

RUN WITH EXCELLENCE

THE HYPHEN HABITS STUDY GUIDE



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PRAAYER

CHAPTER

1

Key Idea: Starting small, building slowly, and having structure leads to long-term success—both in running and in spiritual disciplines.

Key Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11–14 (NASB)

For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.

God has good plans for His people. Those plans are discovered through:

- Calling on God
- Seeking Him
- Prayer from the heart
- Consistent relationship

Spiritual structure is necessary if we want to be successful. Great runners use great coaches to develop a structure, a process, and to establish accountability. When it comes to spiritual disciplines like prayer, we need a good support system for the same reason. Prayer should not be aimless so a solid structure gives direction. A clear plan can deepen your prayer life and bring daily alignment with God. It is also important to understand that communication builds relationship. Without prayer, how can we expect to know God's plan for us?

Accountability encourages consistency in prayer and spiritual habits. Everyone needs a leader or trusted peer who will ask, "Did you pray today?" and "How are you doing spiritually?". It may take time, but eventually we will build up the type of endurance needed for those longer, deeper conversations with God.

Consistent training will lead to a faster pace, longer endurance, and the ability to do things you once thought impossible. Likewise, with prayer, that daily commitment will lead to spiritual strength, consistent growth over time, and a prayer life that is in step with the Holy Spirit.

Greater commitment leads to greater growth.

Key Scripture: Galatians 5:16–17 (NLT)

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires.

- The Spirit guides believers away from sinful desires.
- The flesh and Spirit are in constant conflict.
- Discipline increases the Spirit's influence in one's life.

Even the best training cannot outrun a bad diet. Elite athletes fuel intentionally and deny cravings through consuming things that are filling and beneficial to the body. Fasting and intentional prayer allow us to eliminate sinful cravings, fill our souls with beneficial things, and help us to tune into spiritual things while tuning out the carnal. Fasting trains believers to choose God's will over personal desires.

Key Scripture: Galatians 5:24–25 (NASB)

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Distractions can hinder our obedience to God's Word or even prevent us from recognizing truth.

Key Scripture: Galatians 5:7 (NASB)

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?

Signing up for the race isn't the same as preparing for it. Spiritual success comes through daily decisions and consistent habits. Your decision to follow God is just the beginning, but prayer, fasting, and worship are the disciplines that carry believers across the finish line.

REVIEW. How can you implement the Couch to 5K approach in developing spiritual discipline in your own life?

PRAY. Just as a runner needs a consistent training schedule, how can you establish a daily routine for prayer, ensuring it becomes a foundational part of your spiritual growth? Ask God to help you develop a more consistent prayer life.

MOVE. Considering the positive impact of an athlete having a running coach while in training, how can you benefit from accountability in your spiritual disciplines? Who can you involve in your journey for support and encouragement?

FASTING

CHAPTER

2

Key Idea: Fasting slows down the flesh so the Spirit can lead. Fasting is not for accelerating our will but for aligning us with God's will.

Key Scripture: Romans 8:5–8 (NASB)

For those who are in accord with the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are in accord with the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind [a]set on the flesh is death, but the mind [b]set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind [c]set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Fasting is not:

- A way to force God's hand
- A way to get quick spiritual results
- A magical "supplement" for supernatural power
- A shortcut to answered prayers

Fasting denies the body food for a set time in order to quiet the flesh and become more attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. We may fast for many reasons, but fasting should always be accompanied by prayer in order to:

- Align with God's will
- Communicate more deeply with Jesus
- Hear the Spirit clearly
- Kill the flesh (our sinful, selfish nature)
- Gain spiritual clarity and direction

Key figures throughout scripture relied on fasting to deepen their relationship with God, dampen the influence of the flesh, and open their hearts and minds to better understand God's will for their lives in transformative moments in their walk with God.

- Esther fasted before petitioning the king to prepare herself for what could have been a deadly interaction.
- Daniel fasted for understanding so that he could interpret the king's dreams and find favor in the kingdom.
- Cornelius fasted prior to a major revelation because he recognized that God had more for him and his household.

- David fasted in distress to save the life of his child.
- Jesus fasted before launching His ministry to quiet his humanity and provide us an example for how to fast and pray before God.

These examples clearly show us that fasting is for direction, clarity, and to express our dependence on the almighty God.

Key Scripture: Romans 7:14–20 (NASB)

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, sold [s]into bondage to sin. For I do not understand what I am doing; for I am not practicing what I want to do, but I do the very thing I hate. However, if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, that the Law is good. But now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I do the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin that dwells in me.

Nothing good dwells in our flesh.

Key Scripture: Galatians 5:16–17 (NASB)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the desire of the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, in order to keep you from doing whatever you want.

The flesh opposes the Spirit as every turn. As effective Christians, we must realize that the flesh leads to death while the Spirit leads to a life of peace and harmony with God's will.

- Fasting starves what is sinful and selfish.
- Fasting creates space for God to fill.
- Fasting crucifies the flesh so the Spirit can take the lead.

Key Scripture: I Corinthians 9:24–27 (ESV)

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. So they do it to obtain a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way as not to run aimlessly; I box in such a way, as [i]to avoid hitting air; but I strictly discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Faithful believers are runners:

- We run for an imperishable crown, not earthly rewards.
- We must be disciplined, temperate, and self-controlled.
- The body must be brought into subjection, not allowed to lead.

Key Scripture: Hebrews 12:1–2 (ESV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

We must “lay aside every weight” to run with endurance. Just like Jesus endured the cross, fasting is enduring the death of the flesh. If you’re too busy to fast, you’re too busy.

REVIEW. Plan ahead what day(s) of the week you are going to fast. Set a schedule for yourself on those days. Use the sample schedule in this chapter and adjust where needed. If you are contemplating an extended fast, it is always recommended to discuss it with your pastor or other spiritual authority in your church beforehand, and be sure to accompany the fast with prayer and reading the Word of God. Don’t fast without prayer and devotion.

PRAY. Do’s and don’ts when you fast: Do consume God’s Word. Do consume the preached word. Do consume worship music. Do not consume entertainment such as social media, shows, popular music, and the like. You know what entertains you. Use wisdom. Entertainment is only a distraction.

MOVE. The benefits of fasting are birthed out of consistency. Just like prayer and reading God’s Word, there is nothing easy about fasting. It takes discipline. But with great discipline comes great godly reward.



WORSHIP

CHAPTER

3

Key Idea: Worship is not about when but how; an active, ongoing participation in the divine ecosystem of praise.

Key Scripture: Psalm 139:13–16 (NASB)

For You created my innermost parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, because I am awesomely and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret, and skillfully formed in the depths of the earth; your eyes have seen my formless substance; and in Your book were written all the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.

The text challenges the idea that only “special” people are wonderfully made. Even in weakness or limitation, God calls us to praise Him. There are no special conditions to praise, no seasonal timings or required rituals. Creation worships God naturally by its existence, but we as Christians are expected to worship intentionally.

Just as Old Testament sacrifices were required, worship is the New Covenant believer's offering to God. Worship is:

- Sacrificial
- Intentional
- Daily
- Essential

Casual Christians treat worship like a casual activity but worship represents so much more, and demands so much more from us. Worship is a discipline that requires focus and training because the practice of worship ultimately forms who we are and who we will become spiritually. The text emphasizes that:

- Everyone's talents are handcrafted by God
- No two people worship in the same way
- Your creativity, skills, and quirks are designed to become worship

God desires for us as believers to always be “on-program,” as we focus on heavenly things like consistency, excellence, holiness, and godly purpose. We are not meant to be casual in our faith acting with inconsistency, being lukewarm, or expressing worship only when it is convenient or beneficial to ourselves.

Physical, outward displays of worship like singing, clapping our hands, dancing, or playing instruments are biblical and necessary, but they only serve as the starting point of what worship should look like in our lives. When our actions become an encounter with God, His presence will fill the atmosphere and transform everything around us.

Key Scripture: Acts 2:1–4 (ESV)

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

A lifestyle of worship reflects:

- Constant sensitivity to the Spirit
- Every moment seen as a Kingdom opportunity
- Transformation of thinking and behavior

Likewise, a lifestyle of worship radiates Christ, draws others to Him, and turns the events of ordinary life into opportunities for ministry. Outward expression of worship can only take us so far, but when our life itself becomes the expression of praise, everything and everyone we come into contact with will be impacted by the presence of God.

Key Scripture: Romans 12:1–2 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Key Scripture: John 4:23 (ESV)

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

We worship by living fully surrendered to God. Therefore, we must use the gifts that we have been given to glorify God, draw others to Him, and to progress the Kingdom of God forward. Your gifts and talents are not random or for personal gain, but are entrusted to you for Kingdom purpose.

Key Scripture: Luke 12:48 (NASB)

But the one who did not know it, and committed acts deserving of a beating, will receive only a few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

Our worship should declare: "He saved me, and He can save you too."

REVIEW. What areas of your life fall into the category of a lifestyle of worship even if they aren't traditionally seen that way?

PRAY. True worship brings about transformation in your life. As you partake in deliberate acts of worship throughout your week, pray that your worship would bring about transformation to your life and the lives of those around you.

MOVE. What role has sacrifice played in your lifestyle of worship up to this point? Considering worship as sacrifice, where do you go from here?



BIBLE STUDY

CHAPTER

4

Key Idea: Just as runners must strengthen multiple systems (cardio, muscles, form), Christians must develop multiple spiritual disciplines, not just one or two.

Key Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

The Purpose of the Word of God is multi-faceted and wholly beneficial.

- Teaching
- Rebuke
- Correction
- Training in righteousness
- Equips believers for every good work

Scripture corrects, guides, equips, and reveals the character of Christ. Likewise, reading the Gospels shows how Jesus lived and taught. Furthermore, understanding historical context deepens our insight into the Word of God more perfectly (e.g., the Golden Rule was revolutionary in Jesus' culture).

Key Scripture: Matthew 4:1–4 (ESV)

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus rebuke was reinforced by His perfect understanding and use of scripture. There are times that we will be tempted or attacked by the enemy. It is in those moments that we must rely on the Spirit in our lives and our knowledge of the Word of God to help us to repel that enemy.

Key Scripture: Matthew 4:5–7 (ESV)

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written..."

'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

God sees when it is fit to test us, His children. The roles should never be reversed.

Key Scripture: Matthew 4:8–11 (ESV)

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Jesus responded to temptation with Scripture, not emotion or personal opinion. He quoted Deuteronomy, tying His story to Israel's history of testing. Practically, we can understand that in-depth study shows intentionality beyond the surface. When we choose to know the Word of God, hiding it in our hearts, we reveal the intentions of our hearts.

Key Scripture: Colossians 3:16 (KJV)

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.

Many Christians know Scripture is important but do not practice consistent reading. This can be caused by distraction, wrong priorities, overfamiliarity, or even a loss of awe with what the Word has to say to them or about them. Ultimately, it should be our goal to make Bible study an integral part of our walk with God, consistently.

Scripture study, prayer, worship, service, fasting, and fellowship function as spiritual "cross-training." Together, they will produce spiritual resilience.

REVIEW. What are some practical things you can do that will allow you to prioritize reading and studying the Bible in your daily routine?

PRAY. Just as runners seek advice and knowledge from various sources like books, magazines, and podcasts, how can you actively seek resources that help deepen your understanding of your faith?

MOVE. Considering the impact of regular strength training in preventing running injuries, how can you ensure that your spiritual strength will withstand trials and temptations?

DISCIPLINE

CHAPTER

5

Key Idea: We cannot control the future, but we can develop disciplines that produce spiritual stamina.

Key Scripture: Philippians 4:8–9 (NASB)

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things. As for the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Endurance requires discipline and discipline prepares you for the unexpected. This mirrors our spiritual journey:

- Life brings unexpected struggles (conflict, finances, illness, family issues).
- We cannot control the future, but we can develop disciplines that produce spiritual stamina.

Mental endurance is often more crucial than physical strength.

Key Scripture: Isaiah 26:3 (NASB)

The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You.

Peace comes when our minds are stayed on God. What we meditate on shapes our emotional well-being, our spiritual strength, our daily endurance, and our ability to remain present.

We must be wary of hazards that threaten that peace and focus:

- Social media comparison
- Anxiety about the future
- Neglecting the present moment
- Dwelling on fear or insecurity

Inspiration is healthy while comparison is destructive. Likewise, when we focus too much on the future, i.e. the unknown and things we cannot control, we can weaken our endurance meant for the present. Our discipline should be focused on what we can control: our thoughts, our actions, and our spiritual well-being.

Your efficiency today is determined by your focus today. If there is no “why”, discipline will not last.

Key Scripture: Proverbs 4:20–23 (NASB)

My son, pay attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. They are not to escape from your sight; Keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them, And healing to all their body. Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

Keep God’s Word in your heart; from it flow the issues of life. Scripture acts like a spiritual coach allowing God to give His athletes guidance, encouragement, and strategy.

Similarly, when we rely upon the fellowship of believers, we are strengthened beyond what we can endure or accomplish on our own. God has given us the Church as a source of support and strength that must be relied on through the course of our spiritual journey.

Key Scripture: Proverbs 27:17 (NASB)

As iron sharpens iron, So one person sharpens another

Spiritual endurance grows when we run with a team. Rely on the people that God has placed in your life, and allow them to build you up, support you, and encourage you in the Spirit. Your discipline today affects your future children, the future of your ministry, and the people God calls you to influence. Don’t allow anything to get in the way of what determines your orientation and future.

Key Scripture: Hebrews 10:23–25 (NASB)

Let’s hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let’s consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds, not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Eternity should always be at the forefront of our minds, inspiring us to live above sin according to the will and purpose that God has called us to. While we may stumble and fall at times, the grace of God is powerful and sufficient. If we will trust in Him and allow Him to transform us through the process, discipline will become the foundation of our relationship with Him.

REVIEW. When we turn on the Olympics every other year and watch as athletes from around the world step up to perform, we understand that before that day arrived, they had a purpose that drove them there. In the same way, before we see our dreams fulfilled, there has to be a purpose that drives us there.

Do you have a “why” statement that you live by? If not, take the time to craft a why statement. You can even have a different why statement for each discipline/habit of your life. To help inspire your why statement, here’s an example of one of mine. Why I read: I read because I want to learn something new every day. I want to approach my everyday life as a student, which ultimately draws me closer to God and gives me the opportunity to teach others, pointing them to the God of their everyday world.

PRAY. As discussed in this chapter, what we choose to meditate on matters. Take some time to evaluate your thought life and run it through Philippians 4:8.

MOVE. Over the next few weeks, reflect on what discipline you would like to implement in your life. As mentioned in this chapter, you run your best race when you run it with others. For accountability purposes, take the time to share with a friend that discipline you’re wanting to develop. Remember to take it one day at a time. Don’t give up on the process. Weeks, months, years from now, you’ll look back and be so glad you started making those small changes today.



HEALTH

CHAPTER

6

Key Idea: What you consume shapes your communion. When your heart is filled with worldly intake, there's no room for Jesus.

Key Scripture: Matthew 6:22–24 (ESV)

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Many of us have experienced it, you glance back in the race of faith and realize people you once prayed with, worshipped with, went to camp with, and thought would never leave Jesus simply aren't running the race anymore. We are left with questions like:

- What went wrong?
- What was missing?
- What can you learn so you don't quit the race God called you to run?

In both the physical and the spiritual, your intake determines your output.

- You are what you eat.
- Late-night junk food slows you down.
- Weight loss success is from changing diet, not from exercise alone

So what you consume spiritually shapes your endurance, clarity, spiritual sensitivity, and your ability to overcome temptation in your life. Social media literally calls content a “feed.” If you're not intentional with intake, the algorithm is destined to become your chef.

You may be consuming any number of “junk food” mentalities like worldly values, bitterness, comparison, immorality, and cynicism. Any number of these things can poison your spiritual endurance. When your heart is filled with worldly intake, there's no room for Jesus.

Overconsumption leads to spiritual breathlessness and an inability to perform when it really matters in the Kingdom of God.

Many people who fall away were:

- Eating spiritual food only on Sundays
- Feeding on deception during the week
- Consuming bitter voices online
- Allowing influencers to disciple them instead of Scripture
- Bingeing entertainment that slowly suffocated conviction
- Doomscrolling until their spirit grew numb

Jesus taught us to pray for daily bread. This implies that we need to be fed daily, not allowing Sunday's spiritual meal to sustain us for days or even weeks at a time. Satan wins not by overpowering you, but by poisoning your intake.

Key Scripture: Proverbs 23:6–7 (KJV)

Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

Set your filter before the world tries to set it for you. Let the Holy Ghost filter your intake and affirm your purpose every day through study and prayer. Once you are able to consistently declare your purpose, you will find that meaningless intake doesn't fit your lifestyle any longer.

Build your consumption plan. Focus on taking in more of the Word and less of the world. Consume more of the gospel and less gossip. Finally, look to spend more time in prayer and less time allowing entertainment to determine your direction. You are loved by God, chosen, empowered, called, anointed, and favored. It is time to start living like it.

REVIEW. Like a "calorie counter" take ten to fifteen minutes at the end of each day to go through your day's "consumption," writing each major chunk down on a notepad.

PRAY. Ask God to help you be intentional in the things you begin to cut out of your life. In prayer, ask questions like, "Lord, is the time I'm spending doing/listening/watching _____ helping me draw closer to You and helping me run a successful race?"

MOVE. Put things into motion. After setting screen-time limits, deleting apps, and having tough conversations with friends or family who are negatively impacting you, start focusing on the things that matter. Then take the time to put the plan into action.

REST

CHAPTER

7

Key Idea: Rest is not a luxury or a reward, it is a biological and spiritual necessity.

Key Scripture: Matthew 11: 28–30 (ESV)

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Science emphasizes that quality rest is essential for health, clarity, and sustainability. Sleep allows the body and mind to “reload” while a general lack of rest impacts nearly every area of life. According to extensive sleep research, sleep affects a multitude of functions:

- Learning and memory
- Emotional regulation
- Judgment and decision-making
- Growth and healing

It stands to reason then that the quickest way to realize just how important rest is is to go without it. When it comes to activity, endurance sports, and even spiritual well-being then, rest is never considered weakness, rather it is considered wisdom.

Training, exercise, and movement breaks the body down while rest allows the body to recuperate and grow stronger through the rebuilding of what has been expended. Without rest, we will experience regression, burnout, and even injury. Too often, believers sell out to what they consider ministry, just to hit a wall and suffer the consequences of not prioritizing spiritual rest and well-being.

Rest is not some modern concept, but rather God’s design for His creation to safeguard against physical and spiritual burnout:

- During the process of creation God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2).
- Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8–11).
- Even farmland was commanded to rest (Leviticus 25:3–4).

We should always work hard, but we should never forget to rest.

It is important that we know our limits, as well as how to grow our capacity as a sustainable rate. We are often capable of more than we think, but we are incapable of doing everything at once. So while you can increase your capacity for things you value over time, it is still important to understand that there are limits that will force us to consider, or reconsider, what our priorities are in any season of life.

Christian leaders often neglect self-care because rest can be wrongfully associated with laziness or apathy. Guilt over these misunderstandings can prevent healthy habits and boundaries that are necessary for long-term health and perseverance. What we should take away from this is that being called doesn't mean we are obligated to give until we are destroyed.

That is why Jesus didn't just teach rest, He practiced it. He frequently retreated after bouts of intense ministry to find a place to rest, fuel, and recharge.

Key Scripture: Mark 6:31 (ESV)

And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

After healing crowds late into the night, Jesus even rose early to pray alone.

Key Scripture: Mark 1:35 (ESV)

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

Even when needs were urgent and crowds were waiting, Jesus prioritized rest and prayer.

REVIEW. How does the biblical principle of rest, expressed by God's Creation week and the Sabbath, influence your view on the importance of rest in your own life?

PRAY. How can you incorporate intentional "rest days" into your weekly schedule, similar to the concept of rest days for endurance athletes? Ask for God's direction as you incorporate rest into your weekly routine.

MOVE. Consider your current boundaries regarding work, ministry, and personal time. Are there any areas where you need to establish or reinforce boundaries to ensure you get enough rest?

SABBATH

CHAPTER

8

Key Idea: God designed Sabbath rest not as a suggestion, but as a pathway to healing, wholeness, and sustained spiritual impact.

Key Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:22 (NIV)

But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”

Christians can unintentionally spiritualize exhaustion equating busyness with faithfulness and sacrifice with obedience. Sometimes we may rely on ministry to form a suit of armor around each of us, hiding imperfections and shortcomings. Scripture shows us that obedience to the Word of God is far greater than what we deem to be “spiritually important.” Sacrifice without obedience leads to burnout, not blessing.

Key Scripture: Ecclesiastes 9:11 (NASB)

I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning, nor favor to the skillful; for time and chance overtake them all.

God designed both the body and the soul to heal through rest. Sabbath is not inactivity; it is intentional cessation from productivity so that God can do restorative work within us. What might God be producing in you during rest that busyness prevents?

When Elijah was at his most desperate, God granted him so that he could recover and get back into the fight when he was most needed. We see these events unfold in I Kings chapter 19.

Key Scripture: 1 Kings 19:6–8 (NASB)

And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a round loaf of bread baked on hot coals, and a pitcher of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. But the angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him, and said, “Arise, eat; because the journey is too long for you.” So he arose and ate and drank, and he journeyed in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Elijah's obedience to rest preserved not only his life but his legacy. Even Elisha's ministry depended on Elijah not burning out. Sabbath, in many cases, is not purely about survival, but about succession. Ministry is about discipleship of ourselves unto God, but also about making disciples so that other faithful believers can succeed us and stand on our shoulders. When we neglect our own spiritual well-being, we undermine the foundation on which others will one day stand.

As leaders, we must ask ourselves, "Am I willing to slow down voluntarily, or will I wait until God slows me down for me?" Burnout does not have to be inevitable. Wholeness is available through obedience. God still speaks in the whisper, but only to those who stop long enough to listen.

Key Scripture: Psalm 23:1–6 (NASB)

The Lord is my shepherd, I will not be in need. He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For the sake of His name. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Certainly goodness and [g]faithfulness will follow me all the days of my life, And my dwelling will be in the house of the Lord forever.

Take the time to establish a sustainable spiritual lifestyle built upon tenants of rest and reliance on God. Identify one weekly Sabbath practice, schedule intentional rest on your calendar, and set boundaries that protect physical, mental, and spiritual health.

REVIEW. Rest prevents burnout and gives us the ability to more easily hear the still, small voice of God in our lives. Take a moment to be still and ask yourself what things, outside of work and ministry, bring joy to your life. What are activities that pair well with your personality to bring about rest in your life?

PRAY. Take out your Bible and read Psalm 23. Pray it over your life. Allow the Scripture to be a place where you can find spiritual refreshment for your soul.

MOVE. In his book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, John Mark Comer encourages readers to take one day a week, one weekend a month, and one week a year to get off their phone, unplug, and practice true biblical Sabbaths with their family. Nothing happens without intentionality, so take the time to come up with your own Sabbath plan and implement it. You'll be surprised at how much more gets done when you find the time to truly rest.

COMMUNITY

CHAPTER

9

Key Idea: God designed growth, endurance, and fruitfulness to happen in community. We can run far alone, but we run farther, and finish better, together.

Key Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 (NASB)

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor; for if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up! Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

The church is not a building, it is a gathered people, called out to live life together, support each other, and gather others out from the world and into the fold.

Key Scripture: Acts 2:42–47 (ESV)

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

The daily, continual practice of community defined the early church, and it should define the church of today. They spent time together in fellowship, eating meals together, praying with one another, and attending church as a community to support and lift one another up.

Every runner matters, especially those who think they don't.

Key Scripture: Hebrews 10:23–25 (ESV)

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Growth happens through shared effort, shared struggle, and shared encouragement. We must seek to encourage ourselves and others as we walk with Christ. Even something like peer pressure can be a positive force when applied correctly and in love for one another, with eternity in mind.

Ultimately, the body grows when every member fulfills their role, not when everyone tries to act as the same part. Growth does not happen in isolation; it happens in alignment with each other and in alignment with God's will and purpose for the Church.

Key Scripture: Philippians 2:2–4 (ESV)

Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Who are you helping to reach the finish line? The greatest joy isn't just finishing the race, it comes from seeing others finish with us. Yes, you are running your own race, but you are not running alone. The church is strongest when every runner stays in the race, lifts others up, and keeps moving toward the same finish line.

We finish best when we finish together.

REVIEW. How can you apply the principle of unity and team-work from I Corinthians 12 to your relationships with others in your church?

PRAY. What are some ways you can motivate and encourage others around you to achieve their goals, both in faith and in other areas of life? It is important that we bring the needs of our community before God in prayer. Let others know you are praying for them. Just an encouraging text can strengthen your brothers and sisters in Christ in ways you never realized.

MOVE. In what practical ways can you ensure you are prioritizing the needs and interests of others over your own in your daily interactions?

TEAMWORK

CHAPTER

10

Key Idea: Growth rarely happens overnight, but consistent progress happens best in the right community. Over time, small improvements create big results.

Key Scripture: Philippians 3:13–14 (ESV)

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Runners aim for incremental growth; getting slightly faster, slightly farther, slightly stronger. In our spiritual walk, we aren't striving for big, life-changing experiences to take place every day. Instead, we should aspire to make small, measurable changes that we can build up and that will grow with us.

Air resistance (drag) is invisible but powerful. In a marathon, it can cost runners several minutes. Likewise, unseen resistance (discouragement, fear, isolation, waiting seasons) can slow us down spiritually. It is important that when we feel bogged down my life, we identify problem areas and do our best to eliminate that resistance as soon as we can. The earlier we can attack temptation and sin in our lives, the more effective we will be at removing it at the root.

Unseen resistance will inevitably impact our long-term faithfulness. Help can be found when we rely on:

- Pastoral Leadership
- Mentors
- Faithful Friends
- The Church
- Jesus Christ

Key Scripture: Hebrews 12:1–2 (ESV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The road doesn't change—but how we run it does. Running with others allows shared strength, protection, and perseverance. Motivations may fade when we're alone, but encouragement is contagious and empowering, multiplying when we're together.

In I Kings chapter 19, we see that even after incredible victory, Elijah became overwhelmed, discouraged, and afraid, largely because he was running alone. It becomes increasingly important so have a support system when resistance increases.

Key Scripture: Galatians 6:9 (ESV)

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

Accountability is not someone policing us, it's about choosing to walk in rhythm with others. Accountability may feel uncomfortable at first, running contrary to how we were raised or how we have lived our lives up to this point, but accountability and motivation work hand-in-hand, keeping us spiritually consistent, even when things get hard.

Paul endured extraordinary resistance in his life and ministry, yet he never ran alone. His ministry was marked by exceptional teammates like Ananias, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Luke, Priscilla, and Aquila. In God's kingdom, there is no MVP. Success is shared and victory is collective. We run today so the next generation can run farther tomorrow. A team mindset multiplies impact beyond one lifetime.

REVIEW. Everybody has faced unpleasant things in life. These unwanted trials seemed hard at the moment, but you somehow made it through. What would be the top three most difficult things you have faced?

Now think about how you conquered and came out of those trials. Did the Lord make a way? Did He give you peace in the middle of your storm? Did He give you strength to endure? What would be your testimony to someone facing an uncertain situation?

PRAY. The Lord has been faithful to you in the past, and He will be faithful to you in the future. How can you remind yourself that no matter what you face, you are able to overcome any resistance?

MOVE. Think about what accountability means to you. How would you describe your current level of accountability? Who are you accountable to that can help you to victory?

FINISH LINE

CHAPTER

11

Key Idea: The Christian life is not about how fast you start, it's about how faithfully you finish. God calls us to run with endurance, focus, and perseverance, even when the race is long, difficult, and marked by setbacks.

Key Scripture: Philippians 1:3–6 (ESV)

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Eliud Kipchoge is remembered not for where he began, but for how he finished. His pursuit of the finish line pushed the boundaries of what was once considered impossible. Life is not a sprint; it's a marathon. Our spiritual endurance matters more than bursts of intensity or passion as they much sooner burn out. Consistency, running in tandem with Christ in our lives, that is what will allow us to persevere until we cross over into eternity with Him.

It is important that we ask ourselves, "What habits help sustain long-term faithfulness?" Invest in those things over the physical and temporary pleasures that life offers.

Paul compared the Christian journey to a race that requires focus, discipline, and intentional effort.

Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:24–26 (ESV)

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.

A physical race has only one winner, whereas this spiritual race is more focused on completing the race set before us. Greater than any medal or wreath, the reward we receive is everlasting and eternal. That is why Paul declares that this race must be run with intentionality and purpose, so that we can complete it together and rejoice in our eternal reward. You can't win a race you quit and you can't finish a race you don't run intentionally.

Endurance runners remove unnecessary weight. Spiritually, unforgiveness, bitterness, fear, and sin slow us down. Even though we may stumble and make mistakes, thanks be to God that our mistakes do not disqualify us from finishing the race or receiving our reward. Peter started strong, stumbled badly, but finished faithfully. His denial of Jesus was not the end of his story. Likewise, Paul wandered aimlessly until He received revelation on the road to Damascus.

We cannot allow a late start or small mistakes to derail our ultimate destination.

Key Scripture: Proverbs 13:4 (NASB)

The soul of the lazy one craves and gets nothing, but the soul of the diligent is made prosperous.

Paul wrote about finishing the race while imprisoned—proof that circumstances don't determine completion.

Key Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:7–8 (NASB)

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Your current condition does not cancel your calling. Regardless of your past failures and mistakes, there are undeniable truths:

- You are a child of God.
- You have been chosen; called for a purpose.
- You are full of the Holy Ghost
- Christ died so that you might live, abundantly.

Even though you are tired, keep running. Even if you stumble, get back up. Even on days when the finish line feels far off, remember that you're closer today than you were yesterday.

You were not sent into this race just to start it—you were sent to finish it.

Key Scripture: Hebrews 3:14 (ESV)

For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

REVIEW. We discussed Eliud's goal to break the two-hour marathon record. Think about a time when you set a goal (New Year's resolutions could count too) but weren't able to complete it. How did that make you feel? Did you try again or just give up? If you gave up on that goal, why do you think you never tried to achieve it again?

Now think of a goal that you achieved. How did you achieve it? Are there any differences in the way you accomplished the goal versus the goal you didn't accomplish?

PRAY. Have you ever felt that your past is hindering your success in reaching future goals? Pray that God would help you over-come your past and move forward into the future without hold-ing you hostage, so you can fulfill God's plan for your life.

MOVE. What if Peter would have stayed on the sideline because of his mistakes? What can we learn from Peter's resilience to finish the tasks the Lord had set for him? How can we apply that to our lives?



CONCLUSION

Key Idea: The Christian life is not meant to be run alone. The church succeeds only when every person cooperates together as one, dependent on God and committed to one another, so that we may finish the race strong.

Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12–13 (ESV)

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves^[a] or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Key Scripture: Ephesians 4:3–6 (ESV)

Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call — one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Many believers wonder if they have what it takes to follow God faithfully. The answer isn't perfection—it's perseverance.

- Have you ever questioned whether you're capable of living out your calling?
- Why is "keep at it" such important advice in the Christian life?
- How do daily spiritual habits shape long-term faithfulness?

Inspiration fades, but motivation, rooted in discipline, leads to action. Endurance is built through intentional, consistent habits. Emotional spiritual highs often fade over time, but a life built on discipline and faith is one that is built on a firm foundation. We can be inspired, but motivation is found within ourselves, ignited and maintained by the power of the Holy Ghost living inside of us. If we will rely on the things that God has given us to fuel and maintain our journey, there is nothing physical or spiritual that can derail our efforts or our godly motivations.

Key Scripture: John 15:5 (ESV)

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

We must abide in Christ if we are going to be successful in this race of life. Likewise, we must support each other, building one another up in the Holy Spirit, so that we may elevate the community of the church as a whole and encourage others to run with excellence.

The church is not a building—it is a people. Every believer brings something essential to the body of Christ. When we begin to value every other person as a child of God, chosen for a purpose, we honor God and His vision of unified body of believers. Together, we are so much better off than when we try to run alone. The truth of this race is that it is impossible to finish without a crew. The unseen encouragement of a team gives strength beyond physical preparation.

- How does community provide strength that personal effort cannot?
- Who has been part of your “crew” during difficult seasons?

Key Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 (ESV)

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Key Scripture: Hebrews 10:24–25 (ESV)

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The Christian race isn't about personal glory. It's about God's glory revealed through His church walking in obedience together. Life is not a sprint—it's an endurance race. You were never meant to run alone so stay connected to the crew that He has given you. Depend fully on God, keep your eyes on the finish line, and allow Him to take care of the rest.

- What spiritual disciplines help you build endurance?
- Where might God be calling you to lean more into community?
- Who can you encourage this week to help them keep running?

As we run this race together, may we all let God carry us through the finish line.

For additional resources, head here:



For the Hyphen Young Adult Podcast, here here:

