



**21-DAY**

**DEVOTIONAL**

**#ANYGIVENWEEKEND**

Who's Your  
**ONE?**



# Who's Your ONE?

When we launched *Who's Your One* in 2019, we wanted this effort to mobilize every Southern Baptist to identify one person in their life to pray for and share the gospel with. The North American Mission Board has witnessed the enthusiasm of church pastors and leaders around the country as they implemented the initiative, evidenced by the hundreds of texts and celebration stories we've seen.

*Who's Your One* is not an elaborate or complicated idea, but it's a simple question that has evangelistic momentum.

The idea of #AnyGivenWeekend revolves around the fact that just as sports take place on any given weekend, the church is gathering to share the gospel so lives can be changed. Like at any sporting event, anything can happen and that's a great thing!

Go to **[whosyourone.org](https://whosyourone.org)** to see the *Who's Your One* stories of athletes. Get encouraged, and share these stories with your one.

#AnyGivenWeekend is about maximizing the momentum of churches and believers "to go make disciples." With God's grace, let's continue to keep the faith and stay diligent in reaching our ones.



## **DAY 1** | TURN ON YOUR LIGHT

You are the light of the world — like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your Heavenly Father.

**MATTHEW 5:14-16, NLT**

Have you ever noticed what happens on a summer night when the porch lights come on? They beam out an invitation to an insect party! Instantly, those lights' glow draws dozens of flies, mosquitos, gnats, and the like.


Interestingly, lights are pretty simple objects. They aren't loud. They aren't demonstrative. They don't do special tricks to draw attention. Lights just shine. And whatever they attract, they simply elicit because of its consistent presence.

Many people have taken steps towards a relationship with Jesus because of one person who simply allowed their light to shine. NFL Hall of Famer and Super Bowl-winning coach Tony Dungy, known for finding ways to use his vast platform to share his faith, once pointed to two individuals. His mother and his former teammate with the Pittsburgh Steelers drew Tony's attention to a deep relationship with Jesus without any extra fanfare.

These two witnesses just stood on the strength of who God called them to be, and Dungy was drawn in and allowed a bright light for Christ to be placed within him. His light has shone around the globe.

If you're a Christian, you've got the same "porch light" power in you except the power of your light isn't measured by wattage, but by the presence of Jesus shining through you in word and deed. You've already got what it takes — right now — to attract one soul to Him. Who is your one?

**Take time today to prayerfully consider your *one*. Who is one individual you see consistently or have a true burden for? Identify that person and begin asking God to give you fresh opportunities to draw them to Jesus through His light inside you.**



## **DAY 2** | ARE YOU READY TO SHARE? (PART 1)

The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.” Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading? The man replied, “How can I unless someone instructs me?” And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.”

**ACTS 8:29-31, NLT**

During the 2018-19 NBA season, Houston Rockets star shooting guard James Harden averaged 36.1 points and more than seven assists per game. He was widely known as one of the league's best scorers and most ball-dominant players.

Meanwhile, Russell Westbrook spent his last three seasons with the Oklahoma City Thunder averaging a triple-double in points, assists, and rebounds. He also was known as one of the NBA's most ball-dominant players.

So, when it was announced during the offseason that Westbrook would join Harden on the Rockets for the 2019-20 season, the trade sent shockwaves throughout the league. Few people thought it would be a good idea for one ball-dominant scorer to join another, instead of finding another team where he could be "the man." It immediately had people wondering how pairing up two of the most ball-hungry players in the league would work.

Basketball skeptics said the duo would struggle to gel because of how much each desired to have the ball in his hands, but before the season began, Harden expressed his confidence in the arrangement.

More than halfway through the 2019-20 season, the arrangement seemed to be working fine. Both players were averaging around 30 points and more than seven assists per game for a team that's likely to make a championship run.

"When you have talent like that, it works itself out," Harden said. "Throughout the season, you figure things out. You've got guys who are willing to sacrifice. It always works itself out."

**Sacrifice.** Both players surrendered their status as stars on their own team and joined forces in the most unlikely way to try and create a title contender.

Sacrifice may be part of being the light for your *one*, especially if it means being prepared to shine at a moment's notice and in places

you might not choose for yourself. Would you be willing to leave what seem like fertile mission fields and follow God’s direction to a more obscure place to share the gospel?

What if your *one* is someone or somewhere who is completely beyond your comfort zone or your expected place? Are you able to discern the voice of God well enough to recognize Him leading you in a direction you didn’t plan on going?

The Apostle Philip was willing.

The shift in Philip’s ministry is interesting because the Holy Spirit led him away from what many would call a successful and sizable ministry and into the desert, where he met an unlikely Ethiopian stranger. Philip discovered God had already prepared the Ethiopian to be his *one*.


God’s Spirit took Philip away from where he was comfortable, but brought him to where he was most needed. Some may look at Philip’s move as a demotion — from a “mega” ministry to trying to explain the Word of God to one guy in the desert, but it actually proved to be a greater opportunity.

Philip shared the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch, and he was immediately receptive and wanted to be baptized. The Ethiopian took the gospel back home with him, and Philip’s ministry to his *one* facilitated the gospel’s entrance into an entirely new country.

We’re often afraid to step out on faith and share with someone at the Holy Spirit’s urging, but Philip’s story shows that when we’re obedient to God’s promptings to share the gospel with our *one*, we’ll often find God is giving us someone whose heart is already prepared to receive His Son. We’ll also realize that the *one* with whom we share may become instrumental in bringing Christ to the nations.

**God is always ready to give us a heart prepared for the gospel. The question is, will you be ready. Ask God to help you be prepared to share with your one.**





## **DAY 3** | ARE YOU READY TO SHARE? (PART 2)

The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.” Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading? The man replied, “How can I unless someone instructs me?” And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.”

**ACTS 8:29-31, NLT**

Sometimes standing up for what's right puts you in harm's way.

On April 15, 1947, Jackie Robinson, a Brooklyn Dodgers first baseman, broke the Major League Baseball color barrier by being the first African-American athlete to play in the Major Leagues.

Today, 50 years after his passing, Robinson is widely lauded for his courage and bravery. In 1962, he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, but back then, Robinson's presence was hardly tolerated, let alone accepted. In fact, during his first days playing Major League ball, he often received insults and death threats.

But Robinson's decision to stand in and take the heat was his way of serving other athletes of color for years to come. His sacrifice paved the way. He didn't have to and could've taken an easier, more self-serving route. If he did, what might have happened to the fate of professional baseball? How much longer would racism have showed its ugly head in the sport?

Having courage in the face of harsh and even dangerous ridicule isn't fun, but it can provide perhaps the most potent witness of what someone believes.

As we continue to think of Philip and the power of sharing with our *one*, we ought to consider the great American evangelist, Billy Graham.

Few people acquainted with the Christian faith have not heard of Graham's ministry, even in passing. Known for packing-out large arenas and venues, Graham preached a simple gospel message that encouraged people to turn from their sins and seek the love, joy, peace, and freedom that can only come in a life surrendered to Jesus.

Before Graham became famous for preaching the masses into salvation, he was someone's *one*.

While hundreds of thousands of people came to know of Graham through his ministry, perhaps fewer knew about Mordecai Ham, a controversial itinerant preacher.

Ham preached a series of revival meetings in Charlotte, North Carolina, when on Nov. 1, 1934, Graham felt compelled to give his life to the Lord. After that, he continued to be affected by the strength of Ham's preaching. Sometimes Ham invited Graham to sit in the place assigned for preachers. Graham pointed to that time as an early influence in his ministry development.

According to Graham's own recollection, one of the things that drew him to Ham's services was the good bit of controversy surrounding Ham's presence. Rumors even circulated of people wanting to do Ham bodily harm, which reminds us that sometimes sharing the gospel isn't safe but can put us in harm's way.

What if Ham decided to cower from the upset masses and not show up to preach that night? What if he had just cancelled his Charlotte ministry altogether? Perhaps Graham never would have been converted, and thousands of souls would have never experienced Christ's saving power through Graham's preaching.

**Even when we think our ministry to *one* isn't significant, it can be. And it can have farther-reaching implications than we could ever imagine, especially if we're willing to be courageous in how we share ourselves. Ask the Lord to give you the courage to share the gospel with your one.**



## **DAY 4** | DON'T GET BEAT TWICE

**As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.**

**2 THESSALONIANS 3:13, ESV**

One of the biggest culprits that keep us from aggressively sharing the gospel with people is fear — namely, fear of rejection. Even after we've prayed and identified someone as our *one*, we may not always automatically get the receptivity Philip got with the Ethiopian eunuch.

There will be times when rejection is unavoidable. In those times, we have to depend on God to help us not allow rejection to keep us from trying again.

In the sports world, there's an adage about not allowing a team to beat you twice. This comes up whenever a team loses a heartbreaking game that it perhaps feels it should've won. When that happens, a good coach will do what he or she can to help the team get over the psychological hurdle of crushing loss before facing the next opponent on the schedule. They do this because the lingering mental and emotional effects of the tough loss could cause the team to lose to that next opponent. In effect, the first team beat them twice.

When we share the gospel and get rejected, we may be tempted to stew in that rejection and second-guess ourselves, essentially psyching ourselves out of future opportunities to share.

**But in the words of a good coach, don't let that rejection beat you twice. Even if you felt like you missed an opportunity, said the wrong thing, or didn't obey the Holy Spirit's prompting in some way, don't wallow in shame and self-pity about it.**

**Instead, receive God's forgiveness and limitless mercy. Then open your eyes and be on the hunt once again for ways you can reach your *one*.**



## **DAY 5 | TEAM EVANGELISM**

**They worshiped together at the temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity ... all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people, and each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.**

**ACTS 2:46-47, NLT**

Coleman Rudolph, former Georgia Tech All-American and NFL standout, once said, “When I was in training camp with the New York Giants, I was blessed to have several teammates who were believers, and through them, that’s really the way I came to faith in Christ.”

Teams aren’t just for winning games. They also can be for winning souls. There are countless athletes across the country, and even around the world, with testimonies similar to that of Coleman Rudolph.

That testimony is of a team’s influence. In teams you find community, camaraderie, and shared interest. It’s an extended form of family, not unlike what is depicted in Acts 2:40-47.

In those early church days, the core group of apostles quickly gave way to thousands of believers making up the church and learning how to live life together, having “all things in common.” Surely there were outliers — people who were less than genuine in their faith, but there were enough authentic members on the gospel “team” with the kind of influence that drew new believers in, even while building current believers up.

**Even as you consider your *one*, bring others to help you. There is strength in numbers. Find three or four people with whom you can pray and journey in your quest to find that *one* with whom God’s Spirit wants you to share His love. You may be surprised how the strength of community not only can help build your faith, but can make it easier to find people to bring to Jesus.**



## **DAY 6** | NOT EASY, BUT NECESSARY

It was good for me to be afflicted so that I could learn Your statutes.

**PSALMS 119:71, CSB**



Every good story has a pivotal point. It's the place where hardships or resistance show up and force someone to make a life-changing choice.

Sometimes the pivotal points make for poetic storytelling. Other times, those moments are just downright hard and unfavorable. But they create part of our testimonies.

What is your story's pivotal point? What is your testimony?

Whatever it is, no matter how difficult, or perhaps even shameful in some way, become acquainted with your personal testimony and become comfortable sharing it.

Why? Because transparency is ministry.

Jarryd Wallace was on his way to a career as a world-class runner. Now he's a Paralympic athlete who uses his platform to share his faith in Jesus.

Jarryd's testimony includes coming to faith in Jesus as a 19-year old, and then having to trust God six weeks later when he was badly injured and his leg had to be amputated.

Don't feel sorry for Jarryd, though. Even when he was young in his faith, he had a firm grasp on the magnitude of his testimony.

"At Day 1 I wouldn't have seen amputation as a positive," he said. "But I trusted God fully. I gave that to Him. I gave up my identity to trust Him, knowing that He would do immeasurably more.

"I don't need a leg to run for Jesus. He's going to create those opportunities."

If Jarryd could've kept his leg, he may have one day won Olympic gold, but because Jarryd gave up his identity as a champion runner while fully embracing his identity as God's child, he now wins something more valuable — souls for Jesus.

Jarryd's *one* is actually someone in Tokyo, Japan — an engineer who helps design the blades Jarryd uses to run at the highest level in Paralympic competition. He likely wouldn't have met him if not for his testimony as an amputee.

**Don't be afraid of your story. Find courage in your story, even the ugly parts—especially the ugly parts. Your *one* is likely looking for someone who can show them how all this Christianity stuff works in the midst of life's most trying times. Let your testimony show them how it's done.**



## **DAY 7** | DON'T NEGLECT YOUR FAMILY

**Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah!" Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus.**

**JOHN 1:40-42A, NLT**

Sometimes your biggest win isn't beating the other opponent. It's the soul you may win who is closest to you. It's winning over your teammates.

Kobe Bryant, the great Los Angeles Laker, was known for his tenacious work ethic and his ability to take over a basketball game, either through prolific scoring or lockdown defense. One thing that can't be underestimated was his ability to win over his own teammates, even despite his ultra-competitive nature.

Bryant believed that winning over his own teammates — the ones who were closest to him — had to take precedence over beating any opponent.

“The important thing is that your teammates have to know you're pulling for them and that you really want them to be successful,” Bryant once said. “I'll do whatever it takes to win games, whether it's sitting on a bench waving a towel, handing a cup of water to a teammate, or hitting the game-winning shot. The most important thing, though, is to try and inspire people so they can be great at whatever they want to do.”

What if your *one* God wants you to inspire to trust Jesus is right in your family? What if he or she is right under your own roof, or someone you're closely associated with on a sports team you play or coach for?

What if Andrew, who was more quick to recognize Jesus than his brother Simon, didn't make the move first to point out Jesus, then take the next step to actually bring his brother to meet Him?

We can't assume that people who know us, see us, and spend the most time with us know enough to automatically come to Christ by the indirect proxy of our personal relationship with Him.

As you're praying to God to help you recognize your *one*, don't neglect looking in those places and among the people who are closest to you.

Andrew's introduction of Simon to Jesus paid off immediately, as Jesus promptly gave Simon a new identity — Cephas or Peter, meaning rock — and, later, a key hand in establishing the New Testament church after Christ's resurrection and ascension.

**The *one* God is calling you to share the gospel with may share your same locker room or even your last name.**



## **DAY 8** | STAY SINGLE-MINDED

For I decided that while I was with you, I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified.

**1 CORINTHIANS 2:2, NLT**

On Saturday Nov. 23, 2013, the Georgia Southern Eagles football team stunned the Florida Gators and the whole college football world by walking out of the Swamp, the nickname for the Gators' home football field, with a 26-20 win.

Beyond it being a monumental upset of a then-Division I-AA team over a Division I powerhouse, the Eagles became the first football team from a lower division to run for more than 400 yards against Florida. The final tally was 429 rushing yards.

But the staggering thing was that all Georgia Southern did was run the ball.

The Eagles attempted three passes and completed none of them. In an era of college football where everyone thought winning big without a passing game was next to impossible, they stayed with the one thing they knew best: running the ball.

The Georgia Southern Eagles showed the power of single-mindedness and sticking with what works. Their example speaks to the power of knowing your strengths and weaknesses to reach your purpose.

In the case of the believer, we've got one major play in the playbook, and the Apostle Paul showed us what it was — it's Jesus, crucified for the remission of our sins, risen, and coming again to gather His church — all those who believe in Him and trust Him as Lord and Savior.

In essence, Paul was saying, nothing else beyond that matters when it comes to saving souls. Nothing else matters because nothing else works. Acts 4:12 undergirds this by saying, "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12, NLT)

**Why try what doesn't work when the tried and true gospel still saves souls? As you seek to minister to your *one*, adopt a Georgia Southern and Apostle Paul mentality. Run the "play" that works until it doesn't. Give Jesus in word, in demonstration, and in love. It's a one-play playbook that hasn't stopped working yet!**





## DAY 9 | RELYING ON GOD

So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

2 TIMOTHY 1:8–9, CSB

If you watched the 2018 Peach Bowl game between Central Florida and Auburn, you may remember a player named Shaquem Griffin. He played defense for UCF. Technically, a linebacker, on that day, he made plays all over the football field.

Griffin made the best plays on the field in one of the most physical sports known to man while playing with what some would call a deficiency. He was born with Amniotic Band Syndrome, which caused the fingers on his left hand to not fully develop.

As a 4-year-old child, the pain in Griffin's hand felt so unbearable that his family found him trying to cut off his underdeveloped fingers. His parents ended up scheduling a true amputation the next day.

Griffin went on to become one of the top college football players in the country, despite only having one hand.

Before being drafted by the Seattle Seahawks in the 2018 NFL Draft, Griffin regularly referenced his relationship with God. In May 2018, he told the Orlando Sentinel, "A lot of people in our generation like to make excuses for little things. God put everyone on the earth for a purpose, and I feel like my purpose in God is to get people away from making excuses."

Sharing the gospel with people is one of those things that can draw out the excuses in even the most committed Christian. Evangelism can feel like a daunting, intimidating task — especially in an age where mainstream culture seems to be turning increasingly hostile to Christianity.

We assume that in order to be an effective evangelist, we must be self-sufficient, bold yet relatable, know theology and doctrines, and we're supposed to come across as both a studied apologist and winsome communicator. Yet who

among us fits that category? No one.

Each of us have legitimate causes for doubting our abilities when we share the gospel. But in our insufficiency, God reminds us of His power and presence — and He provides help and gives us helpers. We're not left alone to accomplish the task of evangelism. We're members of Christ's body, and with each other, we have all the resources we need to grow and learn.

The Bible also tells us to pray "without ceasing," relying on the power of God. If we need courage to share the gospel, we ask for it so that we will remain without excuse or, as Griffin said, we "stay away from making excuses."

Our attempts at evangelism don't start out completely formed and perfect. It's communication about deep things that has enormous eternal ramifications. It takes effort, practice and planning. And even after all that, it's not perfect because we're not perfect.

Instead, we should rely on God's perfect grace and seek the Lord for courage and clarity in the "playing field," knowing we have weaknesses. We trust that when we are weak, He is strong especially when we share the gospel with others.

**What's the last excuse you made for sidestepping an opportunity to find a person to share Christ with? Ask the Lord to forgive you and pray for other opportunities to speak to someone ready to hear about Jesus. Pray for boldness and clarity and pray for your one.**



## **DAY 10** | UNLIKELY SOURCES

**But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of His great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.**

**1 TIMOTHY 1:16, NLT**

Fewer things in sports prove sweeter than a redemption story. Whether it's an athlete who suffered a dismal performance in one game and bounced back in the next to make the game-clinching play, or a team finally settling the score against an opponent that always seems to have its number. Or perhaps an athlete who fell on hard times, disgraced him or herself, and then came back to make a positive impact in society.

Everyone seems to love a good redemption story because it gives people the chance to simultaneously see the worst and best of themselves in one snapshot.

Troy Sadowski, the former Atlanta Falcons standout, colorfully described his life before Jesus.

“For the first 31 years of my life, I was lost like a duck in a desert,” Sadowski said. “I came to Woodstock First Baptist Church one day and heard Johnny Hunt preach, and it made me see I had a problem in my life, and that problem was me.”

Sadowski gave his life to the Lord and has since allowed God to use him and his platform as a former NFL standout to give people hope in Jesus.

Sometimes we allow guilt or shame from our past to prevent us from sharing Christ's love. We allow self-condemnation to put us in a place where we feel unworthy to receive the love of Jesus and unfit to be His spokesperson.

Few people felt this kind of guilt more than Paul. In a letter he wrote to Timothy, his pastoral protégé, Paul called himself “the chief of sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15), but then followed it up by explaining how the grace of God changed his life and set him on a course to help propel people into faith in Jesus, instead of persecuting them for it.

Each of us has a sinful past that we often feel shame. And Satan chomps at the bit, trying to make us believe we've sinned too much for God to use us. Psalm 103:10–12 gives hope regarding our sinful past — especially verse 12, which says, “He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west” (NLT).

**Don't allow sins God has forgiven and cleansed to stop you from reaching your *one*. Instead, rely on the strength of how God changed your life to show others He can do the same for them.**



## **DAY 11** | IT'S ALREADY IN YOU

**By His divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know Him, the one who called us to Himself by means of His marvelous glory and excellence.**

**2 PETER 1:3, NLT**

When an athlete gets recruited out of high school into college, or gets scouted and eventually drafted from college to professional leagues, those scouts, recruiters and coaches believe that athlete already has everything in him or her to find success at that next level.

That doesn't mean some pruning, shaping, and refining won't have to happen in order to get that athlete ready for maximum performance, but the confidence in that athlete comes from knowing he or she is well equipped to do what's needed to be an asset to the team.

When God saves us, He instills us with His power through the Holy Spirit. And, although there's spiritual growth and maturity that come after initial salvation, we are endowed with all we need to grow into a soul-winner for Christ.

**You may be feeling nervous about sharing your faith with someone because it's your first time, and it may feel a little awkward at first, but be assured that your relationship with Jesus gives you everything you need to be able to reach your *one* for Him.**





## **DAY 12** | NEVERTHELESS

**“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done.”**

**LUKE 22:42, NKJV**

Some aspects of our faith don't come naturally or automatically. Maintaining spiritual disciplines such as a quiet time, daily prayer, and Bible study often seem to go against the grain of our flesh. We know we need to do these things in order to maintain a strong spiritual life — the kind that lives out the gospel and gives us the fuel to share it with whomever we can, but it's still hard. It's not a reflex. We actually have to work at it — sometimes against our own will.

It's sort of like the offseason work athletes go through that prepares them for the rigors of the season. Even the most dedicated athletes will tell you the most enjoyable part of their jobs isn't running endless wind sprints, doing summer conditioning in 90-degree heat, or drilling a particular technique, play, or skill over and over again. However, those same athletes also will tell you that the sacrifice pays off in the long run. It's about doing what you don't want to do, in order to become what you want to be.

Jesus went through something similar in the Garden of Gethsemane, but the stakes were way higher than getting in shape for a sports season. Jesus was trying to wrap his brain around the suffering He would experience on the cross for the remission of our sins. He struggled with it to the point where He actually asked the Father to give Him an alternative plan, but one word cut through His moment of human dread and re-centered Him to His purpose: *nevertheless*.

In essence, Jesus was saying, "It's not about what I want, but what God wants out of me." May we take on this mindset when we do the work of finding people to share the gospel with.

Sharing our faith isn't natural. We don't always want to do it because it can put us at odds with those who don't see Jesus the way we do. It can set us up for rejection, but just like the athlete who sacrifices comfort in the offseason and, even more, like Jesus who sacrificed His heavenly position with the Father to

suffer and die for our sins, may we also keep a *nevertheless* in our spirits when it comes to sharing the gospel with people in our lives.

**Ultimately, the difficulty will pay off when we see God being glorified through our sharing the good news of His Son with our *one*.**



## **DAY 13** | PRAYER IS THE WORK

**Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike.**

**EPHESIANS 6:18-19, NLT**

Preparation is key to anyone's success, whether in or beyond athletics. Proper practice is necessary and the old adage of "practice makes perfect," is true. Practice for an athlete is paramount, not just because of what happens physically in a practice, but because of what takes place interpersonally, between athlete and coach.

Have you ever watched an athlete or team practice with a coach present? It's typically a give-and-take exercise where the athlete rehearses the craft physically, then takes time to converse with a coach. During that conversation, the coach is providing instruction to the athlete about how to improve what they're doing. The athlete may also explain their vantage point or ask for clarification for the coach's directions. Such conversations probably are even more beneficial than simply practicing the act itself.

This is where coach and athlete truly earn their stripes — in practice. Many will tell you that the real work of a coach and an athlete isn't what is performed on a big stage in a game, but rather, in the relationship forged in those conversational and instructional moments of practice.

As Christians, it's easy for us to see what we do in Sunday morning worship, or even sharing our faith with someone, as *the* work — and it's definitely work. Yet, it's not the most important work. Talking to God is — it's prayer.

A prayer life for a Christian is akin to that relationship a coach and athlete build with each other through practice. When prayer is done right, it's not just us presenting a laundry list of concerns to God. It's engaging in a give-and-take relationship with Him, where He hears from us and we take the time to listen to His responses. No wonder Paul closed Ephesians 6 with an emphatic request for the believers in Ephesus to pray for him — specifically that he'd have the right words to say when it was time to share the gospel.

**Paul realized such prayer was the real, behind-the-scenes work that prepared him for “game time.” May we, like Paul, be just as passionate about being prayerfully prepared to share Jesus.**



## **DAY 14** | LISTEN TO THE COACH

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.**

**PROVERBS 3:5-7, NLT**

Have you ever been inside a large gym for a basketball game, or maybe a raucous football stadium with tens of thousands of fans screaming at the top of their lungs while a visiting quarterback is trying to call signals?

Sometimes those are the toughest moments for an athlete, because if their role depends on hearing instructions, and the noise of the crowd makes that difficult, the athlete could make a big, game-changing mistake.

In those moments, the voices of fellow teammates and coaches frantically shouting out directions are futile and, if it gets too loud, the coach or a player may call time out. Why? Because it stops the noise momentarily and gives the team an opportunity to get to the sideline and listen to the coach's attempt to position them for success.

For the Christian, our coach — in a spiritual sense — is ultimately God. At times, a pastor, Sunday school teacher or trusted family or friend can help us make sense of God's words and instructions. Ultimately, it's God's voice that we must recognize and listen intently to, even when it comes to knowing how and with whom to share the gospel.

We must be careful that the noise of life doesn't overwhelm us that we miss out on hearing God's voice, especially when it comes to knowing how to proceed in sharing our faith with our *one*.

**Place a premium on hearing God's voice before striking out on your own to do ministry. Even if you have to take time out to get away from the voices of others to do so, it will be well worth it to ensure you're best positioned for victory.**





## **DAY 15** | KEEP IT SIMPLE

**For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.**

**JOHN 3:16, CSB**

One of the most frustrating things for the armchair athlete is when you're watching coaches or players outsmart themselves in a game.

Even if you've never coached a team or played one moment in a game, sometimes you still recognize the paid professionals on the field try too hard to make something happen when they should've kept it simple.

Run the ball up the middle on third and one, instead of going shotgun and throwing it 40 yards down the field, right?

Make the fundamental layup instead of trying for the crowd-pleasing slam dunk. Both are only worth two points anyway!

Stay on first base, instead of pressing your luck with an unlikely steal to second.

Keep it simple!

Perhaps God should admonish us when we try to make sharing the good news more difficult than it has to be. In fact, one reason we often find it hard to share our faith is because we make it more challenging than necessary.

Is it always easy to do? Of course not. But, when in doubt about the right words to say or the right way to communicate the gospel, you can always simply say what Jesus did to save our souls.

John 3:16 often gets pushed aside as the children's church Bible verse. Still, it's perhaps the simplest, most straightforward articulation of the gospel in all of Scripture.

**Don't make sharing your faith unnecessarily complicated. When given the opportunity, simply tell what Jesus did for our salvation and how it personally affected your life — and let the Holy Spirit take over from there.**



## **DAY 16** | SAY IT RIGHT

**Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.**

**COLOSSIANS 4:6-7, NLT**

All athletes aren't created the same, and that's in ways other than just the physical.

Some athletes respond best to a coach barking loudly at them, or being demonstrative in how a coach interacts with them.

Whether trying to coach an athlete or persuade a person to trust Jesus as Savior, sometimes our past successes are our worst detriments. If we've had success sharing our faith in a certain way or by using certain methods, we may begin to believe that way is a "silver bullet" tactic, guaranteed to get positive results every time.

Every person is different, and taking the time to learn the people we share with and discern which communication strategies work best with them is part of effectively sharing Christ with those we encounter.

**Don't let pride, stubbornness, or even well-intended familiarity with certain methods cheat you out of opportunities to be an effective light for the gospel. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the right responses for everyone and to avoid the pitfalls of saying the right thing in a wrong and off-putting way.**



## **DAY 17** | IT'S NOT OVER 'TIL IT'S OVER!

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing...Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.” And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

**LUKE 23:34; 43, NLT**

One of the most memorable, surefire, highlight-grabbing plays in most sports occurs in a game's final play and results in a miraculous, game-winning, out-of-the-ordinary moment that no one expects.

Although some will call it luck when it happens in football, the last effort still goes down in the stat book as a completed pass. And most importantly, it's recorded on the scoreboard as a touchdown.

Basketball has its equivalent with the buzzer-beating half-court shot. In baseball, it's the walk-off homer with a total count and two outs in the bottom of the ninth. Even in a track and field sprint or relay race, there's intrigue when someone comes from behind in those last few feet before the finish line to take the lead and win the race.

Spectators watching react with joy—in awe. There are hugs and all kinds of movements—they jump up and down, cry, sit in silence with their faces covered with their hands. They also know that moment created an unexpected circumstance, an unfathomable reward. “A miracle. I can't believe it.”

Those moments teach us that a game isn't over until it's over — that as long as there's even one second left on the clock in a close game, there's still time for a team to win the game.

Evangelism requires dedication—not only your time but talents and resources. Without results, D.L. Moody witnessed and prayed for two of his best friends for decades. Incredibly, one of the men gave his life to Christ at Moody's funeral and the other shortly after.

Don't despise the small things like speaking of Christ to others, by which unbelievers—your one — may come to trust and treasure Jesus. Look for last-minute, end-of-life confessions of Jesus. Look for the miracle!!

In Luke 23, one of the two thieves flanking Jesus on the cross shows us that any life has the potential for salvation, even down to that person's last few moments alive.

**You may grow frustrated by someone's continued rejection of the gospel. Perhaps you're worried about a loved one who doesn't seem to have much time left to call Jesus their Lord and Savior. Don't get discouraged to the point that you stop praying. Don't stop sharing and showing Jesus to them. Don't stop trusting God for salvation. Even in the 11th-hour of a person's life, there's still enough time for Christ to win that soul and welcome them into His kingdom.**



## **DAY 18** | BE A PERSON OF INFLUENCE

The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.

**ACTS 4:13, NLT**



Some people will never read a Bible to know more about Jesus, but they will “read” the Christians in their life. That’s why we must understand the value of our influence, and the potential cost of not managing our influence well.

On many sports teams, you typically have two types of leaders: the vocal leader who doesn’t mind getting up in his or her teammates’ faces in an attempt to verbally motivate them, and the one who leads by example.

Both are necessary for the optimal performance of a team, but the danger with an extremely outspoken leader is if that leader’s walk doesn’t match his talk, then all credibility, not to mention the value of influence, is lost. The leader who puts out the non-verbal example first may not get as many headlines or as much attention, but that leader often more quickly gains the respect of his or her teammates.

The amazing thing about Peter and John in Acts 4 is that they exhibited both leadership styles. They were bold in their proclamation of Jesus, but their talk also was undergirded with action. Their influence was enough to persuade people, some of whom staunchly opposed Christianity, to listen to what they had to say about Jesus.

**May we become leaders and gospel-sharers who, like Peter and John, can both talk the talk and walk the walk so that, by our influence alone, we can open doors to share Jesus.**



## DAY 19 | LOOK THE PART

Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News.

PHILIPPIANS 1:27, NLT

Teams wear uniforms and have pre-game dress codes to create a sense of camaraderie and psychological presence of unity. When a team looks unified, acts like it gets along, and shows it has team chemistry, the scales can tip in close contests, and an otherwise evenly matched game can go in that team's favor.

You could trot out an athletic team onto the field of play or onto a court, allowing them to wear whatever they wanted, not requiring them to be in uniform, and nothing about the athletic abilities of the team's individual members would change. The fast players still would be fast. The big athletes still would be big.

But chances are, a bunch of mismatched, ragtag-looking athletes wouldn't get taken very seriously by their opponents or even by that team's fans. There is something to be said about a team looking the part.

Looking like a team is a big part of acting like one. It signifies that no one person is bigger than the other.

As Christians, we also are teammates, spiritually speaking. We have the same coach (The Father). We have the same power undergirding us (The Holy Spirit). We have the same person to make much of (Jesus).

We've also got a uniform! Paul instructs believers in Ephesians 6:10-18 to "put on the whole armor of God" as we fight against the tactics of Satan, our common opponent.

Although sometimes you feel like you're alone in sharing your faith, never forget there are people you can count on to come alongside and give you the strength and support to be who Christ has called you to be.

**When we walk in unity with one another, we send a message to Satan that through our unified stance and our obedience to His “gameplan”, the Lord uses us in His work to pull souls out of darkness and into the light and love of Jesus.**



## **DAY 20** | STAY CONNECTED

**Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in Me.**

**JOHN 15:4, NLT**

The biggest key to finding and successfully sharing your faith with your one is staying or remaining continuously connected to *The One*. Jesus not only is our source of strength, but He is the reason we bear fruit.

How much sense would it make to share Jesus with people outside of Jesus' power? Not much.

The eloquence of our words don't produce the fruit. The perfection of our ministry plans don't produce the fruit. The size of our offerings don't produce the fruit. Our charisma, our degrees, and even our denominational ties do not, in themselves, produce fruit.

The fruit of a Christian's life — that is, the tangibly seen characteristics of living a godly life (see Galatians 5:22) — are what makes us appealing to those with whom we seek to share Jesus. Your *one* likely will be affected first by the way you carry yourself and the way you exhibit Christ-like character, rather than the mere words you say.

**As you are praying for God to reveal the *one* with whom you can share the gospel, pray also that you'll remain fastened to Jesus and that you'll daily walk with Him.**



## **DAY 21** | DON'T LIMIT YOURSELF

Jesus came and told His disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

**MATTHEW 28:18-20, NLT**

High-level coaches and high-functioning athletes aren't afraid of big goals.

Even the teams and athletes that finish a season without a single win on their record will tell you their goal for the new season is the championship. Regardless of previous outcomes, coaches and athletes still prepare hard and train diligently to maximize success in the next campaign. Why shouldn't they set high expectations?

As Christians, we shouldn't be afraid of big goals and high expectations either, especially when it comes to sharing Christ and making disciples.

Here's why:

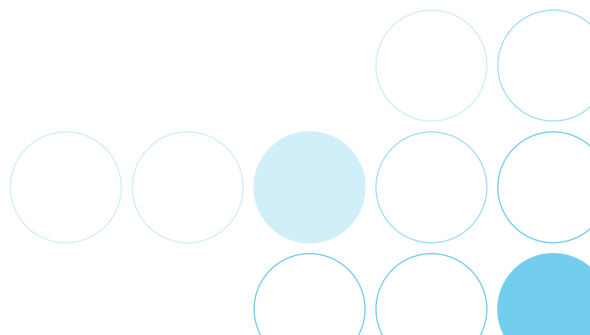
1. If we have given our lives to Jesus, we are endowed by the power of the Holy Spirit, who gives us gifts and ability to advance Christ's kingdom.
2. Jesus himself has commanded us to make disciples and win souls, not just with people who live near us or look, talk, and act like us, but of all nations.
3. We have the promise of the never-ending presence of Jesus — the One who has “all authority in heaven and earth” — as we serve Him.

Additionally, we have an unmatched playbook: the Word of God. We have our fellow Christian to draw upon for strength. And we have the assurance of others who have come before us and found success in living out the faith, as well as sharing it.

Though the task of sharing Christ may sometimes feel overwhelming, and the fear of ridicule and rejection is real, so too is the promise that Jesus has “overcome the world” (John 16:33). The apostle Paul's affirmation also rings true for us: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).



**As the world around us gets increasingly dark and more sin-sick, there's never been a better time, nor a greater need, for Christians to be the light of Jesus than right now. Before you do anything else today, pause and take some time to ask God to show you the *one* who is waiting for you to give them the light of Christ.**



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