

“WHATEVER YOU DO . . .”

Colossians 3: 17

A study of 4 vocations which illustrate our calling as a believer

- Lesson 1 - An Athlete
- Lesson 2 - A Soldier
- Lesson 3 - A Representative
- Lesson 4 - A Counselor

These study guides have been designed to assist you in the “Three R’s” of your own Bible study – reading, receiving, and responding. You are welcome to print out the whole series. If you wish to print out only one lesson at a time, choose that option from your printer.

Please feel free to use these materials for your own personal use or with a small group, remembering to give credit where credit is due.

Study Time Suggestions for this series

- Reflect – This is an important part of your study time. As you quiet yourself in the presence of the Lord, He will make Himself known to you. It is a time to be still and to wait upon Him. Let the “hurry and worry” of your daily life diminish for these minutes and let the reality of God’s love and mercy and grace and forgiveness come into focus for you.
- Read - Have your paper and pencil ready so that you can mark down the phrases and ideas that seem to be important or interesting or even disturbing to you. What are your observations?
- Receive - God has promised that He will be your teacher. You really don’t need anything else but the Word of God, an open mind, and a willing heart. As the Holy Spirit reveals His truth to you and opens the “eyes of your understanding”, let Him speak quietly into your spirit.
- Respond - Studying the Word of God is always more than an intellectual exercise. Jesus longs for a personal relationship with you and with me. As you “let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your life”, He will enable you to be His representative in all that you do and say. And you will be able to give thanks and praise to Him for what He is doing in you and through you. (Colossians 3:17 - NLT)

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Lesson One

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An ATHLETE

“Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles,
and let us run with perseverance **the race marked out for us.**

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” Heb. 12: 1-2

The prize is always a big incentive, isn't it? It may be a blue ribbon, a trophy, or a significant amount of cash. It might be the internal satisfaction of overcoming a fear, an obstacle, or simply improving your own skill, strength or time. Sometimes it is simply the joy of accepting a challenge or the possibility of winning that drives the athlete to participate in a certain sport. No matter where the motivation comes from, there are certain characteristics that real athletes share. For each of them, their reward is greater than the effort! In your mind, what characterizes an athlete?

REFLECT – Take some time to open up your Bible and ponder Hebrews 12: 1 – 2. It is important to know that Jesus is the One who has called you to be His child. He is the One who will strengthen you for the race that is yours. Tell Him all about your fears and your concerns and your questions. Listen to The Coach as He explains your next challenge.

READ - If possible, read these passages in more than one version of the Bible and then write down your observations and your questions.

Acts 20: 22 – 24

I Corinthians 9: 24 – 27

Galatians 5:7

Philippians 2: 14 – 18

II Timothy 2:5

II Timothy 4: 7 – 8

Hebrews 12: 1 - 2

RECEIVE - What are the truths, the insights, that the Holy Spirit would like you to consider today?

1. Why do you think the athlete makes a good illustration for us as followers of Jesus?
2. In what ways was Jesus a model “athlete” during His years of ministry and in His mission?
3. Looking back over these passages of Scripture, what are some of the lessons to be learned?
4. Why was Paul so anxious to finish his race well? What enabled him to be so dedicated?

RESPOND –

As you consider the characteristics of an athlete, which one is God pointing out to you most clearly? Invite the Holy Spirit to be the One who can empower you and enable you to become “the athlete” that God is calling you to be. It will be a great race.

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Lesson 2 –

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A SOLDIER

“Be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus.
Endure suffering **as a good soldier** of Christ Jesus.” II Tim. 2: 1 & 3 (NLT)

One of the characteristics of a good soldier is that he/she is willing to take orders from those who are in charge of the training or the battle. From the lowest enlisted soldier right up to the top general, each person knows his position and his responsibility, and can not deviate from the orders given. Why is this necessary for success in a battle? Why doesn't “the committee system” work? What other attributes best describe a good soldier?

REFLECT – It is important to accept the idea that Jesus is The One who has called you to be His soldier.
Take some time to ponder II Timothy 2:1 – 4 and to thank Him that it is by His grace that you can be strong enough to follow His “orders”. Victory is His promise to you.

READ – If possible, read these passages in more than one version of the Bible and then write down your observations and your questions.

Romans 12:19 - 21

Romans 13:12- 13

I Corinthians 16:13- 14

II Corinthians 10: 3 – 5

Ephesians 6: 10 – 18

I Timothy 1: 18- 19

I Timothy 6: 11 - 12

II Timothy 2: 1 – 4

II Timothy 4: 6 - 8

I Peter 5: 8- 9

I John 5: 3 - 5

RECEIVE – What are the truths, the insights, that the Holy Spirit would like you to consider today?

1. Why do you think the soldier makes a good illustration for us as followers of Jesus?
2. Who or what are “the enemies” in these passages?
3. Sometimes a soldier is in a defensive position and at other times on the offense?
Can you find illustrations of both of these situations?
- 4.
5. Looking over these Scriptures, what are some of the lessons to be learned?

RESPOND – As you consider the characteristics of a soldier, what is God pointing out to you most clearly?
Praise God that in Jesus there is victory – I Corinthians 15: 57 - 58

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Lesson 3

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A REPRESENTATIVE

“Whatever you do or say, do it as a REPRESENTATIVE of the Lord Jesus.” Col. 3: 17 NLT

Being a “representative” can mean a wide variety of responsibilities, can’t it? There are representatives in the capitol of our country and our state. They are sent there to reflect and carry out the will of the people in their geographical area politically. In foreign countries, ambassadors are sent to represent the United States. At conventions and conferences, organizations send a few people to reflect their choices and products, their opinions and convictions. As a “representative” of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are given some clear instructions about “what to wear” and “how to act”. Did you know that there is a new wardrobe waiting for you through the gift of the Holy Spirit in your life?

REFLECT – Are you interested in exchanging your own comfortable habits and attitudes for new ones – ones that reflect Jesus more clearly and beautifully? Think about it and tell your heavenly Father what you are thinking. Though He already knows, it brings Him joy for you to talk with Him about your desires.

READ – If possible, read these Scripture verses in more than one translation of the Bible and then write down your observations and your questions.

Romans 13:14

Ephesians 4: 22 – 25

Philippians 2: 5

Colossians 3: 9 - 10,

Colossians 3: 12 -17

I Thessalonians 2: 5

I Peter 5: 5 – 7

II Peter 1: 5 – 11

RECEIVE – What are the truths or the insights which the Holy Spirit would like you to consider today?

1. Why do you think that a representative is a helpful illustration for us as believers?
2. What are some of the reasons that keep us from being a “good representative”?
3. What are some of the reasons that make consistency so difficult for us?
4. Compare the “new wardrobe” with the fruits of the Spirit – Galatians 5: 22 – 26
What does this passage help you to understand about your old and new nature?

RESPOND – As you consider the characteristics of a representative, what is God pointing out to you most clearly? Are there some “new clothes” that God wants you to exchange for your old ones so that the “beauty of Jesus can be seen through you”?

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Lesson 4 –

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A COUNSELOR

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."
I Thessalonians 5: 11

People make appointments to see a counselor for many different reasons, don't they? It might be for information or wisdom. It might be for advice or insight. It might be for encouragement or confidence. And it could be for guidance or correction. It is important to find a counselor who can be trusted, is competent, and who is eager to listen carefully and speak the truth. It is no doubt more important for a counselor to ask good questions than to give the answers. In your mind and experience, what would characterize a counselor to whom you would go?

REFLECT – In John 14: 16 - 17, Jesus promised to His disciples that another Counselor would come to be with them permanently. This counselor, the Spirit of truth, would not only be with them, but in them, just as He is in us, as children of God, today. (Romans 8) What an amazing reality! Let it soak in to your mind and heart and listen to His counsel right now.

READ – If possible, read these Bible verses in more than one translation and then write down your observations and your questions. THE COUNSELOR wants to enable you to be a counselor, too!

Romans 15: 1 - 5

Ephesians 4: 15 – 16

I Thessalonians 4: 18

I Thessalonians 5: 11

II Timothy 2: 1 - 2

II Timothy 4: 2

Titus 2: 3 – 5

Hebrews 3: 13 - 14

Hebrews 10: 24 - 25

RECEIVE – What are the truths or the insights which the Holy Spirit would like you to think about?

1. Who has God used in your life as a "counselor"? What are the reasons that you see that person in that role or would give them that title?
2. Does God use only trained and/or gifted people to be counselors or does He want to use everyone?
3. Look again at the verses in Titus. Do you see yourself in these verses? What are the possibilities?
4. Where are your strengths as a counselor? Where are your weaknesses?

RESPOND – As you consider the characteristics of a counselor, what is God pointing out to you? Who needs your encouragement, your blessing, your comfort, your insight? Listen quietly to the prompting of THE COUNSELOR, Who lives within you.