I love this because it shows that Jesus is God, but He's also one of us—human.

The second thing that I'm noticing in these passages is that:

[show slide]

2. Communion and baptism are signs of obedience: In each passage we've read, we see that Jesus gave us a command. It's not negotiable. When talking about communion, He didn't say, "If you want, you should do this in remembrance of me." No. He said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

If you're anything like me, when I hear someone say, "Do this because I said so," it makes me want to do anything BUT what that person wants me to do. That's normal. We're rebellious by nature. And one of the things I LOVE about your generation is that many of you aren't the type of people to do anything without a good reason.

So, I want to give you a reason. When we follow Jesus' commands, we tell the world two things:

We tell them something about us. When we participate in communion and baptism, we say to the rest of the world that we've decided to follow Jesus. No one has forced us to do anything. We make the choice. And our choice is to put Jesus above ourselves.

And we tell them something about Jesus. The flip side of the coin is that if we say to the world that we've decided to follow Jesus, it means we believe that Jesus is worth following. And if you're wondering what it is about Jesus that makes Him someone worth following, check out what He said in John 14:15:

[show slide]

15 "If you love me, obey my commandments." (John 14:15 – NLT)

It's truly that simple. Obeying Jesus' commandments is an expression of our love for Him. He showed His love for us when He created us, gave us life, died in our places, rose from the dead, and forgave our sins. We show our love for Him by obeying His commandments.

The third thing that jumps out to me is that:

[show slide]

3. Communion and baptism are earthly experiences that point to heavenly realities: Honestly, I sometimes feel frustrated that I can't always see what God is doing around me. I wish it were as simple as seeing a giant sign on the side of the road pointing to God's hand as He works in my life. But it's just not that simple.

Instead, Jesus gave us gifts that give us a glimpse of things we cannot see. For example, let's look at how the Apostle Paul described baptism:

[show slide]

12 For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.
(Colossians 2:12 – NLT)

Paul said that when we are immersed in the water during baptism, it's like we're experiencing Christ's death and burial. And when we re-emerge from the water, it's like we're being raised from the dead with Christ.

And communion does the same thing. The bread representing Jesus' body reminds us of the pain He endured for our sake. The cup of juice (or wine) points to the reality that only Jesus' blood can forgive us of our sins. And when we build these two practices into our lives as habits, we find that those truths become less of a memory of what Jesus has done for us and more of the reality that we share in these truths with Jesus.

ACTION ► (How can we live this out?)

So, what do we do with all of this? How do we allow the *celebrations* of baptism and communion to become spiritual habits in our lives? I have a few ideas for how we can start.

If you believe in Jesus, and you haven't been baptized yet, I encourage you to:

[show slide]

1. Take the next step in your faith by being baptized.

To be clear, baptism doesn't guarantee you a spot in heaven. Only faith in who Jesus is and in what He's done to accomplish our salvation does that. And baptism doesn't suddenly make you into a perfect person. But it is a BIG deal. It's an opportunity for each believer to declare their faith publicly. It's a chance to tell other believers about what Jesus has done and continues to do in your life.

And then, baptism is also a chance for those other believers to celebrate with you, which brings me to the next thing we can all do:

[show slide]

2. Celebrate with others who are being baptized.

Baptism is 100% something to be celebrated! Anytime someone is baptized, we should see it as a party we are all invited to. You see, most people only get baptized once, so making it a habit is hard, but celebrating baptism? We can definitely make that habit.

Here's what I can do: anytime a student from our ministry is going to be baptized, I'll do my absolute best to make sure that everyone knows about it beforehand. Then, for your part, it would be awesome if you commit to doing everything in your power to be there at the baptism to celebrate with that person. Even if you don't usually attend our church on Sunday mornings, when we have baptisms, it would be incredible if you could be here to celebrate with us!

Imagine what it would be like if we kept celebrating every time someone got baptized! It might cause us to want to see more and more people get baptized. And we might start going out of our way to tell more and more people about Jesus. Now, that's a habit I can get behind!

Lastly, the third thing we can do is:

[show slide]

3. Regularly share communion with each other.

One of my favorite things about Jesus' command to share in communion with each other is that this can involve two different habits.

The first is precisely what you think of when you think of communion. It's when we, as a group, take bread and juice and eat and drink them together to remember and honor Jesus' sacrifice. That's why we often have communion on Sunday mornings or at youth group. This is important because when we build this habit together, we ensure we never forget what Jesus did for us.

The other habit that we can build is simply sharing meals together. I think Jesus chose food and drink to represent His body and blood because we all need food and drink to live. And if we all are going to eat and drink anyway, it is a perfect time to spend time with each other, laughing, telling stories, and reminding each other of how much God loves us and how much we love each other.

In a moment, we will take communion together before heading to our small group discussions. As we do this, I want to encourage you to spend a few moments in silent prayer, thanking Jesus for His sacrifice and asking Him to help you practice the habits we've been talking about in your own life.

[Teacher note: At this point, you will need to explain the process for how you will serve communion to your students. This may be a confusing time, especially for students unfamiliar with how your church practices communion. We would suggest being as straightforward as possible in your instructions, even if everyone should already know what to do. This will help avoid confusion and prevent potential distraction.]

[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 are some habits (or traditions) that you and your friends or family celebrate on a regular basis? What makes these habits so special?
2. How would you describe the significance of baptism to someone who isn't already familiar with the concept?
3. Why do you think Jesus picked practices like baptism and communion to symbolize things like His death and resurrection?
4. Why is taking communion a critical way to remind ourselves of the suffering Jesus endured on our behalf?
5. How often do you think we should celebrate communion together? Why?
6. When we have baptisms and hold communion, and those who are not yet followers of Jesus observe us participating in them, what do you think these habits tell others about us? What do you think they tell others about Jesus?
7. What is something you can do to make baptism, celebrating others' baptisms, and participating in communion more of a habit in your life?
8. Of all the habits we've talked about over the past few weeks (Hanging out with God, Accountable Friendships, Bible Study, Involvement in Church, Tithing, and *shared + sacred practices*) are there any that you'd like to experience more of in your own life?
9. How can we, as a group, pray for and encourage each other throughout the week?