



To get better at a sport, you'll need a training plan.  
To get better at playing an instrument, you'll need a training plan.  
To master a new skill for a job, you'll need a training plan.

To grow closer to Jesus and better live the way of grace and love,  
you'll need...

## **THE TRAINING PLAN**

Train yourself for a holy life! While physical training has some value, training in holy living is useful for everything. It has promise for this life now and the life to come.

- 1 Timothy 4:7-8 (CEB)

**The Training Plan is a 28 day Bible reading and prayer program designed to help you form (or grow) the habits of Bible reading and prayer in your life. The Clay Church congregation is invited to start training together on August 5, but the plan can be started at any time.**

*To join the plan in August and receive daily reminders at 6:30pm on your mobile device, download the Clay Church app and turn on notifications.  
(weekly sermon summaries for small group conversation are on the last page)*

## **WEEK 1**

### **EYES FORWARD**

*A spiritual goal keeps our focus on Jesus.*

Day 1: Find a Bible.

Find your Bible and place it somewhere visible that will remind you to read and pray at a set time over the next 28 days – by your bedside for bedtime, on the dining table for breakfast or dinner, etc. Or, if you like to read the Bible online or on an app, create a reminder alarm on your phone, set to repeat each day at a good time for you, to remind you to put your training plan in motion.

Day 2: Read 1 Corinthians 9:23.

What do you think it means to “share in the blessings” of the Gospel (NIV)?

Day 3: Set a goal.

At the end of this 28 days of Bible reading and prayer, what do you picture as transformed or better in your life and/or your faith? Write down this goal on a notecard, or place it somewhere you will see it every day. (For example, tape it to your mirror).

Day 4: Read Matthew 6:33.

What stands in the way of keeping your focus on God and the way of Jesus?

Day 5: Pray.

For two minutes, share with God your hopes and dreams for yourself, for your family, for your church, and for the world.

Day 6: Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

What is one choice you can make this week or this month to pursue a spiritual goal or a deeper relationship with Jesus in your life?

Day 7: Take a day to rest, pray, or catch up with your training plan!

## WEEK 2

### PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

#### *Following Jesus requires practice!*

Day 8: Watch the "Day 8" video at [claychurch.com/trainingplan](http://claychurch.com/trainingplan).

Day 9: Read Philippians 4:8-9.

Where have you experienced practice making a difference for you or someone else?

Day 10: Practice gratitude.

Set a timer for 3 minutes. In that time, name (or write down) as many things you are grateful for as you can.

Day 11: Read 1 Timothy 4:6-10.

*The Message* Bible translation says, "Exercise daily in God." What might it look like in your life to exercise daily for your spiritual health and wellness?

Day 12: Pray.

Spend four minutes in prayer. In the first minute, **AWAIT** God's presence in silence, however it may come to you. (If it helps, put your hands at your waist, cupped up to receive). In the second minute, **ALLOW** a sense of God's presence to come ...or not...and be what it is. (If it helps, reach up with your arms, with hands open.) In the third minute, **ACCEPT** as a gift whatever comes or does not come to mind. (If it helps, hold your hands over your heart.) In the final minute, **ATTEND** to what you are called to, letting your mind imagine the next step. (If it helps, hold your hands outstretched.)

Day 13: Read 1 Timothy 4:11-15.

In what spiritual exercises or practices – prayer, Bible reading, Bible study, meditation, silence, singing, serving, gratitude, etc. – would you like to grow or improve? What is one step you could take to get started?

Day 14: Take a day to rest, pray, or catch up with your training plan!

## WEEK 3

### DON'T GIVE UP

***In the most difficult moments, lean into the promise that God is with you to press on and persevere.***

Day 15: Watch the "Day 15" video at [claychurch.com/trainingplan](http://claychurch.com/trainingplan).

Day 16: Read James 1:2-8.

How can practices that help you know God's presence equip you to see the bumps, trials, and challenges of life as "occasions for joy" (NIV)?

Day 17: Read Psalm 46:1-11 and go for a walk.

As you walk, pay attention to your breathing and try the following "breath prayer". As you breathe in, think or say, "Be still." As you breathe out, think or say, "and know that I am God." Repeat as you walk and breathe.

Day 18: Read Romans 5:1-5 and pray.

In a short time of prayer, share with God the things of the world that trouble you or cause suffering. Are there things that make you want to give up? How can your faith in God give you hope? How have you experienced "trouble producing endurance, endurance producing character, and character producing hope" in your own life or the life of others (NIV)?

Day 19: Read Hebrews 12:1-3 and pray.

In prayer, share with God the things that hold you back from fully experiencing and/or sharing the love of Jesus. What priorities, even good ones, are you tempted to put in front of time with Jesus in your life? What sins, or behaviors that hurt instead of help, do you have trouble releasing? What might God be encouraging you to do with these things with which you struggle? What priorities in your life could you put back in proper order?

Day 20: Read James 1:9-18.

When bad things happen, James says God isn't tempting or testing you, but offering wisdom and strength to help you hang on. Where do you need strength and wisdom in your life right now? How can focusing on gifts from God give you hope?

Day 21: Take a day to rest, pray, or catch up with your training plan!

## WEEK 4

### THE AGONY OF DEFEAT & THRILL OF VICTORY

***Victory comes not in the number of our accomplishments, but in surrendering our lives to Jesus.***

Day 22: Watch the "Day 22" video at [claychurch.com/trainingplan](http://claychurch.com/trainingplan).

Day 23: Read 2 Corinthians 4:6-18.

For Paul, weakness isn't a cause for self-pity or a victim mentality, but an opportunity for faith. How can you keep a focus on victory in Christ even when, on the outside, you're hurting, failing, or feeling defeated?

Day 24: Pray and then read Romans 8:31-39.

In prayer, share with God any of the ways in which you feel defeated. Share mistakes you've had a hard time letting go of, struggles that don't seem to have an end, and anything that haunts you. After you've shared with God, read Romans 8:31-39.

Day 25: Read 2 Corinthians 12:6-10.

What helps you to keep your trust in God and God's goodness, not in yourself and your own abilities? What is the difference between victory in Christ and victory in this world?

Day 26: Read Revelation 21:1-8 and meditate.

After reading, close your eyes and imagine what heaven may be like. What does a life with no more tears look like? What does a place where no one lacks for food or water or the basics of life look like? What does life with God ever-present look like? How can you begin to live into that life in the here and now?

Day 27: Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

What is one thing you have learned about yourself and/or the practice of faith that you'd like to retain or continue, so that, in the words of Paul, you can finish the race and keep the faith (NIV)?

Day 28: Watch the "Day 28" video at [claychurch.com/trainingplan](http://claychurch.com/trainingplan).

## SERMON OVERVIEWS

**AUG 4**

### **EYES FORWARD**

**1 Corinthians 9:23-27**

The city of Corinth hosted the Isthmian Games every two years, a sporting contest that drew people from all over the region, much like the Olympics. With the popularity of these games, it made sense that Paul would use sports analogies in his letter encouraging the early church. His message to the church in Corinth: life as a follower of Jesus isn't aimless, but like an athlete striving to win, focused on a "prize" (NIV). What is your spiritual goal?

**A spiritual goal keeps our focus on Jesus.**

**AUG 11**

### **PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT**

**1 Timothy 4:6-16**

In a letter to Timothy about teaching and sharing his faith in Jesus, the apostle Paul urged him to "train", "labor", "strive", and "persevere" (NIV). To become a great athlete takes practice. To become a good musician takes practice. To become good at anything takes practice. To be a faithful follower of Jesus takes practice.

**Following Jesus requires practice!**

**AUG 18**

### **DON'T GIVE UP**

**James 1:2-13**

In nearly every sports movie ever made, the athlete or team faces challenges and obstacles to the point of nearly giving up, only to find a source of strength and push on to become champions. James, an early leader in the church in Jerusalem, knew firsthand how hard living with faith in Jesus could be amid opposition and persecution. He tells the early church: God isn't tempting you, but God will provide wisdom to face the challenges when you ask. And when you stick with it, your faith in the promise of the victor's crown only becomes stronger.

**In the most difficult moments, lean into the promise that God is with you to press on and persevere.**

**AUG 25**

### **AGONY OF DEFEAT AND THRILL OF VICTORY**

**2 Timothy 4:6-8**

Why do we keep our eyes on Jesus? Why do we practice? Why do we keep pushing? Not because we have to win the race by ourselves, but because our faith allows us to participate in Christ's victory. We compete not against the world, but against anything that stands in the way of knowing and accepting the saving love of Jesus. When we anchor our lives in the love of Jesus, all the defeats of this world – loss of job, loss of relationship, famine, pain, trouble, depression, even death – pale in comparison to the promise of God's eternal victory parade!

**Our victory comes not in the number of our accomplishments, but in surrendering our lives to Jesus.**