

# IN SEASON

## TRAINING GROUP GUIDE

by Elizabeth Laing Thompson

Dear Friends,

Welcome to your spiritual training ground! The only thing better than growing closer to God during your sports season is growing closer to God *and* friends at the same time.

This *Training Group Guide* is designed to support a small group of athletes who have decided to read *In Season* together. Your group may consist of you and one friend, a small group of athletes from different teams (or even different sports), or perhaps your entire team has decided to read the book together. Whoever you are reading with, I'm thrilled that you are using *In Season* as a way to connect with God and with other believers throughout your season. Their support and friendship will be a game-changer.

Maybe you've never led a group like this before and aren't sure how to do it. Or maybe you're wondering whether you have time to lead a group—especially during the busyness of the season. But don't stress. If God has placed it on your heart to start an *In Season* Training Group, *you can totally do it*. I've done my best to make your job easy with this step-by-step, plug-and-play Training Group plan.

You are always on my heart and in my prayers. I'd love to meet your group on social media—or even in person! It is such a joy to connect with readers and hear how Training Groups are going. To arrange for me to visit your Training Group, team, book club, ministry, or school, either in person or online, please reach out through the contact page on my website: [lizzylife.com/contact](http://lizzylife.com/contact).

I'm excited for your group to grow together, and I'm honored that you've chosen *In Season* to support you on that journey. I pray that your Training Group experience helps you have your best season yet.

Cheering for you always,

ELIZABETH LAING THOMPSON

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRAINING GROUP LEADERS

This *Training Group Guide* is designed to support a small group of athletes who have decided to read *In Season* together. Your group might consist of you and one friend, a small group of athletes from different teams (or even different sports!), or your entire team. This guide is not meant to be rigid, but rather a starting place to get the conversation and connections flowing. Feel free to adapt the content however you need and set the pace that works best for your group.

## How to Start a Training Group

1. Invite friends to join your group, and if they're in, make sure everyone has a copy of *In Season*. (You can save by buying the books in bulk. Scan the QR code to order.)
2. Pick a day to begin reading the devotional together.
3. Gather everyone's phone numbers and create a group text thread. This thread will be the place where you share discussion questions, prayers, and encouraging thoughts a few times each week.
4. Consider connecting with your Training Group via text three to five times per week. If your group is especially chatty and wants to check in every day, that's great too! You can see how the pacing feels as the season progresses and adjust the frequency according to your group's needs.



## HOW TO USE THIS TRAINING GROUP GUIDE

This *Training Group Guide* includes discussion and connection ideas to go along with every day's devotional reading. For every day, I've included several options to choose from:

1. a short discussion question
2. a prayer
3. a brief encouragement to share with your Training Group

**You don't need to share all three options with your group**—the idea is to **pick one** that feels right for your group that day. (And remember—you can always rewrite the prompts in your own words or come up with ideas of your own. You know your friends and what they need!)

On the days when you want to help your Training Group connect, look up the prompts that correspond to your current reading day. Then choose one prompt to post in the group text thread.

If a discussion question feels like the right choice, I suggest first posting the question and then saying, "I'll go first!" before sharing your own answer to help get the conversation started. If the group could use a prayer prompt, simply copy and paste the prayer into the thread. And if you would like to send the group an encouraging thought for the day, share the encouragement prompt instead.

(Some of the encouragements are quotes from the day's devotion; others are Bible verses. Whenever you see a designed quote on the right-hand side of the guide, we also have that graphic available as a shareable image. You can download all images from the *In Season* page on my website: <https://lizzylife.com/in-season>.)

There is no "right way" to run a Training Group—the goal is simply consistent connection: showing up to encourage one another spiritually throughout the season so that no one feels alone and everyone grows together.

I pray God uses your Training Group to strengthen your faith and your friendships all season long!

## WEEK 1

# IDENTITY

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** What helps you remember who you are when sports feel overwhelming?

**Prayer:** God, thank you that my worth comes from you, not my performance. Help me remember who I am today. Amen.

**Encouragement:** I am more than my skills. More than my stats. More than my sport. I am a daughter of God.

### DAY 2

**Discussion:** Where do you feel pressure to prove yourself?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for choosing us. Please help us walk with godly confidence, bringing you glory and honor through our words and actions. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** Yesterday and today and tomorrow and forever, God chooses you.

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** What reminds you that God is with you during competition?

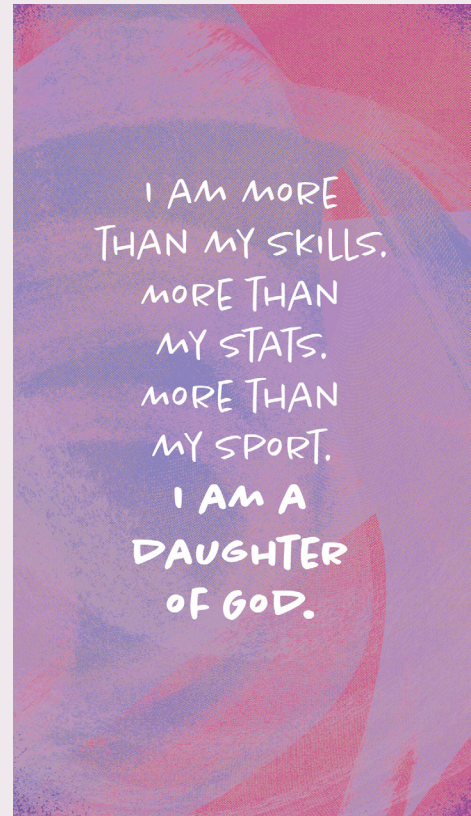
**Prayer:** God, thank you for being near in every moment. Help us to practice and compete with confidence today. Amen.

**Encouragement:** This season—and always—we can be as close to God as we want to be.

### DAY 4

**Discussion:** What purposes do you think God is calling you to on your team this season? Let's pray for each other!

**Prayer:** Lord, help us to get rid of worldliness, sin, and distractions so we can be more useful



to you! Amen.

**Encouragement:** When we get rid of worldly distractions, we can be useful to God—he's ready to use us for his purposes this season.

## DAY 5

**Discussion:** Whose life are you hoping to touch this week?

**Prayer:** Lord, please open our eyes to see the teammates, family, and friends you want us to touch for you this week. We want to show others your love. Amen.

**Encouragement:** When Jesus chose you for his team, like a good coach he had a role already in mind for you. He blessed you that you might bless others. He called you, then gave you a calling. Let's step into his calling today!

## DAY 6

**Discussion:** How has God shown you love recently?

**Prayer:** God, please help us to see and feel your love today, and to remember that our confidence and identity come from you—and you are faithful. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Today and always, Jesus is our man.

## DAY 7

**Discussion options:**

- What does it mean to keep God first in your heart this season?
- What helps you to create space for Jesus in your busy schedule?

**Prayer:** Father, we want to keep you first in our hearts today and throughout the season. Please help us to stay aware of your presence and your priorities all day. Amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- Sport is what we do, not who we are. It's our activity, not our identity.
- "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." (Colossians 3:3–4, NIV)

## WEEK 2

# GROWTH MINDSET

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** How do you define success in your sport?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for the progress we've made. Help us notice and celebrate growth, even when it's small. Amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- Some success can't be counted in time or statistics.
- Your mindset matters. It might even change your game.

### DAY 2

**Discussion options:**

- What's something positive you did in your last practice or competition?
- In what ways are you a perfectionist?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for the ways we are already growing. Help us see progress when it comes. Amen.

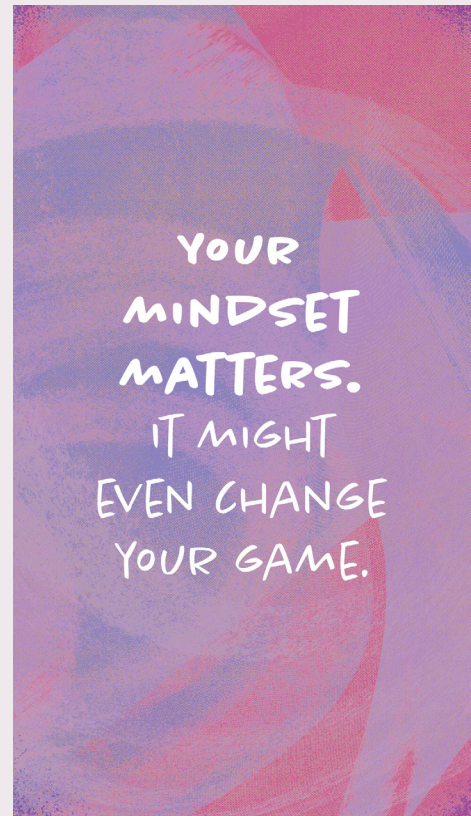
**Encouragement:** *Perfect* is an impossible standard and an unhealthy mindset. Let's embrace God's way of thinking today!

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** What's a negative thought you need to get rid of today? How can you rewrite it?

**Prayer:** Father, please help us to capture negative thoughts and focus on positivity and your truth. Thank you for being with us today. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Games may appear to be won and lost during competition . . . but they're usually won and lost inside our heads. Let's give our thoughts to God today!



## DAY 4

**Discussion:** What's the toughest thing you've faced so far this season?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, Thank you for giving us the strength to do hard things. If we face tough things today, please help us to be determined, not discouraged. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- Today is the hardest it will ever be.
- Today, when we're tempted to feel discouraged, let's get determined instead.
- I'm not discouraged ... I'm determined.

## DAY 5

**Discussion:** How has God already used adversity to strengthen you?

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank you for loving us enough to push us out of our comfort zone. Thank you for trusting us to handle setbacks with courage and resilience. Please give us strength to grow, and show us the opportunities hiding amid the difficulties. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- Setbacks can be opportunities in disguise!
- Setbacks don't have to set *you* back. With the right mindset, they can set you on a path toward growth and new opportunities.
- Setbacks are also opportunities.

## DAY 6

**Discussion:** What helps you reset after mistakes?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for showing us grace when we mess up. Please help us to learn from the past, embrace grace, and keep growing. Amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- We can learn from our past without living there. Our goal isn't to avoid making mistakes—it's to recover quickly from mistakes.
  - Resilient athletes use mistakes as springboards into growth.
- 
-

## DAY 7

**Discussion:** What helps you reset after a mistake?

**Prayer:** God, thank you that bad moments don't define us. Please give us the courage to shake off mistakes from the past and move forward quickly. Amen.

**Encouragement:** As you head to practice today, focus on the things you *can* control, like your attitude and effort.

## WEEK 3

# SPIRITUAL HABITS

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** What character trait would you like to strengthen?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for meeting us where we are. Help us take small steps toward you today. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Spending time with God isn't just one more overwhelming to-do we cram into our packed schedule; it's the practice that makes all the other to-dos doable!

### DAY 2

**Discussion:** When it comes to your weekly schedule, are you naturally a planner or a “pantser” (a person who flies by the seat of their pants)? Post a check emoji ✅ if you're a planner, and a jeans emoji 👖 if you're a pantser!

**Prayer:** Lord, help us make space for you even on the busiest days. Please help us to feel your presence all day long, even during practice and competitions. Amen.

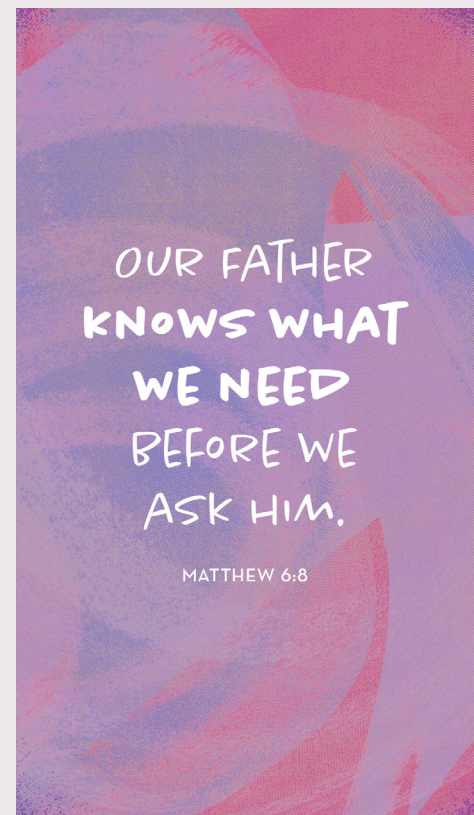
**Encouragement:** This week, let's all take time to choose a routine for our walk with God for the rest of the season. Then on [pick a day this week], we can compare notes and share our plans with each other!

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** Two-part text prompt: 1) On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable do you feel praying? 2) When is your favorite time to pray?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for always staying near us no matter how busy life gets. Help us to stay near you too, remembering to give you our worries, confident that no prayer is too small. Amen.

**Encouragement:** “Our Father knows what we need before we ask him.” (Matthew 6:8)



## DAY 4

**Discussion:** How can we pray for you today?

**Prayer:** Father, we want to feel your presence and love all day today. Please help us notice your work, even when it's small and quiet. Amen.

**Encouragement:** God is ever-present and attentive, a devoted Father. And when his children ask for help, he always listens.

## DAY 5

**Discussion:** Let's swap ideas for a longer prayer time with God. What sounds fun to you? A prayer walk with worship music? Journaling in a coffee shop? Does anyone want to meet up to pray sometime this weekend?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for being the source of our energy and inspiration. You know our needs and stresses and burdens—please give us the strength we need today. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Jesus drew strength from his prayer life, his walk with God. Let's remember where our strength comes from today.

## DAY 6

**Discussion:** What scripture is keeping you going this season?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for giving us your Word. We want to bring it more deeply into our hearts. Please remind us of your ways as we go throughout our day. Amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- God's Word is the best guide. Let's find some time to spend in the Bible today!
- "I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:10–11, NIV)

## DAY 7

**Discussion:** Where is it easiest for you to sense God's presence?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for being with us everywhere we go. Please give us wisdom in tricky situations, courage when we need to be different, love for those who don't know your ways, and comfort knowing you are with us. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9, NIV)

## WEEK 4

# COACHABILITY

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** What part of taking coaching is hardest for you?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for the chance to grow even when it's hard. Please help us to receive coaching and input with humility and without losing our confidence. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Growth takes time. Let's trust the process!

### DAY 2

**Discussion:** What are you learning from your coaches right now?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for the people who are investing in us. Please help us to show them our gratitude today. Amen.

**Encouragement:** The more we grow, the wiser we become, and the wiser we become, the more we grow.

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** What's your first response when you feel criticized?

Emoji key:

Anger = 😡

Insecurity = 😞

"Whatever" = 😐

Determined to grow = 💪

Or add your own!

**Prayer:**

Lord, thank you for the chance to continue growing as players and as people. Please give us the self-control to listen before we speak and the humility to learn from constructive criticism. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** Remember James 1:19 (NIV) today: “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”

## DAY 4

**Discussion:** Are you more likely to throw a pity party or a rage fest?

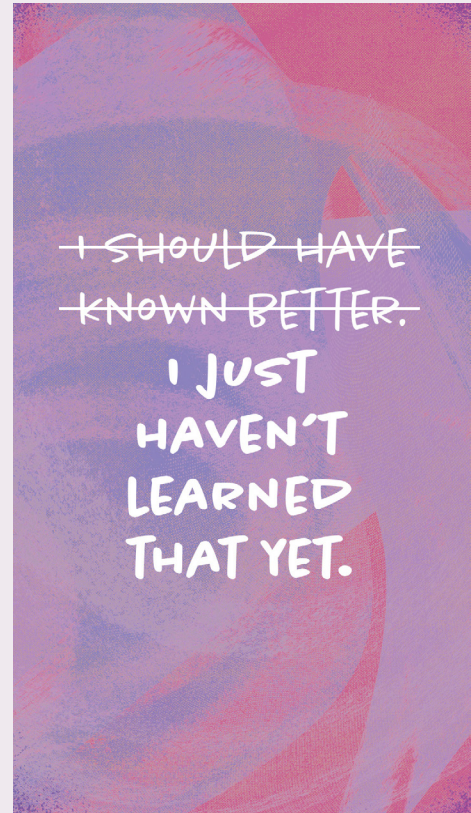
🎉 + ❤️ = pity party

😡 + 🖊️ = rage fest

**Prayer:** God, please help us to stay cool in moments when we feel criticized, attacked, or embarrassed. We want to listen, learn, and set a great example for you. Amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- Every mistake is a chance to improve. To add to our knowledge, skills, and experience.
- ~~I should have known better.~~ I just haven't learned that yet.



## DAY 5

**Discussion:** Who inspires and teaches you besides your coaches?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for all the people who inspire us and make us better. Help us keep our eyes and hearts open to learning wherever we can. Amen.

**Encouragement:** People who keep learning keep growing. Athletes who learn the most grow the most.

## DAY 6

**Discussion:** Does the vibe on your team make it easy to apologize, or hard?

**Prayer:** God, please give us the courage to offer quick apologies when we need to, and the grace to offer complete forgiveness. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Let's lead the way in humility on our teams, remembering that *I'm sorry* paves the way for forgiveness and fresh starts.

## DAY 7

**Discussion:** How do you feel about conflict?

Feisty: 🗨️

Like I want to run and hide: 😨

Terrified: 😱

Or add your own!

**Prayer:** Father, when we feel burdened by tough conversations we need to have, please provide the right opening, and please give us the courage and wisdom we need to communicate well. Thank you for wanting to help us find peace. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** If you've been having conflict with your coach (or anyone) recently, remember: God cares about our conflicts, and he wants us to have peace.

## WEEK 5

# FRIENDSHIP

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** Who can we pray for on your team?

**Prayer:** God, we want to find friends and we want to be friends to others. Please open our eyes to see the people you need us to love today, and please strengthen our friendships in this group and on our teams. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Jesus offered his friendship to many people who didn't expect it—and some who didn't return it. Let's love as Jesus did today: without strings or expectations.

### DAY 2

**Discussion:** We all need support. When can we hang out?

**Prayer:** God, please give us the courage to plant seeds of friendships on our teams—and with each other! Thank you for being our closest friend. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Feeling lonely? You're not alone. God is with you—and so are we.

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** What spiritual gifts from Paul's list do you have?

**Prayer:** Father, please open our eyes to see how you have gifted us and what we have to offer to friends and teammates. Please give us the courage and opportunity to use our gifts for you today. Amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- God gifted you for a reason—don't be shy about sharing your gifts today!
- “In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.” (Romans 12:6–8 NLT)

## DAY 4

### Discussion:

How do you like to connect with new friends?

This or That:

- Coffee or lunch?
- Deep talk or activity?
- Soda or smoothie?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you that you have plans for each of us, just as you have plans for our teammates and friends. Please help us to support others when they have success, and please protect our friendships even when we have different levels of success. We trust you with our sports and with our hearts. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** God has a place for each of us in his story.

## DAY 5

**Discussion:** What matters most to you in friendship? Share a colored heart:

💜 loyalty

💛 fun times

💙 deep talks

💚 common interests

**Prayer:** God, thank you for this group. Please help us to grow closer to you and to each other. And if anyone in this group is feeling lonely in her faith on her team, please provide the spiritual support she needs to stay strong today. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Godly friends are good for the soul. I'm thankful for you, ladies!

## DAY 6

**Discussion:** Who are you hoping to get closer to on your team this season? We'll pray for you!

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for being our most faithful friend, and thank you for the gift of human friendships. Please give us the courage to take our conversations a little deeper so our friendships can grow even closer. Amen.

**Encouragement:** “Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well” (1 Thessalonians 2:8, NIV). I’m thankful to share life with all of you this season!

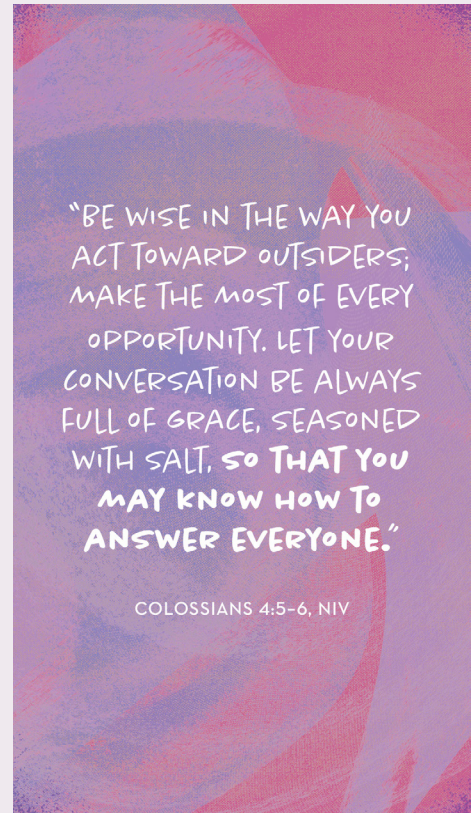
## DAY 7

**Discussion:** Who would you like to share your faith with or get to know better on your team? We’ll pray for you!

**Prayer:** God, we want to have an influence for you on our teams. Please open our eyes to opportunities where we can add a little salt and light into our conversations. Help us to stay out of our own heads and remain aware of others’ needs. In Jesus’s name, amen.

### Encouragement options:

- Remember: Sometimes simply sprinkling a few grains of spiritual salt into a conversation provides an opening that leads someone a step closer to God . . . or closer to us in friendship. Let’s keep an eye out for openings God gives us to make connections, deepen friendships, and share about him.
- “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (Colossians 4:5–6, NIV)



## WEEK 6

# RESILIENCE AND GRIT

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** In what ways do you need to be resilient right now?

**Prayer:** Lord, please strengthen us in every hard thing we are going through. Give us the courage we need to get back up every time we fall. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." (2 Corinthians 4:8-9, NIV)

### DAY 2

**Discussion options:**

- How have you already shown perseverance in your faith or your sport this season?
- How can you tell you are putting your confidence in God instead of yourself? What does that look like or feel like for you?

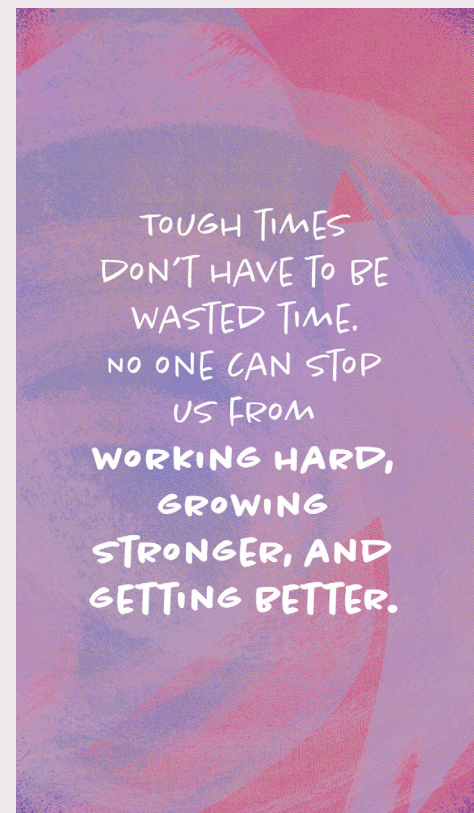
**Prayer:** God, you know everything going on inside us. You see every moment when we feel discouraged, insecure, or tempted to compromise in order to fit in. Please strengthen us to do your will and put our confidence in you alone. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Our confidence isn't in people's opinions—our confidence is in God.

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** When have you seen a "bad" situation turn into something good?

**Prayer:** Father, please open our eyes to the good hiding inside difficult situations. Help us to see your hand at work even when things seem unfair. We trust you. In Jesus's name, amen.



**Encouragement:** Tough times don't have to be wasted time. No one can stop us from working hard, growing stronger, and getting better.

## DAY 4

**Discussion:** What's hard about the middle of the season? Do you have any midseason goals we can pray about for you?

**Prayer:** God, please keep us motivated when the newness of the season wears off and the daily grind sets in. Please keep our eyes on your Son, and let his example keep us inspired to give and be our best. In his name we pray, amen.

**Encouragement:** Just as we never run a perfect race or perform a perfect routine, we will never "arrive" at the goal of becoming like our perfect Savior—we always have room to grow.

## DAY 5

**Discussion:** What's your favorite drill or exercise? How does it make a difference in your training?

**Prayer:** Dear Father, thank you for caring about the small details of our lives. Please give us the character and consistency we need to work hard in the small things. We want to honor you by having integrity in all we do. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- Who you are when you're alone is who you really are.
- "If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones." -Jesus (Luke 16:10, NLT)

## DAY 6

**Discussion:** What stat do you wish they kept in your sport?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for the chance to build character and skills day by day, even when no one sees our efforts but you. Thank you for keeping us company during the lonely times when it feels like no one sees our hard work. Amen.

**Encouragement:** When your stats don't tell the full story, God knows. When you pour out your heart, his heart swells with pride. And that's a reward worth fighting for.

## DAY 7

**Discussion:** What are you proudest of so far this season?

**Prayer:** Father, how amazing it is that you are always awake and never too busy for us. Thank you for caring about every detail of our lives. We want to always make time for you too. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- God is with us and for us. Before dawn and after midnight. Off the field and on the field. Always.
- “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.” (Psalm 139:7–10, NIV)

## WEEK 7

# LEADERSHIP

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** How is God calling you to lead right now?

**Prayer:** Lord, please show us the situations where you need us to set an example or lead others. Give us the courage to step up and speak up. In Jesus's name we pray, amen.

**Encouragement:** Sometimes we have to step up and lead before we feel ready. If God has called you to lead, he will give you the strength you need to follow through.

### DAY 2

**Discussion:** When you think of someone who represents Jesus well, who do you picture, and why?

**Prayer:** Father, it is a privilege to represent you on and off the field. Please show us how to conduct ourselves in every situation. Give us wisdom and self-control even when others are losing control. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** Jesus has put his reputation in our hands. Let's represent him well today!

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** What excites you about the idea of leading on your team? What intimidates you?

**Prayer:** Lord, please help us to humbly serve our families, friends, and teammates as Jesus did, remembering that he didn't come to be served, but to serve. In his name we pray, amen.

**Encouragement:** If you have ambitions to lead, don't squash them. Leadership ability is a gift from God. Let's all find someone to serve today!

### DAY 4

**Discussion options:**

- How is God calling you to lead right now? What does your team need from you?
- How do you already lead on your team, and what leadership quality do you still want to develop?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for the honor of representing you. Please strengthen us and give us wisdom as we strive to exemplify your ways today. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** Remember: You don't have to be a senior, star player, or stat leader to make a difference or be a leader on your team. Leadership isn't about skills, stats, or physique—it's about character and heart.

## DAY 5

**Discussion:** How do we give God credit for our victories? What does that look like?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for being the source of our confidence. Please help us to play and lead boldly and confidently, always giving you the glory in everything we do. Amen.

**Encouragement:** A cocky player draws attention to herself, but a confident player points the spotlight back to God.

## DAY 6

**Discussion:** Which do you prefer: leadership or supporting roles?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for paying attention to our lives. Please give us the courage to fulfill your purposes for us and to play whatever role our teams need us to play. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** God has you where you are... for such a time as this.

## DAY 7

**Discussion:** What's your favorite way to connect with new people?

Music: 🎵

Movies: 🎬

Food: 🍌



Sports: 🏀 or whatever sports-themed emoji relates to your group

Faith: ✝️

**Prayer:** God, thank you for the privilege of sharing about you with friends. Please help us to find ways to have fun and build friendships, and open our eyes to opportunities to share about you along the way. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** “Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.” (1 Corinthians 9:22–23, NLT)

## WEEK 8

# COMPLICATIONS, FRUSTRATIONS

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** What frustration are you facing right now? We'll pray for you!

**Prayer:** Father, please strengthen us with patience, courage, and endurance through adversity. Please heal any in our Training Group or on our teams who are dealing with injuries. Help us to see past the short-term of how things feel today, and remember the long play. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** The end will be worth the beginning.

### DAY 2

**Discussion:** What bothers you most about unfairness?

**Prayer:** Father, it's so frustrating to experience unfairness. Please help us trust that you are working even when we can't see that work happening. Help us to trust you to defend us instead of losing our temper or taking things into our own hands in negative ways. Give us courage and wisdom to speak up when we need to get help. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- "Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act." (Psalm 37:7, NLT)
- Remember: God is aware, he cares, and he is working!

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** Do people's expectations motivate you or stress you?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for having great vision for our lives, but also for loving us just as we are today. It's reassuring to know that we don't have to earn your love or approval. Thank you for being our safe place. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** God is your safe place, and his love does not depend on your performance. You don't have to win a game or set a record to make God proud. He's already proud, and he loves you as you are.

## DAY 4

**Discussion:** Do you consider yourself sensitive, or can you quickly shake off criticism?

Sensitive: ❤️

Shaker-offer: 🙌

**Prayer:** Father, please give us the wisdom and grace to shake things off when sports get a little heated. Help us remain confident without taking every little thing personally. Amen.

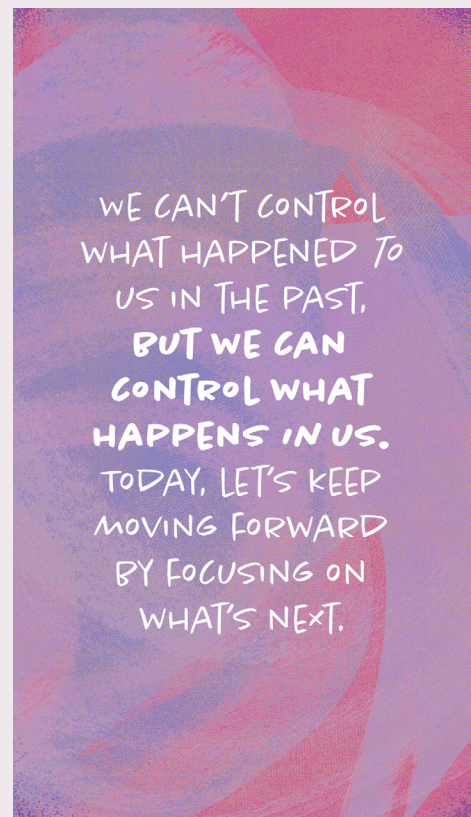
**Encouragement:** Resilient athletes know when to listen . . . and when to let things go.

## DAY 5

**Discussion:** If you could relive one sports season without changing anything, which season would you want to experience all over again?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for drawing near when we hurt. Please help us to resist the temptation to dwell on the past or get stuck asking why. Instead, please help us to focus on what's next. Amen.

**Encouragement:** We can't control what happened *to* us in the past, but we can control what happens *in* us. Today, let's keep moving forward by focusing on what's next.



## DAY 6

**Discussion:** What's your favorite worship song?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for giving us the church as our spiritual family. Please help us to find Christian community if we don't have it, and once we find it, please show us how to stay connected even when our schedules are hectic. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** God is with you and for you, wherever you are.

## DAY 7

**Discussion:** What feels uncertain in your life right now? Let's pray for each other.

**Prayer:** Father, thank you that you can see around every blind turn, and you are never surprised. Thank you for guiding us through uncertainties. We ask for wisdom in making decisions and a sense of peace as we wait for you to reveal what's next. We trust you and we love you. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Even when we are blind, God can see. He'll shine a light when our path feels dark, and he'll never leave us alone.

## WEEK 9

# CHRISTLIKE COMPETITORS

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being “not at all,” and 5 being “I’m practically the team chaplain,” how comfortable do you feel bringing up your faith with teammates?

**Prayer:** God, we invite you to use us to lead others to you. Please give us the courage to overcome fears and insecurity so we can mention you in conversations. Please lead us to people who are seeking you. In Jesus’s name, amen.

**Encouragement:** A single moment can make a world of difference. Sometimes God takes one baby-brave step on our part and uses it to change a life.

### DAY 2

**Discussion:** What’s the weirdest nickname you’ve ever had (or still have)?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for having vision for us and seeing the people we can become. Please help us to step into your vision for our lives. Amen.

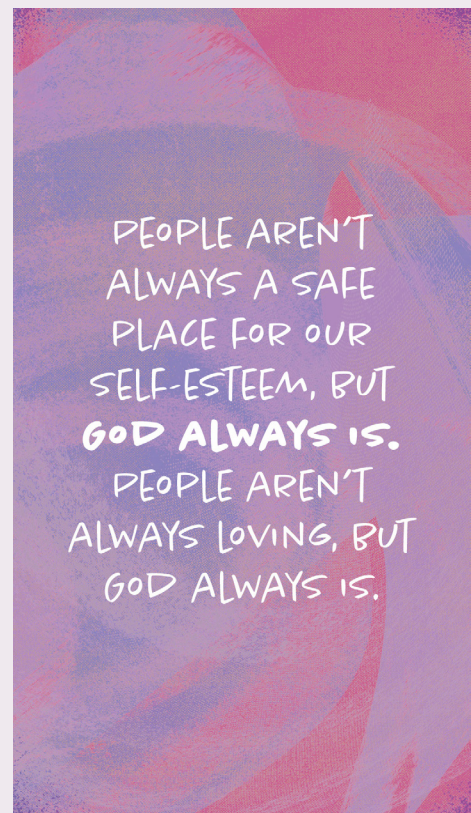
**Encouragement:** Let’s be visionaries for others the way Jesus is for us. Let’s all find someone on our teams to encourage today.

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** What 2-3 adjectives best describe the vibe on your team this season?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for being the safe place for our self-esteem, always loving us and believing in us. Please help us to draw our confidence from you today and always, not changing our convictions or personalities to try to please others. Amen.

**Encouragement:** People aren’t always a safe place for our self-esteem, but God always is. People aren’t always loving, but God always is.



## DAY 4

**Discussion:** How can you imitate Jesus's heart of inclusivity on your team?

**Prayer:** Father, please help us to notice those who need to be included, and give us generous hearts to invite new people into our conversations and our friend groups. We want others to experience your welcoming love through us. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** Today let's all make a point to connect with someone on our team who seems quiet or left out.

## DAY 5

**Discussion:** Which area is stronger for you: having conviction or showing compassion?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for showing us mercy whenever we need it. Please help us to have strong convictions like Jesus did, not compromising in order to fit in. And please help us to show mercy and compassion to those who don't know you. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Jesus viewed the world with conviction and compassion. Let's look at the world through his eyes today.

## DAY 6

**Discussion:** What's the chore no one on your team wants to do?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for Jesus's example of servant leadership. Help us to be like him, gladly serving behind the scenes and without expecting thanks. We offer our acts of service as expressions of love and gratitude to you. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** The greater you are, the more you serve.

## DAY 7

**Discussion:** When do you feel like the Different Christian Girl on your team?

**Prayer:** God, we know that your ways are dramatically different from the world's, and you don't value what the world does. Please help us to stay strong when we have to choose your path instead of the world's. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Remember: If you sometimes feel out of place in worldly situations, there's nothing wrong with you. Feeling different or left out is a good sign that you're living God's way. Why? Because God's way is countercultural.

## WEEK 10

# HANDLING SPORTY FEELINGS

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** What are you worried about today? And what are you thankful for today?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for your faithful love. We place our worries in your capable hands. Please help us with school stress, family problems, friend drama, and the pressure of sports. We love you. Amen.

**Encouragement:** “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6–7, NLT)

### DAY 2

**Discussion:** How do you express anger? Are you a screamer, a stuffer, or a shove-it-under-the-rugger?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for teaching us how to handle ourselves when things get heated. Please give us wisdom and self-control even when other people are losing it. In Jesus’s name, amen.

**Encouragement:** Gentleness is the fire extinguisher that cools down heated situations.

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** How do you respond when someone gets angry with you? Do you fight back or shut down? Feel defensive or discouraged?

**Prayer:** Lord, it’s really stressful when coaches, teachers, and parents get mad at us—especially when their anger feels unfair. Please give us the self-control to stay calm and the wisdom to know when to speak up—and when to be patient and ride out the storm. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Stay cool, stay calm, and say a prayer. God can help you bring resolution to any tense situation.

### DAY 4

**Discussion:** How can prayer help us with forgiveness?

**Prayer:** Father, I am struggling in a relationship right now. I feel hurt, confused, and frustrated. Please show me if there's anything I need to do or to change. Please help the other person to control their anger and treat me differently. Please pave the way for forgiveness and resolution. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** Prayer is a powerful weapon against bitterness. If you have a difficult relationship in your life, spend time praying for and about that person today.

## DAY 5

### Discussion options:

- What's your favorite celebration snack? Post the emoji!
- What makes you feel celebrated?

Words: 🖋️

Food: 🍰

Gifts: 📺

Hugs: 🤗

Going out to do something fun: 🥳

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for the times when we have success—it's a gift from you. Help us to be generous and humble in those moments, sharing the spotlight so our friends feel seen and loved too. Amen.

**Encouragement:** "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." (Romans 12:15, NIV)

## DAY 6

**Discussion:** How do you celebrate your friends when they succeed?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for directing our paths and timelines. Please protect our hearts from jealousy when others succeed while we're still waiting, and help us to truly celebrate others' wins even as we pray about our own desires. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Everybody's timeline is different. We can feel sad for ourselves and happy for a friend at the same time. We can rejoice with and for friends who succeed, trusting that God is guiding their path—and ours.

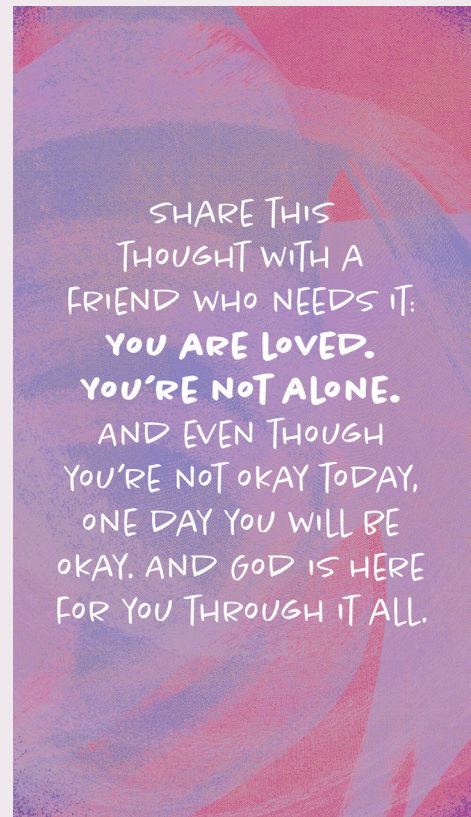
## DAY 7

**Discussion:** How are you feeling today? Share the emoji that best captures it.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for hurting with us when we lose. We don't know how to express all we feel, but thank you for searching our hearts and understanding them. Thank you for sitting with us in our sadness. In Jesus's name, amen.

### Encouragement options:

- “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18, NIV)
- Share this thought with a friend who needs it: You are loved. You are not alone. And even though you're not okay today, one day you will be okay. And God is here for you through it all.



## WEEK 11

# REST AND TRUST

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** How do you feel about taking breaks? How about naps?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for understanding our need for rest. Please help us to admit when we are tired and speak up if we need help taking breaks. Please give us the energy we need today. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** You don't have to prove yourself to God. He already delights in you.

### DAY 2

**Discussion:** How do you plan to rest and recharge this week?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for caring when we are tired. Thank you for giving us your energy. We need your spiritual strength and physical energy to make it through this day. Please strengthen us for the day ahead. Amen.

#### Encouragement options:

- God is never too tired, overwhelmed, or busy to comfort us through our exhaustion, overwhelm, and busyness.
- “Do you not know? Have you not heard? 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. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah 40:28–31, NIV)

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** How have you seen God at work in your life recently? Has he... answered a specific prayer? Encouraged you through a friend? Comforted you after a tough loss?

**Prayer:** Father, how amazing that you care about our little lives! That you pay attention to everything we're going through, and you know more about us than we do! You know everything happening in the locker room and out on the field. We invite you to use us today however you

see fit. Amen.

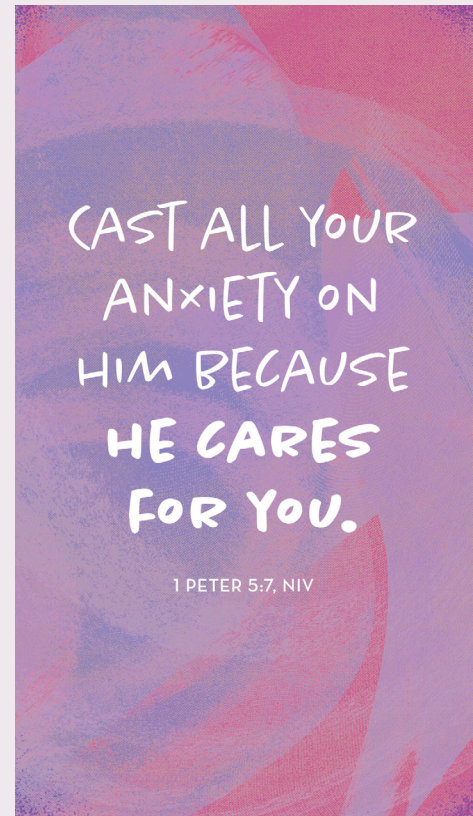
**Encouragement:** God never forgets about you. Even when he seems silent or his work is happening behind the scenes where you can't see it, he's there. So go ahead . . . talk to him today.

## DAY 4

**Discussion:** What's easy for you to pray about? What feels less comfortable? (Feelings? Family stuff? Sports?)

**Prayer:** Father, sometimes we unconsciously edit our prayers to include only the "big stuff." But you care about everything—the hurt feelings, the insecurities, the pressures and fears no one sees. Thank you. We hand you our worries today, and we know they're in good hands. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** "Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)



## DAY 5

**Discussion:** If you could get a sneak peek at one thing in your future, what would you want to see?

**Prayer:** Dear Father, as Psalm 31:14 says, "I am trusting you, O Lord . . . You are my God!" Our future is in your hands. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** God is our God. He is ours... and we are his. Let's take that truth (and that confidence!) with us all day today.

## DAY 6

**Discussion:** What's your biggest dream or hope for the rest of this season? We'll pray for you!

**Prayer:** Father, what a comfort to know we are safe in your hands. We give you everything that is on our hearts, everything weighing us down. We know that because we are loved by you, we can make it through any difficulty. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** When our hope is in God, the pressure comes off our performance. If we don't achieve a goal, we're disappointed, but we're okay. If we have a rough game (or season!), we're

sad, but we're okay. Our sport isn't our only hope for happiness and a great future. God loves us no matter what—win or lose. Our hope is in God, so it's in good hands.

## DAY 7

**Discussion:** What's your go-to comfort food when you're sad?

**Prayer:** Father, what a blessing it is to share the comfort you've given us with others. Today please open our eyes to see those in need of your comfort. Let your love flow through us to encourage people who are hurting. Amen.

**Encouragement:** God doesn't allow adversity because he's unkind or uncaring. And he doesn't comfort us just so we'll feel better all alone in our room—he knows that one day we'll be able to share his comfort with others. Let's encourage someone today.

## WEEK 12

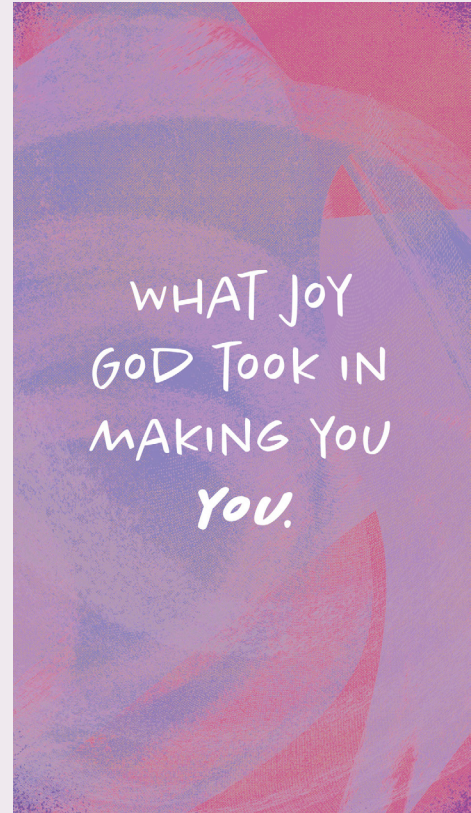
# FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME

### DAY 1

**Discussion:** What's your favorite thing about your sport? When are you happiest in your sport?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for inventing sports and making our bodies strong and athletic. Today, please help us to forget the pressures and goals and just remember all the reasons we love to compete and train. Help us to have fun in our sports today. Amen.

**Encouragement:** What joy God took in making you *you*.



### DAY 2

**Discussion:** Finish this sentence: I can enjoy this season even when... (As you think about how to complete that sentence, think about a goal you're still waiting on or something hard you're going through that isn't resolved yet.)

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for the gift of this season, even with all its ups and downs. We may have some goals still unmet and prayers still unanswered, but today, we are determined to simply enjoy the game. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** We can choose an *even when* attitude. We can be joyful even when things aren't going our way. Tomorrow isn't here yet—we only have today. This practice. This game. This meet. And today is a gift from God.

### DAY 3

**Discussion:** If you picked a walk-up song today, what would it be?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for teaching us how to pause all our striving and just celebrate what you have already done. Please open our eyes to see our progress today, and help us take the time to celebrate. Thank you for all the wins you've already given us! Amen.

**Encouragement:** Let's take time to celebrate our wins today—even the small ones. Small progress is still progress!

## DAY 4

**Discussion:** When do you feel valuable to your team? Or what do you think you bring to your team?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for the unique gifts you have given to each of us. Please help us to offer them to our teams with confidence and joy. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Your team doesn't need you to be any other player besides yourself.

## DAY 5

**Discussion options:**

- What's the best loss you've ever experienced?
- Besides earning a winning record, how would you define a winning season for yourself? For your team?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for teaching us to focus on the big picture, not just the win-loss column. No matter what our team's record looks like, please help us to appreciate victories along the way. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** Trophies tarnish. Records get broken and forgotten. But our joy in Christ never rusts or fades, and our inheritance in Christ can never be taken away.

## DAY 6

**Discussion:** What scripture or thought helps you through times when God is slow to answer a prayer?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for being trustworthy and loving. Even when we don't understand why you are allowing difficulties in our lives, we know you want to comfort and strengthen us. Our hope is in you. In Jesus's name, amen.

**Encouragement:** Circumstances change, but God's love never does. It never fades and never fails.

## DAY 7

**Discussion:** What's a favorite memory from this season?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for wanting joy for us! Please help us to root our joy in who you are, not in how life (or the season) is going. Thank you for all the joy we can find in today. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Our joy doesn't depend on a practice or game. It doesn't depend on a coach's approval. It doesn't depend on our performance or record. Our joy depends on who God is, and he is always good.

# OVERTIME DEVOTIONS

**Note:** Since devotions 1 through 5 speak to specific needs that could crop up throughout the season, you may want to have your group jump ahead to read these devotions (and use the accompanying prompts) whenever these topics feel appropriate. (For example, days two and three are game-day devotions you could read when someone in your group has a big game.)

## DAY 1

### When You're Really, Really (REALLY) Hoping for Something

**Discussion:** What's your biggest sports prayer right now? We'll pray for you!

**Prayer:** Dear Father, thank you for wanting what is best for us *and* knowing what is best for us. Thank you for caring about our desires and dreams. Please give us peace as we wait, and help our hearts to truly trust yours. In Jesus's name, amen.

#### Encouragement options:

- Nothing can stand in the way of God's plans for your life.
- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28, NIV)

## DAY 2

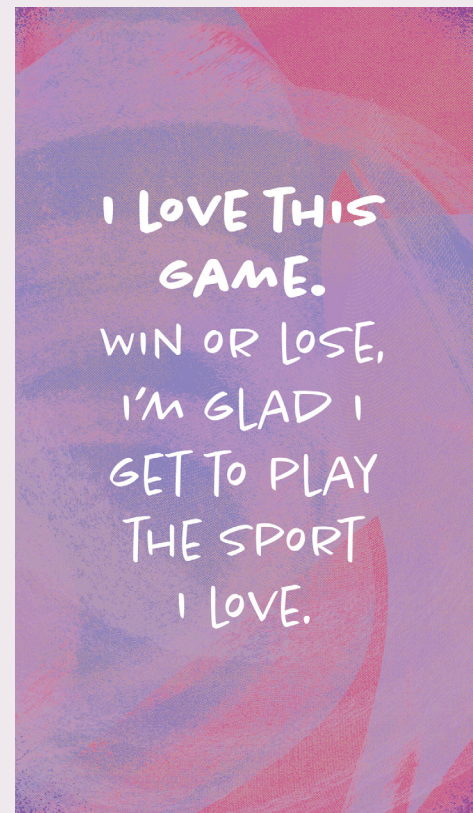
### A Game-Day Devotion

**Discussion:** What settles your stomach on game days? What makes you queasy?

**Prayer:** God, it's so good to know that you are with us as we compete. Please help us to give our all and play our best, honoring you in everything we do and say. Amen.

#### Encouragement:

I love this game. Win or lose, I'm glad I get to play the sport I love.



## DAY 3

### Simple Truths for Game Days

**Discussion:** What truth do you need to remember about God today?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for the chance to play the sports we love. Please help us to remember that we are your daughters, and no scoreboard, time, or outcome can change that! Amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- We are God’s daughters, and no scoreboard, time, or outcome can change that.
- You could choose any of the simple truths for game days to share in the group thread.
- “And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38–39, NLT)

## DAY 4

### A Devotion for The Day After a Tough Loss

**Discussion:** What’s an untrue thought that sometimes pops up when you lose? (Like, you know it’s not true, but it feels true anyway?) Let’s help each other rewrite those negative thoughts.

**Prayer:** God, only you can fully understand the way we feel when we lose. Thank you for sitting with us, for listening and caring. We need you today. Amen.

**Encouragement options:**

- “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18)
- If you are hurting, God is the first to know. No tear you shed ever goes unwitnessed. No cry goes unheard, no heartache unshared.

## DAY 5

### A Devotion for Celebrating a Victory

**Discussion:** What are you most proud of this season?

**Prayer:** Lord, we commit our wins to you. We're seeking to honor you through our sports, and we pray people see Jesus in us through the way we compete—and the way we handle victories. We want to point the glory and attention to you instead of ourselves. Amen.

**Encouragement:** Don't just celebrate your wins one time—relive them with God over and over again!

## DAY 6

### A Devotion for the End of the Season

**Discussion:** Who do you want to thank for supporting you this season? How do you plan to express your gratitude?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for our coaches and how hard they worked to train us. Thank you for the parents and other supporters who have poured into us. Our season wouldn't have been possible without their sacrifices, wisdom, and guidance. Please open our eyes to opportunities to show our appreciation, and please give us the right words and ways to express our gratitude.

**Encouragement:** Let's all write a thank you card for someone we appreciate today!

---

---