

21 DAYS AFTER CAMPORAMA



National **CAMPORAMA**

JULY 9-13, 2012 ★ EAGLE ROCK, MO



**A GUYS ONGOING JOURNEY
TO CHRISTLIKE MANHOOD**

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Wow! Isn't God amazing? We enjoyed a great time together and a great experience with God during National Camporama. God challenged our hearts to become the men He created us to be. We learned that God forges boys into confident, godly men by way of adventure, character formation, and a God-given task, and together we committed ourselves to pursuing that all-important cause.

Although Camporama is over, the process of growing into godly men has only just begun. We must continue the process by daily seeking God through prayer and reading His Word. The following series of devotions has been specifically written to help you continue your experience with God. For the next 21 days, you will be challenged to continue your walk with God by reviewing again the Scriptures you read for Camporama and by reflecting on its meaning for you. Take time to let God speak to you and shape you into the man you were meant to be.

Thanks for joining us on this journey. We're all in this together!



ADVENTURE



Read or review: 1 Samuel 17; Acts 13:22

The Big Idea: God shapes men who adventure with Him. To adventure with God means you are willing to do whatever God asks you to do.



CAMPORAMA X / JULY 9-13, 2012 / 21 DAYS AFTER

DAY 1

EVERY NOBODY IS A SOMEBODY

Key Point: My significance is not determined by the opinions of others but by the purposes of God.

Key Verse: The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7

David was a man after God's own heart because he purposed to do whatever God asked him to do (Acts 13:22). He was the youngest son in his family and the smallest, too. As a result, many overlooked him and labeled him as someone insignificant.

In his day, being your father's eldest son held social and economic privilege. So as the baby of the family, David was pushed aside and given the least desirable task, that of tending sheep, a job considered the lowest on the social scale. Not only was he the youngest, he was naturally not as big or as strong as his older brothers. Men look at the outside stuff—height, muscles, and other physical features—but God looks on the inside. When people looked at David, they saw a childish grunt, but what God saw was a young man whose heart was on fire to please Him.

Have you ever felt like people didn't appreciate or value you? Have you ever felt unimportant or insignificant? Just remember, God created you for a purpose, HIS purpose, and your value is determined by the significance God has placed on you, not the opinions of others. Only God can see your heart; therefore, only God can see your true value.

THINK ABOUT IT:

What are some of the ways you believe God has made you unique? Right now, you may see some of these as "good" or "bad," but remember, God has a purpose for all of them. List some of them below:



DAY 2

GOOD MEN PRACTICE FAITH IN ACTION

Key Point: God accomplishes great things through men who are willing to trust Him and obey.

Key Verse: Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5

Because David was willing to do whatever God wanted him to do, he became king. God could trust him. If you are willing to do whatever God asks, to adventure with Him, God will trust you and, like David, take you places you can't imagine. God took David from being a lowly shepherd to being a powerful king—a king over God's very own, His chosen people. Why? Because David was willing to do whatever God asked him to do.

Even today, God is looking for young men willing to do whatever He asks. Those are the young men who will live real adventures and who will go places. Are you prepared to do whatever God asks you to do?

THINK ABOUT IT:

Do you really trust God to do what He says? Have you ever taken a “step of faith” by doing something risky because you trusted God to help you? In what ways do you believe God is challenging you to do more and be more than in the past? In what areas of your life are you willing to step out and trust God to do amazing things?



DAY 3

THE FOUNDATION OF ADVENTURE

Key Point: Bold commitment to God is the foundation of adventure.

Key Verse: For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. Romans 1:16

Read Daniel 6

Daniel, the Old Testament prophet, is one of my favorite Bible characters. Daniel lived a life of worship and praise to God. He was completely unashamed of his commitment to God, and even when faced with a horrible death, he refused to stop praying to God every day. For Daniel, every day was an adventure with God.

Daniel had made it a practice to pray to God three times every day. He would open the upstairs window of his house and pray boldly for God's help and provision. But when a group of ungodly men tricked the king into making a law that prohibited prayer to any god other than the king, Daniel was arrested and thrown into a den of hungry lions.

Daniel could have stopped praying or could have begun praying in secret, but he chose to continue his adventure with God, regardless of the cost. And as a result of his faithfulness, God saved him from death by closing the mouths of the lions and miraculously protecting him from any harm.

While his nation fell apart, Daniel stood strong and tall. He had true manly strength. His life had foundations we should all have. You, too, can have the strength of Daniel if you know its source and take full advantage of it.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Have you ever been tempted to keep quiet about being a Christian? Have you ever been afraid of what others might think of you if they knew? What was it that made Daniel so bold about his faith? How do you think you can have that kind of boldness?



DAY 4

A FIRM FOUNDATION

Key Point: The Word of God is the foundation of an adventurous, Christlike life.

Key Verse: Your word is a lamp for my feet, and a light on my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. Psalm 119:105-106

Read Matthew 7:24-27

A story is told of two adventuresome men; on the surface, they appeared very similar— young, trendy, and accomplished. But how they expressed their adventure tells the whole story. Both dreamed of building homes on ocean front property. However, one proved to be wise and one foolish.

The wise builder constructed his home on a large rock bluff high above the waves with a beautiful panoramic ocean view. The foolish guy threw caution to the wind in favor of the up close and personal approach, building his home directly on the beach near the water's edge.

I think you know which of the two guys rested peacefully whenever it stormed, don't you? The wise man slept like a baby come rain or shine. The foolish man lived fearfully every time the wind and waves picked up. Eventually, a storm leveled his home. But the wise man's house stood firm!

One thing made the difference between the wise man's and the foolish man's adventures: the foundation. The wise man knew the foundation was the most important thing about his home. The foolish man apparently didn't know or didn't care that building on sand was dumb. Either way, he learned the hard way.

Jesus told this story in Matthew 7 to make this point: God's Word, the Bible, is the foundation of a strong, godly man's life. Your life can never be sturdier than its foundation. That's why real men build their lives by putting into practice the truth of God's Word and eagerly doing whatever He asks.

THINK ABOUT IT

How strong is your foundation? How well do you know God's Word? Do you make it a habit to read and think about Scripture every day? What can you do to make your knowledge of the Bible better?



DAY 5

GOD'S WORD, A FOUNDATION FOR LIFE

Key Point: The Word of God is true and dependable.

Key Verse: I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Psalm 115:11

God's Word is true! You can't build your life on a lie and expect anything short of a disaster because a lie or a half-truth is no foundation at all. Some people believe the lie that they can build their lives on their opinions and feelings. The Bible says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but it's end of death." Some people believe the lie that they can build their lives on the opinions or feelings of their friends. They, too, can be wrong. They can come and go, but "God's Word remains." Some people believe the lie that they can build their lives on the values of pop culture icons and current trends, which by definition means they are always changing. Only one foundation is true and sure, and that is God's Word.

Life is hard. Storms will come. Men are expected to be strong. But there is only one source of true, lasting strength. It is the foundation of God's Word. That's how Daniel from the Old Testament stood so strong; his life was built on the rock of God's Word. Your life can either be the eyesore on the sandy beach, the house destroyed by the waves, or your life can be the home standing firmly on the rock that everyone admires. The foundation you choose to build your life on makes the difference in the outcome. Building 429 sings the song, "Where I Belong." In part the lyrics say, "When I'm lost in the current of this raging sea, I have this blessed assurance holding me." Adventuring with God, doing whatever He asks you to do, is that foundation. The song goes on to say, "When the lights fade, I want to be found in you." Sing along if you want.

THINK ABOUT IT

Do you have a favorite verse of Scripture? Something that seems to speak to you personally? Write the verse below with a few notes explaining why it is so important to you.



DAY 6

THE CALL OF ADVENTURE

Key Point: Adventure with God requires risk and sacrifice

Key Verse: Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23

David was a man after God's own heart because he purposed to do whatever God asked him to do (Acts 13:22). He was the youngest son in his family and the smallest, too. As a result, many overlooked him and labeled him as someone insignificant.

In his day, being your father's eldest son held social and economic privilege. So as the baby of the family, David was pushed aside and given the least desirable task, that of tending sheep, a job considered the lowest on the social scale. Not only was he the youngest, he was naturally not as big or as strong as his older brothers. Men look at the outside stuff—height, muscles, and other physical features—but God looks on the inside. When people looked at David, they saw a childish grunt, but what God saw was a young man whose heart was on fire to please Him.

Have you ever felt like people didn't appreciate or value you? Have you ever felt unimportant or insignificant? Just remember, God created you for a purpose, HIS purpose, and your value is determined by the significance God has placed on you, not the opinions of others. Only God can see your heart; therefore, only God can see your true value.

THINK ABOUT IT:

What are some of the ways you believe God has made you unique? Right now, you may see some of these as "good" or "bad," but remember, God has a purpose for all of them. List some of them below:



DAY 7

THE SOURCE OF ADVENTURE

Key Point: God calls me to adventure.

Key Verse: The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer, my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. Psalm 18:2

Where did we get a heart for adventure? What if I told you we got it from God himself? God is alive and active. He's not sitting on His throne with a frown on His face. No way! The Bible says God rides on the clouds and wind, speaks in the thunder, and plays in the rain. He's inviting you to join Him on a real life adventure.

Every call to obedience from the Word is God's invitation to adventure with Him. How can I live on 90% of my income when it's hard to imagine paying all the bills with 100% of my wages? Tithing is an example of an invitation to risk it all and adventure with God. How can I pray for the guys at school that give me a hard time for being a follower of Christ? This, too, is an invitation to adventure with God. These are real life adventures, and they are better than rappelling off a crane in front of thousands of people.

It's true, there are things you will only learn about yourself on adventure. It's also true there are things about God you will only learn when you adventure with Him. Every time you decide to do what God asks you to do, you are taking Him up on an offer to adventure. You'll learn things about yourself and about God you can't learn by studying alone.

So when I say that God build's boys into strong, godly men by taking them on adventure with Him, I'm suggesting following Christ can be as heart pounding, adrenaline rushing, and sweat inducing as any adventure you can think of. Adventuring with God can sound risky, but it's worth it. It will build your confidence and courage like nothing else.

The reason some guys are bored and tired by their Christian life is because they are going through the motions. They read the Bible, go to church, and try to behave, but there is no life in them because there is no adventure. You will only experience real life in God when you risk it all to adventure with Him, to do whatever He asks you to do. If you are man enough to do that, fasten your seat belt because God will take you places that will blow your mind and make you come fully alive!

THINK ABOUT IT:

God wants you to experience adventure with Him, but you have to be willing to take the first step. Take time to pray and ask God what kinds of adventure He wants to take you on. Then make some notes here about what He is speaking to your heart.



DAY 8

ADVENTURE WITH GOD

Key Point: God arms me with strength and prepares me to win the battle.

**Key Verse: It is God who arms me with strength...He trains my hand for battle.
Psalm 18:32,34**

In *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien, Bilbo Baggins is drawn into a great adventure. His story is a picture of what your life can be like if you adventure with God. He was from an impressive line of family members, who were great adventurers, but Bilbo was not cut from the same cloth, or so it appeared at the start.

At a critical time of his adventure, he is separated from Gandalf and all the dwarfs. He's alone, deep in the woods, surrounded by darkness. His great adventure has turned into a nightmare. Exhaustion draws him into a deep sleep, and all he can dream of is the warmth and comforts of his hobbit-hole and his well-stocked pantry of food.

He is rudely awakened as a giant black spider is wrapping his legs tightly together with his sticky string. Unless he fights back, he will soon be trapped, poisoned, and the life sucked from him. What's he to do?

Instinctively, something came out from deep inside Bilbo. He jumped up but stumbled back to the ground. He could feel the hairy spider legs around him trying to bind him. Next, Bilbo began to hit the spider with his hands. The spider never expected that, and it backed up for a few moments. It gave Bilbo just enough time to draw his sword and cut himself free.

Now, he is no longer on defense. He is free to fight! He courageously runs after the spider that was backing away from him. Once he closed the gap between them, Bilbo plunged his sword into the giant spider's eye. The spider writhed in pain until Bilbo struck him again with his weapon and killed the evil beast.

Bilbo fell to the ground, winded, thirsty, and hungry. In spite of his weakened state, there was a confident strength that welled up inside of him. "The spider lay dead beside him, and his sword-blade was stained black. Somehow the killing of the giant spider, all alone by himself in the dark without the help of [Gandalf] or the dwarves or of anyone else, made a great difference to Mr. Baggins. He felt a different person, and much fiercer and bolder in spite of an empty stomach, as he wiped his sword on the grass and put it back into its sheath."



This is the same hobbit that originally refused Gandalf's invitation to adventure. He said that he had "no use for adventures. They are nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! They make you late for dinner."

Gandalf creatively persisted, and before long, Bilbo Baggins was off into the unknown. Bilbo would have never discovered who he was or what he was made of if he had stayed in the Shire. At the start of the adventure, everyone carried him, but by the end, Bilbo was who everyone turned to for strength and solutions.

Young man, you will only discover your glory, your strength, your confidence—the real you—when you adventure with God by doing whatever He asks. God's claim that He will never leave you or forsake you is what you'll only learn once you head out on adventure with God. You have what it takes to be a man who pleases God.

THINK ABOUT IT

What was it about killing the spider that gave Bilbo Baggins confidence? How did that confidence change him?



DAY 9

TAKE THE RISK TO ADVENTURE WITH GOD

Key Point: I will join the adventure God has for me.

Key Verse: I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.
Philippians 3:12

The choice is yours. You need the foundation of God's Word. Instead of reading the Bible out of duty, simply to increase your knowledge, or to check off a daily chore, you start to read it to find your next adventure or the answers to an adventure that has become inexplicably hard. Take the risk and trust God; determine to do whatever He asks you to do. Only on adventure with God will you discover who you are and what you're made of and who God is and what He's made of.

The risk of trusting God is worth it! Lots of guys invest themselves in the adventures of video games, television, sports, extracurricular activities, etc. These in and of themselves are not bad unless they leave no time or energy to pursue the real adventures. Let's face it, all these are artificial adventures. God is calling you on real adventures that will deeply impact your life. So balance these artificial or recreational adventures so they don't cut out the life shaping adventures that God has designed for you.

Jesus described the risk this way: If you discovered a treasure or natural resource buried deep in the earth, you would be smart to sell everything you have to buy that land and lay claim to the fortune. It may cost you everything to buy it, but since the value of the treasure is so great, the cost is nothing compared to what you gain once the fortune is yours.

Jesus is the treasure worth risking everything to adventure with. There is no other foundation worthy of building your life on—not your feelings, not the opinions of your friends, and not the values advanced by pop culture. God's Word lasts and is immovable. God is trustworthy. You can follow Him, doing everything He asks, and He will never harm you, lead you astray, or leave you behind.

God will shape you into a strong, godly man if you are willing to risk it all and adventure with Him. It's the only way you will learn who you are and what you are made of; it's the only way you will fully experience God. Adventure is how God shapes boys into real men. There is strength and confidence reserved with your name if you will adventure with God every day.

THINK ABOUT IT

Identify anything or anyone in your life that is keeping you from searching God's Word for your next adventure. What will you do to remove those obstacles? Let's talk to God about them and ask for His help.



CHARACTER

The Big Idea: Every battle you face—every choice, challenge, and temptation; all the losses and wins; and all the successes and failures—is God’s opportunity to strengthen your character in His power.

Read or review: Judges 6-8; 8:21



DAY 10

STRENGTHENED THROUGH ADVERSITY

Key Point: God will provide the strength I need to persevere under adversity.

Key Verse: As is the man, so is his strength. Judges 8:21

Gideon, his family, and his fellow citizens were bad off. A foreign people, called the Midianites, were ruling over them and destroying their livelihood by destroying their crops and livestock. The Israelites cowered in fear; they couldn't even travel safely from place to place. Growing their food, raising their animals, and taking them to market were nearly impossible. Fear, poverty, and hopelessness described their situation. The only thing that could turn things around would be a courageous man or a miracle or both.

God found such a man and performed miracle after miracle on his behalf. God found Gideon in the place you'd least expect to find a hero—cowering in a wine press, milling wheat in the hill country away from his enemies. But through a series of circumstances, God spoke to Gideon and confirmed that He would use him to deliver Israel.

From that moment on, God called out the winner in Gideon and made him a mighty deliverer. How did God do that? He did it by sending challenges and temptations his way that would test and strengthen his determination to live life God's way.

First, God asked Gideon to tear down the idols in his village. An idol is anything that becomes a substitute for God. Today, young men often allow TV, video games, girls, pornography, drugs, alcohol, or sports to be substitutes for God. We must place God in His rightful place in our life.

Second, God had to make sure Gideon would obey. The call for fighting men goes out all across the country, and 32,000 men show up! To insure that God, not Gideon, received the credit for victory, God wanted Gideon to go into battle with few men—only 300, in fact. After sending 22,000 men home, God told Gideon how to reduce the army further, sending another 9,700 men home. But there's more! They were not to fight with swords and spears but with trumpets, jars, and torches. Remember, God wanted credit for this victory. The same is true today. God will not be a co-leader in your life; He will not share the driver's seat. You must let Him lead you completely. His ways are not your ways, but He will always take you the right way.



Next, Gideon's character was tested by criticism. God routed their enemies with just 300 men, armed to the teeth with trumpets, jars, and torches! Why would people criticize? Even when you do what is right, people may attack you. It takes courage to live life God's way, courage to stand up to critics, fools, and the educated, who mock God and His ways.

Finally, Gideon's character was tested by victory. Successful people attract attention. With it comes pressure to do things, to adopt attitudes, and to become someone you are not. Staying humble and submitted to the Lord is critically important if your character is to survive success.

For forty years, Israel enjoyed peace because of Gideon. His courageous character, his inside stuff, is what made the man hiding in a wine press stand up and do what was right. God builds a man of character by way of battles that test and strengthen his inside stuff—which is the real man. “As is the man, so is his strength” (Judges 8:21).

Let God shape your character by choosing His ways and not yours or those of the world. That will be a battle. But that is precisely how God shapes men's character. Don't recoil from battle, instead run to the fight to be a man of godly character.

THINK ABOUT IT

God often uses the problems of life to build our character. Have you experienced any particular problems that you believe God may be using to build your character?



DAY 11

JESUS IS FULL OF SPIRIT AND OBEDIENT YET TEMPTED

Key Point: I am empowered to live a righteous life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Key Verse: His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him. 2 Peter 1:3

Have you ever wondered why life can't just be easy? In light of this question, we can feel tempted to retreat. But if we do that, we will shrivel up and die inside. That's no fun! Life is tough because we live in a sinful, broken, and fallen world. That's reality. But God uses the battles you face to make you strong. Those who retreat from the battles become weaker and weaker, but those who face the fact that life will be hard get stronger and stronger.

Every battle you face—every choice, challenge, and temptation; all the losses and wins; and all the successes and failures—is God's opportunity to strengthen your character in His power. God designed you to become a strong man and will give you all His power to face life's hardships head-on if you will only go after it. It's in the seeking through all of life's challenges that you find Him and gain His strength. The Bible says even Jesus learned obedience by what He suffered.

Jesus was transitioning from His job as a carpenter, the trade He had learned from Joseph, His dad, into the mission God had sent Him to accomplish. After His baptism, His Heavenly Father directs Jesus to adventure with Him by going deep into the wilderness for forty days to pray and prepare. Soon after arriving, Satan shows up to tempt Jesus.

Think about it. Jesus is full of Holy Spirit power and is walking in obedience to His Father. Boom! He's attacked by Satan. If you think following Jesus will be without battles and hardships, think again! Even Jesus was severely tempted. Yet, He stood strong.

Is it possible for you and me to stand firm in the face of Satan's lies and temptations? I want to stand; I know that. Jesus did. He stood strong, and He did it in the power of the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus, you can learn to walk, fight, and stand strong in the power of God's Holy Spirit.

THINK ABOUT IT

God has made available to you everything you need to be the man you were created to be. God's Holy Spirit lives within every believer and gives us the power to overcome sin. But you have to ask for His help. What areas of your life do you need God's help in overcoming?



DAY 12

TEMPTED TO SHORT CUT GOD'S TIMING

Key Point: Patience is an expression of faith in God's ability to govern my circumstances.

Key Verse: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. **Philippians 5:22**

After Jesus was baptized, the Bible says he was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to endure a time of temptation. The first temptation Satan fired at Jesus was to take shortcuts: "You don't have to obediently finish this spiritual fast Your Father has called You on. Quick, You're hungry, and You feel alone and forgotten out here in the wilderness; so turn these rocks into bread!" Satan wanted Him to value His comfort and ease more than what God was building inside Him. It's easy to become impatient with God's timing and take matters into our own hands. There are things God wants to do in your life that can't be done at microwave popcorn speed. So you lose heart, lose patience, and feel alone. Then, you are tempted to move forward on your own time line. We reason: "God's not coming through for me as fast as I'd like. I'm tired of waiting! Has God forgotten me? I'm going to check out spiritually and retreat to the familiar." Satan was offering Jesus a shortcut.

Jesus knew shortcuts with God never get you where He's leading. As a young man with red blood pulsating through your body, you will be attracted by the mystery and beauty of the opposite sex. God made her gorgeous! God made sex to be enjoyed in the context of marriage. You will be tempted to take a short cut to sex—to enjoy it before marriage, to view pornography, or to exchange inappropriate text images. But that is a shortcut that will rob your marriage of the closeness and the trust that it will demand.

God is leading you into a life of strength and freedom, and shortcuts will never get you there. Instead of taking the shortcut to immediately solve His hunger, Jesus chose to depend on God and His timing. Waiting for God's timing is worth it! "Man does not live on bread alone," Jesus said, "but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Sure I'm hungry! But I'm not going to let my impatience dictate God's timing. No shortcuts!

THINK ABOUT IT

Have you ever been impatient? Have you ever got tired of waiting on someone to do something? Sometimes we may get impatient with God as we wait on Him to change a situation or solve a problem. What can you do to practice patience as you wait for God's timing?



DAY 13

TEMPTED TO SHORT CUT GOD'S WAY

Key Point: I will follow God's plan.

Key Verse: "For I know the plans I have for you", declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

After the first temptation, Satan left Jesus but immediately mounted another attack, offering Jesus another shortcut. He took Him to a high place with a great view. Satan pointed to all the nations and rulers below them and said, "I'll give you authority over all of them, they will all pay tribute to you, they will all recognize you as their leader if only you will bow down and worship me."

After Jesus goes to the Cross, He will have earned all the credibility He'll ever need by self-sacrifice. So Satan is saying, "Don't bother with the pain and suffering of the Cross; You can avoid all that humiliation and difficulty. By worshipping me, You can have all these kingdoms with none of the mess of following God's plan."

Jesus knew what you and I know. Satan was making Him a false promise; by offering this shortcut, Satan was trying to trick Jesus, suggesting He could avoid pain. But a coward inspires no one. People follow leaders who pay the highest price, and Jesus knew you and I would never experience His saving power if He took a shortcut to avoid personal pain.

Satan ultimately never delivers on his promises. With drugs and alcohol, he promises escape from trouble, but in the end, that's all it gives. With witchcraft, he promises control over others, but in the end, he has you under his control. With theft, Satan promises quick gain but leaves you without the dignity that comes from hard work and financial planning. Jesus knew if He yielded to this temptation, He'd be subject to Satan, and we would have no future. Only obedience to God will fill your life with power. Jesus again refused and told the devil in no uncertain terms, "I will worship and serve God only." No shortcuts!



After offering these two shortcuts, Satan took another stab. Notice that Satan repeatedly attacked Jesus. Satan was rebuffed, yet he immediately regrouped and mounted a new attack. Don't be surprised when you experience the same. Just keep standing strong! Next, instead of offering another shortcut, Satan wanted to test Jesus' sense of security. He wanted to make Jesus strive rather than stand confidently in His Father's loving relationship.

THINK ABOUT IT

God often shares His plans with us by putting a desire in our heart for something specific. It could be a desire to share the gospel with people in a foreign land or a love for working with kids. What kinds of things has God put in your heart that may indicate His plans for you?



DAY 14

TEMPTED TO GUT IT OUT

TRYING TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S FAVOR WITHOUT RELATIONSHIP

Key Point: I can never earn God's love and forgiveness, but I can accept it freely.

Key Verse: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Jesus successfully pushed Satan back after the first two temptations of shortcutting God's timing and God's ways. Next, Satan took Jesus to the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem. He said, "Jump off. If God loves you, He'll send His angels to catch You and no harm will come to You." He even quoted a Bible verse to make the temptation sound believable. But Jesus didn't need to do anything to prove God's love for Him. Neither do you! The Father loves His Son. I'm a father and I just love my kids. God loves you! Jesus didn't need to do anything to prove God's love. He simply accepted it and walked confidently in it, and so can you.

Satan often tries to create doubt. Does God really love me? As a young man, I'd sin and blow it. I'd feel bad. So I'd determine to be real good to prove my worth to God, to get back in His good grace. At times, I even created a list of rules I'd follow. In other words, I'd strive in my own strength. I'd reason: "I'm going to behave well for so long, and when I show myself to God next, He'll be so impressed with my effort that He'll be honored to take me back." You know how that worked out for me? It just led to spiritual pride, an attitude that says I can do this without God or an attitude that says God doesn't know how fortunate He is to have me. Sooner than later, I'd fall again and feel humiliated by my repeated mistakes; my striving wasn't working out. I'd conclude that I didn't have what it takes to please God, and I'd be tempted to walk away from Him. Then, I'd pray, "God help me." However, I would immediately go back to striving. After I failed again and again, I concluded, "God doesn't come through for me. Maybe He does for others, but not for me." It took me years to learn that I could just rest in God's forgiveness and kindness and that I could walk in His undeserved favor. I can't behave myself into God's favor, but I can just receive it. Godly behavior and character begins to form from the strength of my relationship with God not from my own willpower.

THINK ABOUT IT

Have you ever done something you felt was so bad that God could never forgive you? God's love and grace is greater than any sin we could ever do. But you have to be willing to let it go and forgive yourself. What have you been holding back from God?



DAY 15

GOD DESIRES RELATIONSHIP

Key Point: I will draw close to God and know Him personally.

Key Verse: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. Matthew 22:37

The Christian life is not first and foremost about behaving well. That does happen, but it's not God's priority. First and above all, God wants your heart; He wants a close relationship with you. He wants to walk with you every day. He wants to talk. He wants you to rely on Him for everything—about your feelings for that special girl, about buying that car, and about those future plans. In that relationship, there is no striving and effort on your part to prove your worth. He already proved how valuable you are to Him by dying on the Cross. If you were the only one who needed a Savior, Jesus would have died just for you.

The proper response to that kind of love is acceptance. Take it freely and walk confidently in it by giving God your whole, undivided heart. One of Satan's greatest temptations, and one so many guys fall into, is the temptation to strive, to prove our worth or to live the Christian life in our own strength. The result is frustration, self-doubt, and self-hatred. You can be real with God: "OK, here I am God with all my sins, this lust, this greed, this jealousy, and these behaviors; thank you for taking me as I am. I want to walk with You and talk with You. I come as I am so your Holy Spirit can shape Your character in me." When you sin, you ask His forgiveness, which He gives. Then, you ask Him to teach you to avoid repeating these sins again. You may fail some more, but as you walk with God, you will find He gently and patiently shapes your character—it's not God's anger but His grace, kindness, and patience that trains you to be godly.

Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness by offering Him shortcuts and by trying to get Him to gut it out on His own, and he will offer you and me the same. But Satan endured another epic failure! What was he thinking by taking on Jesus, God's Son? But wait a minute. Do I have to be Jesus to withstand temptation? Of course not! The Bible says that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives and works in those of us who have chosen to live in relationship with Christ every day (Romans 8:11).

THINK ABOUT IT

Have you ever tried to earn God's love and acceptance? Do you really think you could ever be good enough to deserve His forgiveness? Probably not. But that's okay because you don't have to earn it. God has given it freely to you. What are some things you may still need God's forgiveness for?



DAY 16

WINNING BATTLES BY WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Key Point: I will daily walk in the power of God's Spirit living in me.

Key Verse: Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
Galatians 5:16

Satan offers you the same temptations that he offered Jesus. But shortcuts and gutting it out will not produce the character and strength God has designed you to live in. We must choose character. The same power that Jesus had to withstand temptation and the same strength that Jesus lived in is available to you and me!

The Holy Spirit gives us the strength we need to become winning, confident men who walk with God. We don't have to keep falling for Satan's tricks and schemes if we choose to walk in relationship with God's Holy Spirit.

When you ask Jesus into your heart, His Spirit literally moves in. He starts to change your heart, making it new—to love and want what He does. He starts making the real you come alive.

He starts to change your character. Little by little, he tears apart the shortcuts you have followed. He heals the sexual immorality, impurities, and filthiness of all kinds that you used to medicate your damaged emotions! The idolatry and witchcraft you thought promised power and influence but left you chained up are broken and loosed! The hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy you rely on to control people begin to go away! The drunkenness, orgies, and all that junk melts away as you walk with God! This old stuff is not who you are and not what you want!

In their place, the Spirit of God puts His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That's the real you! Only God's Spirit can draw out the real you!

There is only one way to avoid Satan's shortcuts and the gutting-it-out-trap. It is to live in the power of God's Spirit (Gal. 5:16,25).



You begin to experience His power when you ask Jesus into your life. Remember the joy and excitement when you first asked Jesus to be your friend and the leader of your life? That was the real you starting to emerge. God's Spirit has power to make you come alive more and more every day!

Jesus saves you when you invite Him into your heart, then He wants to baptize you in His Holy Spirit so you can walk and talk with Him more closely, so your heart becomes new, and so you become alive and strong.

To receive the Holy Spirit, you simply ask Jesus to fill you; you talk to Him and tell Him how much you love Him. "I love you, Jesus; I love you, Jesus." As you pour out your heart to Him, He fills you until suddenly you begin to overflow with love and gratitude. He then changes your words into a new language that you've never learned. He does that as an outward sign so you can tell He's doing a big job inside of you, making you come alive. You just keep flowing in it, praying in your heavenly language. Let the joy flow out! Then, walk in that new relationship every day.

THINK ABOUT IT

The Holy Spirit performs many roles in the life of the believer, but one of the most significant to our daily lives is that He empowers us with the ability to live the life God has called us to live. In what areas of your life do you need the power of the Holy Spirit to help you?



TASK

The Big Idea: You are on task with God as you discover and develop your God-given abilities and as you sync them with God's purpose to strengthen and serve others.

Read or review: Judges 13:5,24-25; Judges 14-16



DAY 17

LEADERSHIP IS SERVICE

Key Point: I will live my life as a servant to others.

Key Verse: For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45

God gave Samson a task—to start the deliverance of Israel from the clutches of their brutal enemies. Along with the task came the supernatural power to accomplish it. Like Samson, we are all given supernatural strength to accomplish God's purposes in our world.

Instead of using his strength to accomplish God's purposes, Samson used it to toy around with God, to stroke his own ego, and to impress the girls. He used his strength for selfish gain. As a consequence, he landed himself in a work prison with his eyes gouged out. Playing games with God will always cost you dearly.

It also cost those around him. Instead of receiving deliverance, Samson's fellow citizens remained under the control of the Philistines. God wanted freedom for Israel, but they wouldn't receive it until much later. What if Samson had used his strength to deliver his people? They would have lived peaceful lives, and he would have been honored for his bravery and strength.

Instead, he sat in jail, and Israel remained enslaved. Fortunately, in his blindness, Samson recovered his vision, that is, an understanding of his purpose. On a day of festivity to a false god, the Philistines brought Samson out of jail to publically mock and humiliate him. Standing between two pillars of the temple, Samson used God's strength to push the pillars so that it collapsed and killed those inside. In His death, Samson started the deliverance of God's people.

We must all die someday. It is best to die to self and come alive to God now. After you breathe your last, it is too late. If you die to self as a young man, you will see throughout your life how God uses you to accomplish His purposes. In being God's ally of grace and strength in a lost and suffering world, you gain true life.



Use your talents and gifts to benefit those around you and accomplish God's purposes. In being a man on task, who uses his strength to benefit others and to accomplish God's purposes, you truly live.

THINK ABOUT IT

Samson is a good example of a man God empowered to do great things, and yet he most often used his power to serve his own purposes. God gives every man talents and abilities, and He intends for us to use them to serve others. What abilities has God given you? How can you use them most effectively to serve those around you?



DAY 18

GOD'S PURPOSES

Key Point: God's purpose is to give me full life.

Key Verse: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10

Paul said this about Jesus, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1). You are God's mission and purpose. He came, died, and rose again to set you free so you could really live!

Jesus also said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus did not come to advance an egotistical agenda; He came for your benefit and mine.

God created you to be alive and to achieve big things! Your life is designed to make a difference. You weren't designed to be a whisper no one hears. Your life can make a positive impression on people around you. Your life's impact can echo for eternity.

Before Jesus died on the Cross for our sins and rose from the dead, humankind was under the dominion of Satan. Now, Christ has rescued us. When you give Him your life and choose to follow Him instead of going your own way, He begins to set matters straight in your life; He makes the real you come alive. That is God's purpose—to put back together what Satan broke in your life.

On a trip to Jericho, Jesus told everyone why He came to earth, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). Jesus came to set our lives straight. As He traveled during His earthly ministry, Jesus was always looking to love and forgive people, to deliver them from demonic oppression, to heal them, to make them laugh, to give them hope, and to bring justice and equality to the forgotten and oppressed.

While attending the synagogue in Nazareth, His hometown, Jesus read from an Old Testament scroll that foretold His mission this way: God's Son was to heal the brokenhearted and to set the captives free (Isaiah 61:1).

John 3:17 says that God sent Jesus into the world not to condemn it, but to save it. That is the opposite of everything Satan brings to the world. Satan enslaves, but Jesus saves! John 10:10 says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."



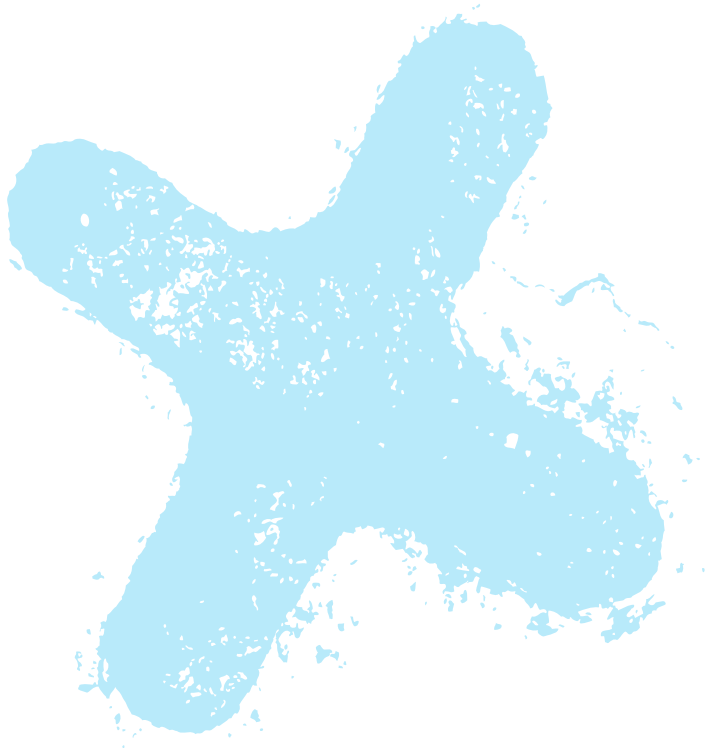
From these verses, we gather a clear picture of God's purpose for sending His Son. Jesus came:

- To seek and save what was lost
- To heal the brokenhearted
- To set captives free
- To save the world
- To give full life and freedom

In a nutshell, Jesus came to set things straight—to fix what Satan broke, to recover what he stole, and to shine the light of truth on Satan's lies. That's Jesus' mission.

THINK ABOUT IT

God's ultimate plan for you is to give you "full life," a life with a purpose and a mission that impacts your world and makes a difference in the lives of real people. Take some time to pray and ask God to show you ways you can impact your world today.



DAY 19

MY DREAMS

Key Point: I will pursue the mission God has laid out for me.

Key Verse: Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you. 2 Timothy 1:6

OK. So Jesus had a great purpose or mission. That's Him. What about me? Is there any relationship between Jesus' mission and the dreams and desires you have for your own life? We are each this bundle of dreams and hopes, talents and abilities, and personality.

I want to suggest you are a man on task with God when you do two things. First, you need to discover and develop your abilities and the desires of your heart. God made you special. He's the one who gave you the dream of being a great preacher or missionary, a successful businessman, a noble politician, a lawyer, an accountant, a salesman, an inventor, a fire fighter, a surgeon, or a first responder. Whatever the desire, recognize that God put it there, so fan it into a roaring flame! You have permission to become the very best you can be. Those dreams and desires are good and are placed there by God to make you come alive. So give yourself fully to Him and to pursuing what makes you come alive.

But that is only a start. Second, you must also sync whatever you do with God's purposes. That's what Hal Donaldson did when he started Convoy of Hope. He wanted to reduce human suffering across America and around the world. But not just that; he also wanted to help people find Jesus. He synced up his dreams and desires with God's purposes.

That's what God does with men like you and me. He calls us to be His allies. Jesus started His mission when He walked this earth, and until He returns, He wants us to set things right in this world by living our dreams while syncing them with His purposes.

Jesus used several illustrations that help us understand the importance of being His allies.



Jesus said this of himself: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your soul” (Matthew 11:29). Like many places around the world, Costa Rica has farmers who do not own modern farm equipment, like tractors. So they practice many ancient agricultural techniques that have been around for thousands of years, including Jesus’ day. A yoke pairs an older ox with a less experienced ox. This teaches the younger how to plow fields and perform other farm duties like pulling wagons. Together the two oxen can tame wild terrains and make them productive farmlands; together they carry produce to market.

It’s the yoke that enables them to work together. Jesus wants you to tie yourself to Him. One of the greatest pit falls young men fall into is living a DIY Christianity, that is, “Do-It-Yourself Christianity.” God never calls you to get busy at life living and working for Him—a DIY Christianity. His invitation is to live and work with Him. He asks you to take His yoke and learn from Him, to feel His heart that is gentle and humble, and to find rest for your soul. Jesus is not a hard taskmaster; He will teach you and will treat you well. He does not expect you to gut it out on your own. He will be right there with you. So tie yourself with all your dreams and ambitions, your hopes and fears, your strengths and weaknesses to Jesus’ mission and live with Him. Hal Donaldson is not out feeding the world for Jesus; he’s doing it with Jesus.

THINK ABOUT IT

Have you ever thought about the mission God may have for you? Have you ever wondered what it is? Take time to pray and ask God to begin showing you the mission He has laid out for you and commit yourself to pursuing it.



DAY 20

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

Key Point: I will stay connected with God to accomplish His purposes for me.

Key Verse: I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5

Jesus gave another farming illustration to show how important it is to live life with Him as His ally, rather than go it alone. He said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). I recently grew a jalapeño plant. If I want to enjoy the fruit, there must be a branch for it to grow from. That branch will only get the nutrients and water it needs from the vine. Jesus is the vine. He connects you with the source of life found in God.

Convoy of Hope is changing people’s lives. But it’s not just feeding them. Any organization can give food to hungry kids. What sets Convoy of Hope apart is that Hal Donaldson is united with the vine, Jesus. He knows that a full stomach won’t change anyone’s eternal destiny. Someone with a full stomach will die and go to hell unless they have invited Jesus into their hearts. So Hal has synced his desire to touch the hurting and meet their physical needs to meeting their greatest spiritual needs.

Regardless of where your heart takes you—into ministry, humanitarian work, public service, or business—God is calling you to sync your dreams and passions to His eternal purposes. Anything else will lead to selfish, dead-end living.

THINK ABOUT IT

Go online and learn more about Convoy of Hope. Consider whether or not there’s a way you can get involved in supporting the work of this important ministry. Write some ideas below.



DAY 21

COMMISSIONED TO GO

Key Point: I will do my part to fulfill the Great Commission as God has enabled me.

Key Verse: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus said, “All authority...has been given to me.” The vine has all authority. Then He says, “So go and make disciples.” Wherever your career path takes you, make disciples, that is, pursue God’s purposes of setting captives free, healing the broken hearted, restoring what Satan has stolen or broken, and bringing people into full and free lives in Christ. If you do this, there is a great promise: “I will be with you always.” (Matthew 28:18-20.)

He’s calling you to live out your hopes and future with Him. Accept His yoke and learn from Him. Discover His heart and find rest for your soul. Graft your life into Jesus because He’s the vine that gives the branch (you) all it needs from Him alone. Apart from Him you may be busy, but you will be unproductive! Jesus said, “Apart from me you can do nothing.”

You are a man on task when you discover and develop your God-given abilities and sync them with His eternal purposes. You have strength this world needs. With Jesus, you will have everything you need to offer it to others and change their lives for now and for eternity.

THINK ABOUT IT

Think back about what God has shown you during the last 21 days. Where is God leading you next? How will you do your part of fulfill the Great Commission?

