

READ LAMENTATIONS 3:23-24

DAY 4

Have you ever tried to play a guitar? It's not as easy as it looks! For one thing, your fingers HURT when you press the strings down and that can be really tough for a beginner.

It takes a long time to get comfortable with that feeling. But over time, your fingers harden up so it's not painful anymore. And you get used to the way the frets feel under your fingers. You learn to play chords, and you can play faster and faster, until finally you can play along with your favorite song. But it can take months, or even years to get to that point.

Learning any instrument takes *practice*. You've got to do the same thing again and again if you want to get better. Of course you'll make mistakes along the way. And some days you just don't feel like it. But you can't give up! You choose to keep going, even when it gets hard. If you want to make music, you have to stick with it over the long haul.

Following God is the same way. Some days you face some really hard things that discourage you or make you feel like giving up. And when you mess up, you wonder if you really have what it takes. But this verse is a great reminder that God is with you—helping you—as you decide to follow Him each and every day.

Write the first sentence of this verse on a sticky note. Put it right next to your toothbrush so you see it in the morning.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Why do we need to remember that God gives us a fresh start every morning?
2. How does God's forgiveness help us to live with determination?
3. Do you think living for God is a decision you need to make every day? Why?



READ GALATIANS 6:9

DAY 1

Now find an iPad® or tablet (or the streaming device on your TV) and pull up the video for TobyMac's song, "Til the Day I Die." As you watch it, think about the lyrics.

This song is powerful because it talks about the determination we need to have as followers of Jesus. Remember, determination is deciding it's worth it to finish what you started.

That's what our memory verse is about, too. Choosing to do good all the time isn't easy. You'll feel tired. You'll feel discouraged. But like the song says, "It might flicker, but they can't kill the flame."

Decide that you're going to be someone who finishes what you start. You know that, in the end, it'll be worth it!

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. What do you think it means to "gather a crop" if you don't give up?
2. Can you think of a friend who shows a lot of determination because of the way they trust God?
3. How have you seen that person keep going even when life gets hard?

READ ACTS 3:12

DAY 2

What's your favorite sport? Who are your favorite athletes? What's the most amazing, most jaw-dropping play you've ever seen—maybe a game-winning catch, or a clutch hit at the perfect time?

Or how about a singing competition on TV? The contestants practice and practice and practice so they can pull off the performance of a lifetime. And when they pull it off, they leave the audience speechless.

We love to celebrate people for their talents and accomplishments. And we should! There's certainly nothing wrong with that. But look at Peter and John's story. They got a lot of attention when they healed the man who couldn't walk, but look how they handled the applause! They gave the credit where it belongs—to God.

The truth is, everything we're able to do comes from God. He gives us skills and puts us in situations where we can choose to use them. But more importantly, He connects us with other people, and He gives us a chance to show love to them. Just like Peter and John did, we can follow God's lead and help the people around us—whether it's easy or difficult.

The next time you pray, tell God that you need His help to live with determination.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Do you like getting recognized for doing something good?
2. How did Peter and John go beyond just the good feeling of knowing others were in awe of what they had done? Why was it so important for them to give credit to God?
3. Why do you think it's hard for us to remember that we completely depend on God?

READ ACTS 4:13

DAY 3

One really cool thing about following Jesus is that He uses ordinary people to do really extraordinary things. You don't have to be a superhero to do what God has called you to do. After all, it's not about how great WE are. It's about how great HE is!

That can be the thing that first opens people's eyes to see that God is real because they can see the difference He makes in our lives.

Think about Peter and John. They weren't experts. They weren't "important" in the eyes of other people. But they were willing to speak boldly about Jesus, even to the point of getting arrested! If they were willing to put everything on the line like that, then everyone could see that they must have really believed.

In Acts 4:4 it says, "Many who heard the message [of what Peter and John did] believed"—not because of Peter and John's skills and talents, but because of their determination. They were willing to keep going and tell everyone about Jesus, even when things got hard.

Trust God confidently this week, because your determination speaks loud and clear to the people around you!

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. What are some hard things you're going through right now where you need to have some extra determination?
2. What does it show to other people when you're able to trust God in the middle of those tough things?
3. The verse says, "They realized that these men had been with Jesus." What do you think would make your friends say that about you? What would make them see that you had been with Jesus?



READ 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-25

DAY 4

Think of the last time you tried to run any kind of distance. Maybe you can sprint really well, but if you use up all your energy at the beginning, you don't have anything left for the rest of the run!

Most runners would tell you that it's mostly a mental battle. They have to be completely focused and sharp, with their eyes fixed on the goal. They have to be 100% determined to win.

That's what Paul was talking about in this verse: *Run in a way that will get you the prize* (NIRV). It's not enough to just run. You have to run the *right* way.

Following Jesus is a lot like running. It means focusing on the right thing: focusing on Him! When you dedicate your whole life to honoring Him, listening to Him, and growing more and more like Him, you set yourself up on the best track to win. You set your eyes on your relationship with Him; the "crown that will last forever." And when He gives you that kind of focus, *nothing* can stand in your way!

If you're tired or discouraged, fix your eyes on Jesus. Remember that He's the real reason you can keep going.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. What happens when you're distracted while you're running? Are your results as successful?
2. What are some ways you can focus on God and tune out the distractions of life?
3. Can you think of a time you had to remind yourself of God's truth to get the motivation you needed?



READ MATTHEW 7:7

DAY 1

The end of school year is always a busy time, and in a lot of ways, your grade depends on the way you finish the year. If you're honest, it's stressful! The one thing you can't do is give up. You've got to do your best and stay determined, all the way to the end. You've got to keep going, even when the work in front of you seems too big to handle.

Remember, the God of the universe is right there by your side! He'll be with you and guide you along the way. He cares about you, and He knows the pressures you're facing. And He's invited you to call out to Him and ask Him for help.

Write down the one thing that's stressing you out the most right now.

Now, write out a prayer to God and ask Him to help you with it.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. If everything in life came easily, do you think it would be harder to remember to rely on God?
2. How does it lift your spirits to know that God is with you as you face something big?
3. Do you think your parents (or older sibling) have ever felt stressed about their jobs or schoolwork? Have you asked them how they handle those difficult moments?

READ ACTS 10:22-23

DAY 2

When God brought Peter and Cornelius together, He opened Peter's eyes in a BIG way. God was basically telling Him, "The good news about Jesus is for everybody!"

All of a sudden, Peter could see the incredible opportunity that was in front of him, which is the exact same opportunity that's in front of us today. It's the mission Jesus gave us as His followers: to share what Jesus has done in our lives, and to share our hope in Him that will last forever.

And how did Peter react when he got this brand-new invitation? He responded with simple determination. He said "yes."

There were a million questions Peter could have asked. There was no way to know exactly how it would go. He could have hesitated or refused. But instead, he made the decision to trust God and act. And he got to be part of the biggest movement the world has ever known.

What about you? Is there something God is stirring in your heart, but it just seems too big or too difficult for you to handle on your own?

Decide ahead of time that you're going to say "yes" to whatever God calls you to do.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Why do you think we hesitate sometimes when we feel God prompting us to do something?
2. Do you think you'll ever regret saying "yes" to something God calls you to? Why not?
3. Why do you think Peter was so quick to say yes when he encountered something that must have surely rocked his world?



READ PSALM 121:2

DAY 3

When you're riding in the car, you wear your seat belt, right? Good.

Before too long, you'll be able to ride in the front seat. And in just a few short years, you'll be driving yourself around. Crazy, right?

There are lots of rules about where and how kids at different ages can ride in the car. And those rules are there to keep you safe. After all, there's a lot of danger involved anytime you travel in a vehicle.

As you follow God, you might face a different kind of danger. Not necessarily the "getting hurt" kind of danger, but the danger of losing heart. Losing your determination. Wanting to give up.

Determination means that you choose to keep going; to rely on God to keep you safe and strong. You make choices that honor Him whether you feel like it or not. You don't let disappointment get you down, but you remember He has a bigger picture. You decide each day to say, "My help comes from the Lord."

The next time you put on your seatbelt, remember that you're putting your trust in God daily and your determination comes from Him!

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Why do you think it's important for us to get in a habit of trusting God, just like we have a habit of putting on our seatbelt?
2. What does it say about someone when they choose not to wear their seatbelt?
3. What do you think starts to happen to someone when they try to make life happen without relying on God? What does that do to their determination?

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-25 DAY 4

David sang these words since God had saved him from his enemies. He was so thankful for all the ways God had helped him and protected him, and he just had to share it!

David was singing about the armor of God, just like Paul would write about later on. And today, we can know the exact same confidence and security that they felt when we trust God and rely on him to see us through.

In the space below, draw out David's words. Get creative and illustrate the images that he used to talk about God's protection. Add color (or glitter!) if you want to. Let it be a reminder that God gives you what you need to keep going.

Post your finished product on the fridge so you can encourage your family too!

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. How has God been a rock in your life?
2. Did you realize at the time what God was up to? Or did it become clearer later, when you could look back like David did?
3. There are lots of songs that are about confidence in yourself—"I can do anything." Why is it so much more powerful to say that GOD can do anything?



READ EPHESIANS 6:14-17 DAY 1

Just about every sport has some kind of protective equipment. (OK, maybe not swimming!) But think about a baseball umpire—specifically, the home plate umpire. Google "home plate umpire" and look at some of the images.

Obviously, the catcher needs to have all kinds of gear to protect himself, but the ump is in almost as much danger. All it takes is one foul tip from a 95-mile-per-hour fastball, and you can see why he needs a mask!

(Fun fact: The ump always wears a chest protector, but you can't always see it. In the big leagues, he wears it under his suit jacket so he can still have the appearance of authority.)

It's pretty obvious why an umpire needs that kind of "armor." We don't always think about putting on the "armor of God," but that's exactly what it takes—to walk into each day knowing we're guarded and protected by everything God has given us.

Remember that God is with you, so you can face the day with faith, truth, peace, and confidence. Then, we'll be determined and ready to handle all the fastballs and foul tips life can throw your way!

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. What are some examples of "armor" that you wear—maybe in a sport you play, or maybe a helmet you wear when you're riding your bike?
2. What's one way you can remind yourself to "put on the armor of God" before you face the day?
3. How is that different from just letting life happen to you, and then reacting to whatever happens?

WEEK THREE
4TH-5TH

READ PSALM 119:9

DAY 2

Have you ever tried to put something together without the instructions? Maybe you threw them away with the box and you thought, "I'll just figure it out." Sometimes that works fine and sometimes . . . not so much. (*Just ask your mom or dad about the last time they put together some build-it-yourself furniture!*)

One really important way to put on the armor of God is by reading the Bible. It really is like an instruction manual for life. It might not say, "You should do _____" for whatever situation you're facing, but it does help you focus on God and what He thinks is most important. It puts you in the right frame of mind so you can be determined to follow Him no matter what obstacles you might face.

And one other thing, God's word is also a refuge when you've hit some trouble. You can *always* go back when you've messed up, and you can be sure you'll experience God's love and grace through the pages of Scripture. Isn't that great to know?

Stay strong and committed to reading the Bible regularly.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. How can knowing God's word protect you like armor?
2. Why do you think it's important to get in the habit of reading the Bible consistently, not just reading when you're in the middle of trouble?
3. How does a devotional like this one keep you "on track" through the ups and downs of life?



READ EPHESIANS 6:18

DAY 3

Why do you think Paul talks about prayer as part of the armor of God?

Go ahead and write down what you think.

That's right! God has given you everything you need to have determination—to keep going strong. That means knowing He's with you, knowing His word, AND being able to talk to Him about anything you might be going through. You can talk to Him about the good, the bad, and the ugly.

That's what's so great about following God. You don't just know ABOUT Him. You know HIM. You have a personal relationship with the one who made you and loves you and who knows you even better than you know yourself.

Part of the armor of God is being watchful—seeing trouble ahead, or seeing where others need help—and talking to God about it.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Is it easier for you to talk to God when things are going well, or when you're in the middle of trouble?
2. Why do you think it's important to God that we remember to talk to him?
3. How does it feel when you know someone else is praying for you?

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 2:9

DAY 4

See if you can figure out the code to fill in the blanks. Hint: Count each letter of the alphabet.

____ _ ____ _ ____ _ ____ _ ____ _ ____ _ ____ _ ____ _
7 15 4 11 14 15 23 19 20 8 5 5 14 4 15 6 20 8 5 19 20 15 18 25

There's no one like our God. His ways are higher than our ways. His plans are bigger than we can possibly imagine. But like this verse says, He's given us a way to understand through His Spirit.

Thinking about heaven is enough to make anyone's head spin. But at the same time, God's spirit helps us to know, deep down, that what He's promised us is TRUE. The Spirit helps us wrap our minds around things that we could never "get" just on our own understanding.

God wanted us to know that He does have a plan for this world, and for each one of us individually. He loves us so much the He gave us Jesus to make a way for us to be part of His family forever. And He's created a perfect place for us eternally. That gives us all the hope we need to keep going and finish the work He's called us to do here and now.

Thank God for giving His Spirit to help us when we believe and trust in Him.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Have you ever tried to imagine the idea of infinity in math class? Isn't it crazy to think about?
2. What does it show us about God's love for us that He gave us His Spirit to help us understand His ways?
3. Aren't you glad God prepared a way for us to see a glimpse of how big He is? How does that help you live each day with confidence and determination?



READ REVELATION 21:4-5

DAY 1

EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.

Isn't that what we really want to know, in the end? It's what we tell each other when something goes wrong, or when we're scared, or when we don't know what to do. The great thing is, when you believe and trust in Jesus, you know for SURE that everything will be all right in the end. You know that even though the world is full of sadness and pain—and even death—that's not the end of the story.

So what is the end of the story? When you believe, you know for sure that God has promised you Heaven. You know that through Jesus, you have forgiveness of your sins. Sin is no longer in the way between you and God. You can have a relationship with your perfect heavenly Father that will last forever, because of what Jesus did for you. There's a lot we don't know about heaven. But these verses bring us life and hope and purpose, because they are a promise that God knows the end of the story. We'll be with HIM—with no tears, sadness, crying, pain, or death. He is making everything new!

Thank God for the truth that He's in control and He knows the end of the story.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Have you ever been to a memorial service? Did it bring you hope when you listened to the person who spoke?
2. Have you ever asked your mom or dad about heaven and what it means to them? (If not, you should!)
3. How does the promise of heaven help you to have purpose and determination for your life right now?

READ ISAIAH 25:7-8

DAY 2

Quick, grab one of your shoes with laces. Take one of the laces out and hold it between your hands.

It's impossible for us to even imagine the idea of eternity, but this is a fun way to try. You know that little plastic part on the end of the lace that you poke through the holes when you're lacing the shoe? Think of that part as your life here on earth. Think of the rest of the lace as eternity, but pretend it goes on and on and on and on to infinity! That's mind-blowing, right?

That's what's so cool about God's view of time. He sees the **WHOLE** story. We've seen just the tiniest little glimpse. And even though our troubles are real, they are so temporary in the grand scope of the universe, all that God has created, and all that He has planned.

Speaking of the whole story, these verses come from the prophet Isaiah, back in the Old Testament. He's the one who spoke for God and made some amazing predictions about Jesus being the Savior of the world. And when John wrote what we call the book of Revelation, he was remembering what Isaiah had said so long ago: that God would wipe away our tears and forgive our sins forever.

As you lace up your shoe again, remember that God's love for you is infinite and never-ending!

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Is it comforting to you to know that God's view of time is infinite? Why?
2. Why do you think it's important to see the Bible as one **BIG** story of God?
3. Do you think most people have the confidence and determination that comes from being sure of heaven? How do you think you can share the hope you have with your actions?

READ MATTHEW 6:10

DAY 3

Have you ever skipped ahead to the last page of a book, or the last scene of a movie? Maybe you just couldn't wait to find out how it ended. Or maybe a friend was talking about it before you got a chance to see it (spoiler alert!).

In a way, that's kind of the situation we're in. We already know the end of the story. We know that God will rule forever, and that He has prepared a place in heaven for those who have put their faith in Him. We've skipped ahead to the end. We already know what's going to happen.

But what about right now in the meantime? It's clear that this world is not a perfect place. It's full of things that are *not* the way they should be. People treat each other terribly. In many ways, it's a messed-up place.

But the great news is, we already know that this isn't all there is to the world. We have hope in what **WILL** be. And right now, we can be part of bringing God's truth and light to a dark world.

In these verses, Jesus was teaching His friends how to pray. He prayed to His Father, *May what you want to happen be done on earth as it is done in heaven* (NirV). In other words, we believe that heaven is perfect. And since this world is not perfect, we can be part of what God is doing here on this earth. While we're here today, we can share His love with others and help them discover the hope we have in Jesus.



THINK ABOUT IT:

1. How does it change the way you live your life when you know that God has already planned the end of the story?
2. Even though we already know the ending, why is it important to make the most of our days now and live with purpose and determination?
3. Can you think of a Jesus-follower you know who is spending their life doing something great to serve others? Have you ever asked them why they do it?