

session 12 study guide

getting your spiritual life in shape

starter

GOALS: Goals are important. If you don't have goals, how will you know if you've accomplished what you want to be and do in life? Check the answer that describes best what your goals in life are.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear | <input type="checkbox"/> What goals? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seldom obtained | <input type="checkbox"/> Clear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A real priority | <input type="checkbox"/> Achieved regularly |

Here is an important exercise in goal setting. Write out a short-term (in one year) goal and a long-term (five to seven years) goal for each area of your life listed below.

1. Spiritual Goals

Short-term (1 year):

Long-term (5-7 years):

2. Relationship Goals (family and friends)

Short-term (1 year):

Long-term (5-7 years):

3. School or Career Goals

Short-term (1 year):

Long-term (5-7 years):

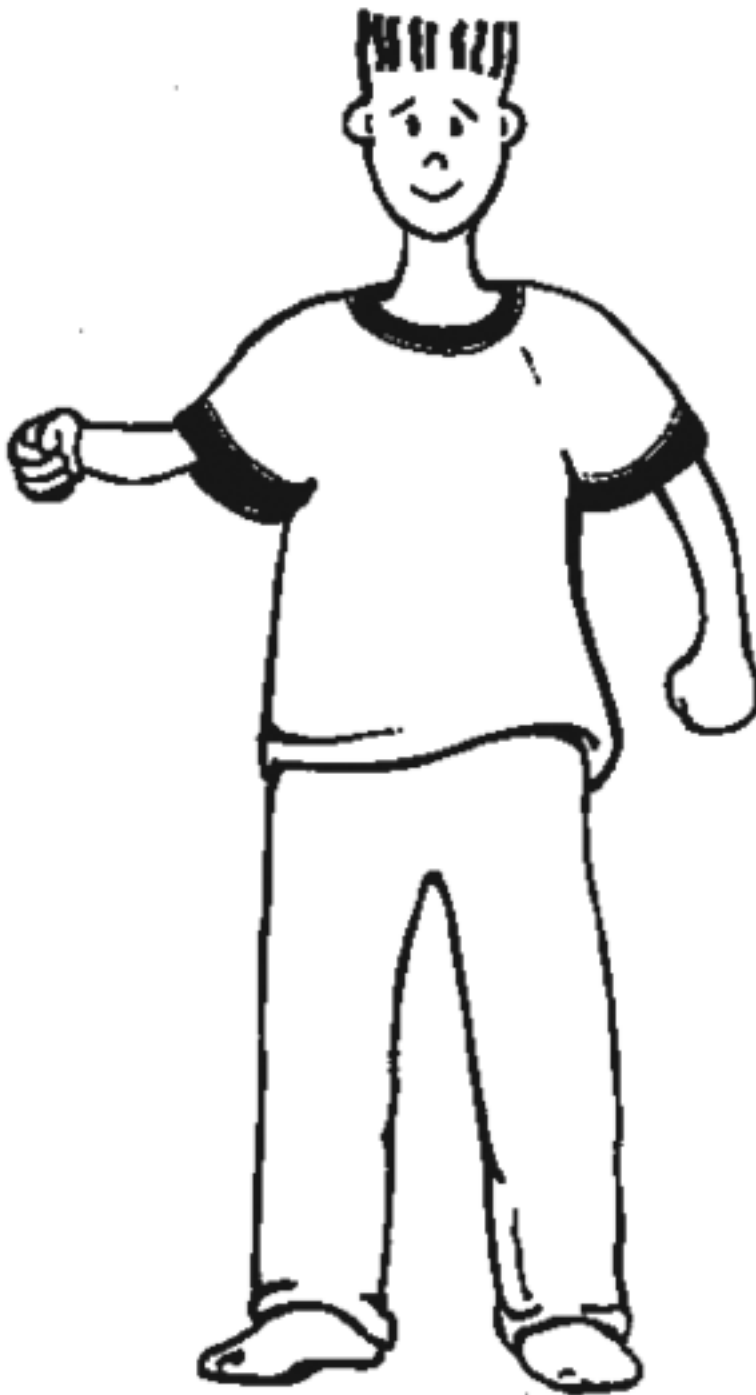
message

Once we know where we're headed, we have to figure out what we need along the way. The apostle Paul gave the church in Ephesus a list of what they would need in their spiritual journey in Ephesians 6:11-18. As you read this passage, consider the following questions: (1) Who does Paul state our struggle is against? (2) How are each of the items in his list like putting on armor? (3) What does he say about prayer?

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit,

which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

1. Draw the armor of God on the person below.



2. How is each piece of armor used in a spiritual battle?

Belt of truth:

Breastplate of righteousness:

Shoes of the gospel of peace:

Shield of faith:

Helmet of salvation:

Sword of the Spirit:

3. Getting our spiritual life in shape is all about suiting up in the armor of God. Each of these areas is a necessary aspect of spiritual fitness. In which area do you feel strong and well equipped? What have you been doing to get that area into shape?

4. In which area do you feel weaker and ill equipped? What have you *not* been doing to allow that area to weaken?

dig

How do we go about arming ourselves in God's armor, and becoming spiritually fit? Paul had some ideas about that, too: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

In a way, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 is Paul's philosophy of life. It could be summed up like this: "There is the easy road to life that gets you nowhere and there is the disciplined road that leads to spiritual victory. Choose the disciplined road."

Many Christians let their spiritual lives get out of shape. They get lazy and don't exercise their spiritual muscles and their relationships with God become shallow. If you desire to get your spiritual life in shape, take a closer look at Paul's philosophy of life.

1. What type of race is Paul describing?

2. What race are you facing?

3. What will it take to win your race?

4. What does discipline have to do with it, according to this passage?

5. In your own words, describe the principle Paul shared with Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:7.

6. How do “myths and old wives’ tales” relate to the magical ideas our culture sells about success without hard work?

7. What common elements are there in an athlete’s discipline and spiritual discipline?

8. What was Paul's goal?

9. What is your goal?

apply

1. Most Christians want to become more spiritually fit, but many don't. What are some things that keep them from developing spiritual discipline?

2. What does this phrase mean: “He or she who aims at nothing gets there every time”?

3. Who do you know who has his or her spiritual life in shape? What steps did he or she take to get in shape?

4. What characteristics do you see in his or her life that show you his or her spiritual fitness?

5. Consider talking with that person this week about his or her “fitness program.” What are three questions you will ask about how he or she stays spiritually fit?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

reflect

1. In Colossians 3:17, Paul writes, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” According to this verse, how much of your time and attention does God want?

2. How much of your time and attention does God have in each of these areas?

	All of it	Most of it	Some of it	None of it
Prayer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bible reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Living like a servant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friendships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sharing Christ with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loving your family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Make a commitment to do one thing this week to improve each area of your spiritual fitness. Share your commitment with a friend to keep each other accountable.

Prayer:

Bible reading:

Living like a servant:

Giving:

Friendships:

Sharing Christ with others:

Loving your family:

meditation



Do you not know that in a race all the
runners run, but only one gets the prize?
Run in such a way as to get the prize.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24