

DAY 6

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.

2 Timothy 4:7 NLT

All of us want to do a good job, especially at the things that are important to us. It's natural to want to do things well in this life—make good grades, win the game, get the lead role, make the team. But real success isn't determined by how well we perform; rather, it's determined by how we live our lives. It's in what we keep in first place. In other words, real success comes from living a life that reflects the things that are important to God—loving others, loving God, and loving ourselves.

As you pray today, ask God to help you shift your eyes from other things and instead, look for success in the way you love God, love others, and love yourself.

DAY 7

Jesus replied: "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 22:37-38 NIV

Memorizing Scripture doesn't just help us keep God's Word in our minds. It changes our hearts! The more we know about God, the more that truth will not only live in our hearts, it will transform our hearts to be more like God. That's the goal!

So, work to memorize this passage this week and do it with some friends! Gather some friends or members of your small group. Write the verse down somewhere you all can see it. Then, circle up nearby. Grab a ball and pass it to someone in the circle, who will say the first word of the verse. Then, pass it to someone else who will say the next word. Keep going until you've read the entire verse in your circle. Then, try the game again, this time trying to recite the words by memory as you go.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

FOR AN
everyday faith.

FIRST PLACE / WEEK 3

MIDDLE SCHOOL

DAY 1

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom.

Isaiah 40:28b NIV

People have been debating the creation of the world for a long time. Even the smartest scientists out there are still studying just how it all came to be! As believers in Jesus, we may not always understand how it happened, but we know who created everything we see. We know that the God who loves and values us made every detail of the world we live in, including us!

This week, make a list of some of your favorite things in creation—the beach, the sun, the mountains, the flowers. Thank God for each one as a reminder of God's love and care for all things, including us. Because we're created by God, we have value!

DAY 2

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen
Romans 1:20a NIV

Have you ever been in the middle of a huge thunderstorm? The kind where the wind is blowing, the thunder is clapping, and the lightning is brightening up the sky? If you have, then you know just how powerful a thunderstorm can be. And when you think about the fact that God is the one who created things like thunderstorms, it reminds us of how powerful God really is. As believers in Jesus, we have access to God's power as we walk through this life. It's what gives us confidence, value, love, and all the important things we need in this life.

This week, pay attention to the things you see in nature that display God's power. When you notice them, remind yourself that you have access to the all-powerful God who created them.

DAY 3

Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Philippians 1:27a NLT

As Christians, our lives should look different than others in some ways. Sometimes it's ways that are more obvious, like avoiding certain behaviors or making choices that not everyone else at school finds popular. But our lives can also look different in smaller, less noticeable ways. The words we use, the way we treat others, the places we go—all of those things are small reflections to others of the way Jesus has called us to live. And when we live that way—when we keep Jesus' words in first place in our lives—we're representing the love of God to others.

This week, ask a friend to help you keep Jesus' example in first place. Encourage each other to focus on reflecting God in one area of your life.

DAY 4

For we speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts. 1 Thessalonians 2:4 NLT

Middle schoolers have to deal with so many different influences in their lives—pressure from friends, pressure from teachers, pressure from parents, pressure from social media, and more! They're all telling you to prove yourself in one way or another. But as Christians, we have the freedom to live truly for an audience of one—God! God's approval is ultimately the most important in our lives; it's first place! So, doing what's pleasing to God in the way we live, love, and treat others should be our top priority.

Make a list of all the things you have to do this week—at school, at home, with friends, in sports. Next to each one, write the words "For God" to remind yourself that you're ultimately doing it all for God.

DAY 5

What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows. Matthew 10:29-31 NLT

Written by Madi, age 14, from Mattoon, Illinois, USA

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone and the other person seems to completely ignore what you are saying? Or maybe you failed the audition you spent weeks preparing for. Whatever it is, there are a million situations in life that can make us feel like we are not enough. And it can be really easy to believe the lie that you aren't enough or aren't important, especially to a perfect God. I had a time in my life where I was really struggling. I felt desperate. I would pray but nothing was working, so I would just go right back to the same things I was doing. Because I felt like I wasn't

enough, I felt like there was a gap between me and God.

But here's what I realized through that: God loves me, no matter my mistakes. God wants us to know everything we are going through and struggling with. And even when we make mistakes or struggle, God tells us that we are valuable, important, and enough.

To God, you are more valuable than you can even understand! So today, take one minute and thank God for loving you and valuing you no matter what. Whenever you feel like you are not enough, go back to this reminder that you are always valuable to God!