

# 5 Day Devo to Prep for Camp

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**TRAINING FOR GODLINESS**

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# *Monday* TRAINING FOR GODLINESS

Who do you want to be?

I ask this for one reason: Who you are will define what you do. This is true every time. The enemy has known this since the beginning when he tempted Eve with her identity. He said she would be “like God” even though she was already made in his image. (Genesis 3:5). We see this again in the book of Matthew when the devil appears to Jesus and tempts him three times by questioning his identity, saying “if You are the Son of God...” do this. (Matthew 4:1-11). The enemy is after your identity. If he can get you to question who you are, then you will never do what you are created to do. So now the question is this: Who has God created you to be? Or better yet: How do you get there? As Christians we need to have a goal of who we want to be. We need to seek the Kingdom above anything else. Our desire should be the kind of person who lives in such a way where God’s Kingdoms becomes the reality in which we live from, in, and for. That sounds beautiful, but how do we get there? The answer is short. Training. Lots of Training.

The Bible states it this way:

“If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” (1 Tim 4:6-8, ESV)

In the same way that; we would train our cardio to run longer, train our muscles to lift heavier things, or train our minds to solve problems, we need to train ourselves in godliness to accomplish God’s will here on earth. The prophet Jeremiah was given a very hard task. He was to warn people of their unbelief and apostasy and the consequences that would come as a result. One of the things that he saw was that the righteous were persecuted and the wicked prospered. In Jeremiah 12:4, Jeremiah complains to God about what he has endured as one of God’s chosen. Let’s look at how God responds to Jeremiah’s complaint.

“If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses?

And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?”  
(Jer 12:5, ESV)

God expected him to not just compete with men, but with horses. How will we ever compete with horses when we get tired of running with men? Again, the answer is simple: Training... and lots of it. God calls us to a higher standard as Christians. We were never meant to just “go with the flow”. He has called us to train ourselves in godliness so that we can “run with horses”. So how can we train?

Much like training for a race or sporting event, we train with repetition and consistency. We train with prayer, worship, confession, serving, fellowship and studying the Word of God. It is never too late to start training, but it is of the utmost importance that you start your training now instead of later. How else will we run with horses?

*Tuesday*

## WORSHIP

To worship God means to express awe and reverence towards Him and all His marvelous qualities. This can be done in a variety of ways— either by singing songs of praise, serving your neighbor, or living a pure and godly life. All these things honor and glorify God. However, one of the most essential parts of worship is taking your eyes off yourself. When I began to discuss this topic of worship with the Lord the other day, I felt like He said: “If you would only remember where I am and where I would be, most of your worries would be taken care of.” When we truly worship and put into perspective the grandeur of His goodness and majesty, most of our problems, which were so daunting before, begin to pale in comparison. To put it simply, when we focus on God and His character, all our problems become a lot smaller. But why is this? Do our problems truly get smaller? Well, not necessarily. That is, not until we see the Lord’s intervention. However, we realize that these problems have an even more powerful and effective solution than we could have realized or imagined. Therefore, in every moment, it is essential to worship the Lord and keep in perspective just how great and beautiful He is. After all, He is worthy of all our praise. In the book of Psalms, we can see how David and the other psalmists praise Him time and time again. In fact, throughout the Bible, we see several examples of the Lord receiving recognition from His people. In Psalm 100:6, it says: “Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!”

Additionally, it is important that when we spend time with the Lord, we spend time properly worshipping and glorifying Him. In the Lord’s prayer in Matthew 6 (also Luke 11), Jesus begins His prayer to the Father by saying “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” Notice how He did not begin by making His own requests, but instead focused on His heavenly Father by worshipping Him. If Jesus began His prayer like this and thought it was important to prioritize worshipping the Father, shouldn’t we do the same? Furthermore, we can see in the Old Testament with the Israelites that when they took their eyes off God and began to worship the pagan gods and the cultures around them, they began to crumble as people and as a society. Once again, this is because they failed to worship the one true God, lost sight of who He is, and ultimately forgot who they were. By worshipping and recognizing the Father for who He is, we learn more about both His identity and ours. But how do we worship the Father? Romans 12:1-2 says this: “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.” So ultimately, worshipping God looks like living a life that is set apart (that doesn’t follow the patterns and trends of this world) and is full of submission (humility and obedience towards God’s Word and authority). When we humble ourselves and submit, living life as He has commanded us to, we are truly worshipping God and honoring Him through our words and deeds. This can be done in several ways, but it all starts by listening to God through prayer and His Word. I encourage you to ask the Lord this question today: “What is one way I can submit to you and worship you today?” He may ask you to simply stop and listen or He may ask you to stand up and dance during worship. But first, before you ask, begin by glorifying His name. After all, He is a good and gracious God who truly does deserve all of the glory. Thank you, God, for being so good to Your children!

*Wednesday*

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## CONFESSION

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What does it mean to confess something? In the Bible, the word “confess” is used in several different ways, but it is often used to describe someone acknowledging or making something known. For something to be revealed about us (especially if that something is related to a shameful act) can be a scary experience. However, Scripture teaches us that there is freedom in the act of acknowledging our sins. The Apostle John writes, “If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9, NIV, italics added). We can see that the act of confession involves making known our sins before God with the assurance that he will forgive us. We know that through the atoning sacrifice of our high priest, Jesus, our sins have been forgiven and decisively dealt with (Heb 10:12). Sometimes, even though we know this, running to God with the expectation that he will be faithful to forgive us still doesn’t come as naturally as we might like.

Perhaps looking at the response of David, the “poster boy” of Israel’s kings and a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14), will help. As we know, David was such a good king that he served as the measuring stick for all future kings of Judah. However, despite David’s accomplishments, you might remember that he was nowhere near perfect. In fact, David did something that left a blood-stained mark on his reputation. In a moment of bad judgement, David committed adultery with the woman Bathsheba. When his plans to cover up the affair didn’t work, he schemed to have Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah, killed. Adultery and murder were two sins that under the Mosaic law would have resulted in death for the transgressor (Lev 20:10; 24:17). These were serious sins and David was doing everything he could to keep them a secret. In other words, he was trying his best not to confess. However, David’s sins were not unknown by God and in an act of mercy God sent Nathan the prophet to confront David about what he had done. Once the light of truth was shining onto what David tried to very hard to keep in the dark, he had two options. He could continue to deny his wrong doings by desperately trying to keep them hidden in his own disillusionment. Or, David could confess and acknowledge that he was wrong. Which would you choose?

At perhaps David lowest moment, he penned the word of Psalm 51. Let’s read this prayer written by David after he was confronted about his sin to see what he did.

1 Have mercy on me, O God,  
because of your unfailing love.  
Because of your great compassion,  
blot out the stain of my sins.  
2 Wash me clean from my guilt.  
Purify me from my sin.  
3 For I recognize my rebellion;  
it haunts me day and night.  
4 Against you, and you alone, have I sinned;  
I have done what is evil in your sight.  
You will be proved right in what you say,  
and your judgment against me is just. [a]

*Wednesday*

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## CONFESSION

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5 For I was born a sinner—  
yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.  
6 But you desire honesty from the womb,<sup>[b]</sup>  
teaching me wisdom even there.  
7 Purify me from my sins,<sup>[c]</sup> and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.  
8 Oh, give me back my joy again;  
you have broken me—  
now let me rejoice.  
9 Don't keep looking at my sins.  
Remove the stain of my guilt.  
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God.  
Renew a loyal spirit within me.

11 Do not banish me from your presence,  
and don't take your Holy Spirit<sup>[d]</sup> from me.  
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and make me willing to obey you.  
13 Then I will teach your ways to rebels,  
and they will return to you.  
14 Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves;  
then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness.  
15 Unseal my lips, O Lord,  
that my mouth may praise you.  
16 You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one.  
You do not want a burnt offering.  
17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.  
You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.  
18 Look with favor on Zion and help her;  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.  
19 Then you will be pleased with sacrifices offered in the right spirit—  
with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings.  
Then bulls will again be sacrificed on your altar.  
(Ps 51, NLT)

As we can see, David chose to confess his sins before God, acknowledging that all he can offer is a broken spirit and a repentant heart. Like David, sometimes we want to hide our sins from God, but this is to mistake his character. God does not desire for us to sit in the shame and guilt of our sins. He desires and even provided the way through Christ for us to be able to come to him despite our brokenness. He is faithful to forgive and restore those who approach his throne with humble confession. God wants you to run to him when you fall short so that he can remind you of who you are because of Christ. Going forward, let us be quick to confess our sins to God in confidence that we will be met with a loving embrace which continuously transforms us into the image of the Son. Let us end with a quote from D. A. Croteau: "Therefore, go to God with the confidence that you have been forgiven and cleansed; confess your sins to Him and make that a pattern of your life. Our response to God saving us should be a life characterized by walking in the light. Admitting we struggle with sin and being willing to confess our sins to God is the characteristic of someone who has been saved by grace through faith."

Merry Christmas!

You might be asking why I am making that statement in the middle of summer. That's a fair question. It's because I believe that the story of Jesus' birth is one of the most powerful illustrations of how we are called to serve. Think for a moment: When was the last time you sat and thought about the majesty of God? His beauty, his goodness, his power, his faithful loyal love? When was the last time you felt the awe that comes when we experience firsthand the Lord's kindness, his grandiose creation, his subtlety?

Wait, what?

Yeah, God's subtlety. At the same time the nativity story is filled with power and wonder at God's working, it is also filled with subtlety. Let me make a few observations about the story of Jesus' birth.

- Jesus was born to ordinary parents. There was nothing remarkable about them. They were not royalty or rich or special in any discernable way. Yet, God chose Mary and Joseph to be the ones who would serve as his earthly parents. The Alpha and the Omega crying out for the arms of his mother.
- Jesus was born in the small town of Bethlehem in a place that was meant for animals. The King of kings sleeping with the donkeys.
- The Caesar, the lord of the Roman world, who would celebrate his birthday with massive festivals and choirs singing praises of Caesar to the masses. However, Jesus, the Lord of lords had a choir of angels show up to just a few shepherds who were keeping watch in a nearby field.

It's remarkable, isn't it? The same Jesus we read about in Colossians who "by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together... For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." (Col 1:16-17, 19) is the same Jesus who left the glories of heaven to enter into his creation in the form of a helpless baby. At the same time he upheld every atom in the universe together, he was held by the arms of the one's he created. At the same time he was being fed by his mother, the stars in the farthest parts of the galaxy were sustained by him. But why would Jesus do this? Because he loved you. Again, pause and think about the significance of that statement. Jesus loves you.

What's more is that God demonstrated his love for you by sending his Son to take on the consequences of your sin. In other words, Jesus took the form of a servant so that we could be reconciled to God. Bethlehem started what Golgotha finished. The Son of God coming not to be served, but to serve. Truthfully, when I take the time to think about all that Jesus has done and demonstrates in his life, I am ashamed of all the times where I thought I was too good to serve. All of the times where I made what I was doing about people seeing me so that they would think that I was great. That's not how Jesus modeled his life and it's certainly not how we should model him to the world. We are called to love like he loved by serving like he served. As we approach camp, let us adopt the attitude of Christ. Paul challenged the church in Philippi by writing this:

"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. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:3-11, ESV, italics added)

Biblical scholar Robert Lightner comments, "No better example of humiliation and a selfless attitude for believers to follow could possibly be given than that of Christ." So then, let us together take on Paul's challenge. Let us live from humility by serving one another just like Christ demonstrated to us.

Prayer: Father God, we repent of all the times that we have not modeled servanthood because of pride. We ask that you work into us a humility to live as servants to the world around us. Let us not view serving as a chore, but as an opportunity to become more like you Jesus. Shape me, O' God, into the servant you have called me to be. Amen.

# Friday

## COMMUNITY

The irony is not lost on me that as I write this devo on Community, I have recently become an introvert in the last year. Usually meeting, spending time with, and getting to know people takes a lot more energy than I gain. Although this is currently how I am wired, I know I would not be able to grow as a person or in my faith without community.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12: "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Without community, we can be left feeling defeated, isolated, and weak. Befriending people who are rich in the Holy Spirit and the Word of God opens up a door for us to grow, be encouraged, and stay protected against any attack of the enemy. When I have been faced with a difficult or big decision, I turn to friends like this because I am seeking advice that has a Kingdom perspective rather than a worldly or self-focus.

In Matthew 18, Jesus explains how the disciples will pray when handling a difficult situation with a brother or sister in Christ,

(19-20) "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

These verses in context relate to handling correction to a brother or sister in the church, and I think the passage is powerful. We need relationships that do not remain surface-level but involve difficult conversations, confrontation, and prayer. We are encouraged to challenge and refine one another into the image of Christ together.

Additionally, when we gather in prayer with one another, Jesus encourages us that He is present. When I was on a mission trip in Wyoming, our team was praying for miracles during a food drive-through. One of the adults on the mission trip (Mike Woodell) was praying with me. I felt a lot more supported, confident, and at ease through the process knowing we were praying for these people together. Even more so, as Mike and I prayed for each person who came through the drive-through, Jesus was right there with us. How much more powerful and bold does that make us to know the Son of God is healing, believing, and transforming lives beside us!

Being in a community is not always easy, but it protects, grows, and strengthens us in our walk of Faith. Kingdom-centered friends call us out when we need it but also pray, encourage, and help us as well. If you have not experienced this kind of friendship before, we hope that you will have a chance to make friends like this at camp this year!

Prayer: Jesus, I thank You for friendships that reflect Your love and glorify You. May our friendships be created and built up at camp. God, give me the boldness to surround, protect, and pray over our friends. I thank you that every one of them is a blessing given to me by You. May I abound in Your mercy and kindness to every single person I meet. In Jesus name, Amen.