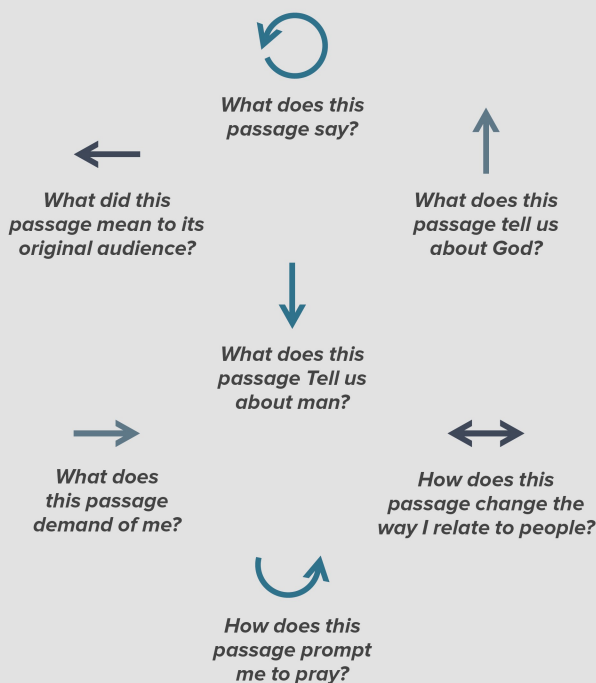


# DAILY DEVOTIONS



## The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



## Day One

### 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24

Previous to this verse, Paul referred to believers' being free in Christ, yet our call was not to use that freedom to indulge ourselves, but to serve others. To serve Jews, Paul had given up many freedoms. For the gentiles, he'd given up other things. Paul loved people so much that he was willing to give up certain privileges that they would know the gospel. The Corinthians were very familiar with the Greek games—the Olympics and the Isthmian Games, which were held in Corinth. They'd seen what athletes give up in seeking the prize for winning. Runners get up early every day and put miles and miles on their shoes. They eat a strict diet and work out relentlessly—all for a wreath! Paul's point was that the prize we strive for—the gospel which leads to eternal life—is much more valuable than any earthly prize. We should be willing, even more than Olympic athletes, to discipline ourselves so that we would receive the eternal prize.

➤ **Why is eternal life in Jesus worth so much more than earthly rewards?**

➤ **How do you discipline yourself like a prime athlete in pursuing the gospel?**

## Day Two

### 1 CORINTHIANS 9:25



There are innumerable athletes in the world today. It only takes moments at a little league game to know that the kids (and especially the parents) take the competition very seriously. However, this doesn't compare with the discipline and drive demonstrated by world-class athletes, who exercise self-control in everything. Did you get that? Everything! Their training regimen involves not only running and lifting weights, but detailed sleep schedules, diets calculated down to the calorie, mental and emotional health, and all this unwaveringly over a period of years. We're in a much more important race, so there's no excuse for casually pursuing God's call on our lives. Let's exercise self-control in everything, striving day by day for the glory of Jesus.

- **How would you describe the discipline exercised by Olympic athletes?**
- **Where is there room for improvement in your daily disciplines?**

## Day Three

### 1 CORINTHIANS 9:26

Paul now switches metaphors to an Olympic boxer. We've all likely seen boxers warming up before they go into the ring. They have on their trunks, boots, and a robe emblazoned with a nickname like "Goldenboy" or "Hands of Stone"—they definitely look the part. There's sweat dripping from their face, so they appear to be primed and ready. They're bouncing, ducking, and snapping punches, carrying out the techniques that are simply a matter of muscle memory due to the thousands of punches they've thrown in the countless hours of training. But if they never step through the ropes into the ring to engage the opponent, being instead content to stand outside the ring going through the motions, there will be no chance of victory. Too many Christians are satisfied with going through the motions. We need to quit shadow boxing—acting tough—and instead step in the ring and get in the fight.

- **How are you sometimes like a boxer who never steps into the ring?**
- **How is God calling you to engage in the spiritual battle of pursuing spiritual victory?**

## Day Four

### 1 CORINTHIANS 9:27a

Discipline is essentially important for the follower of Christ. Here, this word means specifically to punch under the eye. Wait! Why would Paul punch himself in the face? Well, here's why: Paul knew that the flesh continually tempts us to live with a lack of discipline, and in order to overcome our carnal desires, we must knock out the parts of ourselves that would keep us from pursuing God's mission. This is not always easy, and it's certainly not comfortable. Yet this is exactly what it takes to spiritually condition ourselves that we would be the athletes and warriors God uses to accomplish His purposes.

- **What fleshly desires keep you from experiencing victory in Christ?**
- **What steps will you take to knock out the desires of the flesh?**

## Day Five

### 1 CORINTHIANS 9:27b



We are called to share the gospel with other people. First, Jesus has called us to preach the gospel to the lost. Further, we must also understand that Christians need the gospel too, so we must continually remind our Christian brothers and sisters—and ourselves—of the gospel. But we need to be very careful in our own behaviors and actions. If we share the truth of Jesus, and then our lack of discipline leads us to live in ways that are contrary to the things we've said, we can do great harm to those God wants to bless through us. We must, through spiritual disciplines, strengthen our faith and put to death the flesh, so we aren't disqualified as we run the race in pursuit of Jesus.

- **What kinds of words or behaviors might disqualify a believer who seeks to share the gospel?**
- **What disciplines will you commit to in order to grow in your faith?**