

Powerful Strides in Christian Living

14 discussions for knowing your position and daily exercises

Discussion Guide

Notes:

- The questions for discussion will appear in normal text like this.
- *Suggested answers, discussion hints and follow up questions will appear in italics like this.*

1. A New Creation

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Discussion Questions:**
- If you could re-create any part of your game, what would it be?
(Techniques, skills, speed, strength, knowledge, concentration...)
- Why would that be needed? *(It's now insufficient, I'm ill equipped, I'm too slow, weak...)*
- Let's read **2 Corinthians 5:17** and see about how God has made us to be new creations. (Read text)
- What is the one condition the text lists for one to be a new creation? *(To be in Christ.)*
- What kinds of old things would pass away from someone who is re-created in Christ? *(Old habits, old speech patterns, bad temper...)*
- In what ways have you been made new since you committed your life to Jesus? *(Changed lifestyle, clean conscience, freedom from bad habits...)*
- Prayer for wisdom and thanks for making us new creations in Christ Jesus.
- **Session Summary:**
 1. Christ Jesus has made you to be a new person.
 2. Old things have gone away; new things have come to your life.

2. Daily Bible Reading

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Discussion Questions:**
- What information do you take in most consistently related to your sport? (*Statistics, videotape, newspaper stories...*)
- In what forms does that information come to you? (*Charts, websites, television, newspaper, video...*)
- Let's read **Psalm 119:130** and see what it tells us about reading the Scripture. (Read text)
- What happens when we unfold God's Word through Bible reading? (*It brings light to our lives, we gain understanding...*)
- What parts of your life does reading Scripture illuminate? (*Spiritual, athletic, family, financial, scholastic...*)
- How have you gained understanding through reading the Bible?
- Here are four simple ways to approach daily Bible reading:
 - **Read** – Simply reading the text will raise questions in your mind.
 - **Study** – To study is to search for answers to your questions.
 - **Memorize** – Memorization implants the Scripture in your mind.
 - **Meditate** – To meditate is to contemplate the personal application of the truths seen in the Scripture.
- **Proverbs** – Read 1 chapter per day according to the day of the month. (*On 5th read chapter 5, on the 6th read chapter 6, etc...*)
- **Psalms** – read 5 chapters per day according to the day of the month. (*On 5th read chapter 5, 35, 65, 95, 125... Day of month + 30 +30 +30 +30*)
- **Suggested devotional books:** *My Utmost for His Highest* – by Oswald Chambers, *Varsity Letters – Volumes 1 and 2* – by Roger Lipe. (*Others that you may want to suggest...*)
- **Session Summary:**
 1. Daily reading the Bible will bring light and understanding to your life.
 2. God speaks very loudly and clearly every day in the Bible.

3. I Have Everything I Need

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading - (*What did you read? What do you like about it? Encourage them to keep going...*)
- **Discussion Questions:**
- Complete this sentence: *“To be the player/coach I have always dreamed of being, I need _____.”*
- Let’s read **2 Peter 1:3** and see what it says about what we need to be complete in Christ. (Read text)
- This text says we have everything we need for what exactly? (*...for life and godliness...*)
- How do we obtain these life-giving assets? (*He granted them to us through the true knowledge of Christ...*)
- How have you seen the knowledge of God provide for your needs as an athlete or a coach? (*I have confidence in God’s plan for me, I trust God to guide my life, I have the ability to please God with my life...*)
- **Session Summary:**
 1. In Christ we have all we need to please God with our lives.
 2. Even in the weakness of our flesh, God has made us complete.

4. Daily Prayer

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading – (*How is the reading going? Who is reading what? What's been good? Press on!*)
- **Discussion Questions:**
- With whom do you communicate most consistently in your sport? (*Teammates, coaches, opponents, officials...*)
- When and how does that happen? (*At practice, at games, on phone, in person, e-mail...*)
- Let's read **Matthew 6:9-13** and see the model Jesus gives us for daily prayer. (Read text)
- To whom does Jesus address His prayer? (*His father in Heaven...*)
- How would you describe the various subjects of Jesus' prayer? (*Praise, God's will, for daily provision, for forgiveness and a forgiving heart, safety from temptation, deliverance from evil...*)
- How is Jesus' prayer similar or different from your experience in prayer? (*Less selfish, more focused, wider in scope...*)
- **Following are 4 essential elements to daily prayer:**
 - **Adoration** – To adore or praise God for who He is.
 - Try listing character traits of God through the alphabet from A through Z. (*Amazing, beloved, compassionate, dynamic...*)
 - Sing your favorite songs from church or camp. What are some of your favorites? (*Share your favorites to start the list...*)
 - **Confession** – To agree with God on a matter.
 - Agree with God about your sin and need for cleansing. (*Offer a couple to start, as deeply as you trust the others in the group...*)
 - Agree with God about His goodness, grace and provision. (*Lord, You are loving and gracious... You have all I need....*)
 - **Thanksgiving** – To thank God for what He has done.
 - Make a list of people, events and things for which you're thankful. (*Family, team, games, accomplishments...*)
 - **Supplication** – To ask God to do something for someone.
 - For whom/what will you pray today? (*Make a short list...*)
 - What will you ask the Lord to do?
 - **Session Summary:**
 1. God wants daily communication with you.
 2. We can follow Jesus in His model of daily prayer to the Father.

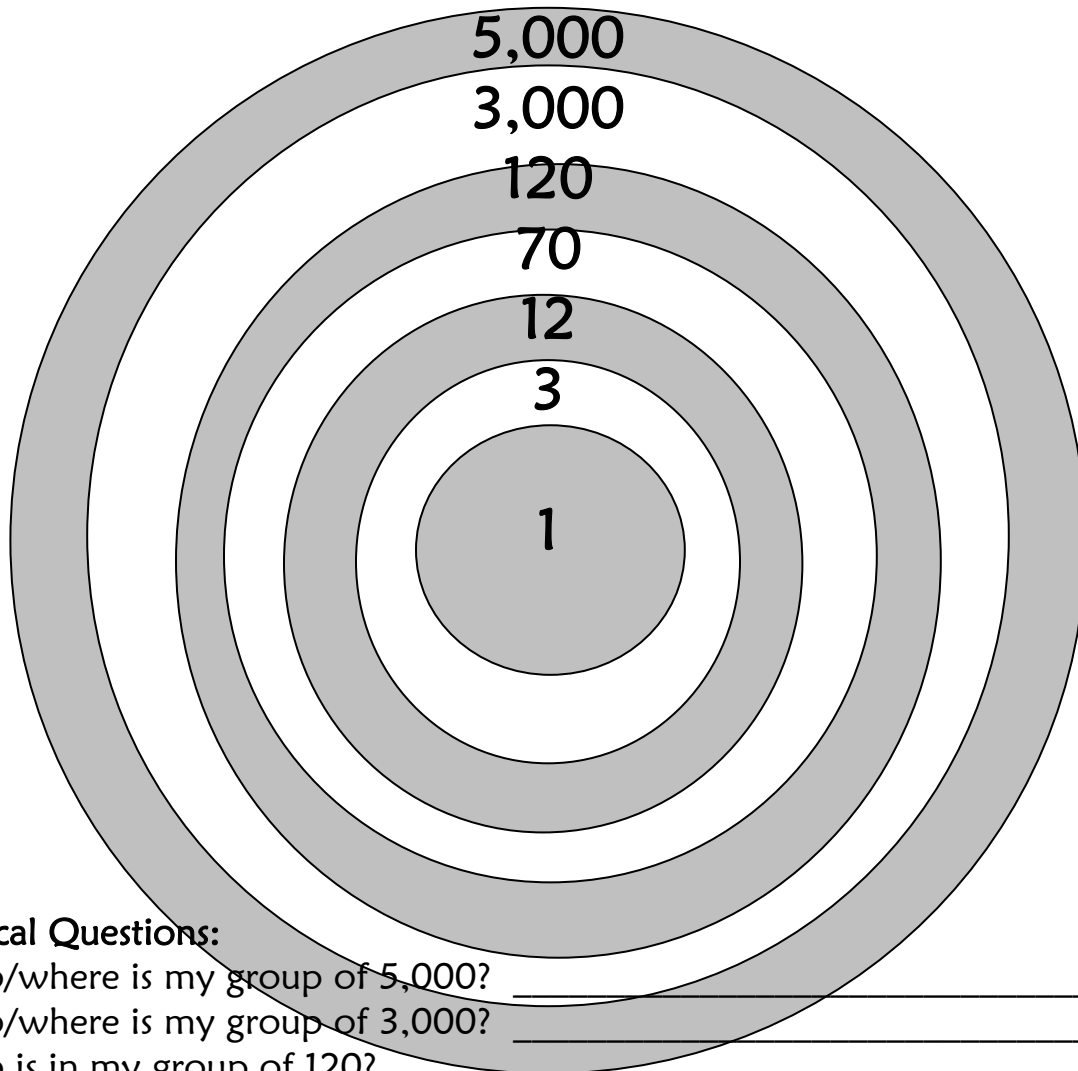
5. I Am His Witness and Workmanship

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading and Prayer – (*Who has tried the A.C.T.S. form? What was your best insight from reading this week?*)
- **Discussion Questions:**
- How much of your game is a direct reflection of your coaches, trainers, or teammates? (*A lot, a little, just certain aspects... because...*)
- How would we recognize them in how you compete? (*Attitudes, expressions, drills, techniques...*)
- Let's read **Acts 1:8** to see what Jesus told his teammates as he was departing the earth. (Read text)
- Jesus said the disciples would receive power to do what? (*To be His witnesses.*)
- Where does He say they will be His witnesses? (*Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, farthest reaches of the earth...*)
- What would be sport world parallels to these places? (*My team, our conference, our state, the nation, the world...*)
- Let's read **Ephesians 2:10** to see in what ways we may reflect Christ's nature in our lives. (Read text)
- If we are God's workmanship, how is His work evident in our lives of sport? (*Our attitudes, our character, our likeness to Him in various ways...*)
- What is God's role in our daily work with Him? (*He has prepared them, we walk in those He has prepared...*)
- **Session Summary:**
 1. We are witnesses to Jesus in the world of sport - let's tell stories about Him.
 2. We are His workmanship – let's reflect His life in ours.

6. Daily Fellowship

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading and Prayer – (*What have you been reading? How has your prayer life changed through the daily exercises?*)
- **Discussion Questions:**
- How is your game enhanced or diminished by your teammates or coaches? (*I learn from them, they encourage me, they complain...*)
- How is your game enhanced or diminished by the people you spend your time with outside the game? (*They encourage me, they distract me, they gossip about my teammates and coaches...*)
- Let's read **Hebrews 10:24** and see some essential qualities for daily fellowship. (Read text)
- What kind of coaching and motivation best stimulates you to compete well? (*Challenge, encouragement, instruction, yelling, pats on the back...*)
- Do those same methods motivate you toward love and good deeds? (*Not if they produce rage, sometimes they do, only if I respect the other person...*)
- Let's read **Acts 2:42-47** to see how the earliest disciples of Jesus had daily fellowship. (Read text)
- What did these early followers of Jesus do for fellowship and where did they meet?
- How is your fellowship with teammates or other Christians similar or different from theirs? (*Similar: daily, various places, with food... Different: Telephones, television, e-mail...*)
- Here is a fellowship exercise to help you evaluate with whom you spend your valuable time and energy:

Fellowship Focus



Critical Questions:

Who/where is my group of 5,000? _____

Who/where is my group of 3,000? _____

Who is in my group of 120? _____

Who is in my group of 70? _____

What are the names of my 12? _____

Who are my 3? _____

- **Fellowship Focus Bull's-eye.**

- **This chart diagrams different sets of people and how deeply they were committed to Jesus.**
- **5,000** – In Mark 6:34-44, Jesus feeds 5,000 men (plus women and children) with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. Their level of commitment was to eat lunch.
- **3,000** – In Acts 2:41, we read that 3,000 people received Christ on the Day of Pentecost. Their level of commitment was to trust Christ for salvation.
- **120** – Earlier that same day there were 120 Disciples of Christ praying in an upper room. Their level of commitment involved prayer and waiting for the Lord's promise.
- **70** – In Luke 10:1, we see that Jesus sent out 70 people in pairs as laborers in the harvest He was to reap in the souls of people. Their commitment included taking greater risks and sharing Christ's message with others.
- **12** – Jesus had 12 disciples who traveled with Him for the three years of his ministry on earth. Their commitment meant leaving their careers and eventually losing their lives in His service.
- **3** – Peter, James and John were the only three disciples present at the Mount of Transfiguration and went further into the Garden of Gethsemane than the other disciples. Their commitment is seen in the leadership roles they assume later in their lives.
- **1** – Jesus was the only one of these to die for all the others. His commitment is supreme...
 - Think through these concentric circles and their respective levels of commitment. Who is most committed to you and your values? List their names in the **3** slots.
 - Who would be the 12 people who have a significant commitment to you? List their names in the **12** slots.
 - What groups have similar commitments to yours at levels **70** and **120**? Write the name of those groups in the appropriate slots.
 - With what groups do you rub shoulders in your life, but don't have similar commitments? List those groups in the **3,000** and **5,000** slots.
- Given all that you've just seen, with whom does it seem Jesus spent the most and highest quality time? (*Obviously, those in the smallest circles and less time as the circle widens.*)

- With whom will you spend the most and highest quality time in your life? (*Hopefully those in the smaller circles...*)
- **Session Summary:**
 1. We need fellowship with other believers in Jesus.
 2. We need to choose wisely those in whom we will invest our lives.

7. I Am Loved and Completely Accepted in Christ

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading, Prayer and Fellowship – (*With which group did you see yourself spending the most time? 3, 12, 70, 120, 3000 or 5,000? How are you doing with your daily reading? What is the best part of your prayer life right now?*)
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - Tell me about a situation or a relationship in which you felt 100% loved and accepted. (*Parents, grandparents, coach, teammate, teacher...*)
 - Do you sense that same sort of love and acceptance from God?
 - Let's read **Ephesians 1:5-6** as an example of how God has accepted us. (Read text)
 - According to verse 5, how did we become children of God? (*By adoption...*)
 - How is that adoption like being chosen for an athletic team? (*We are chosen...*)
 - How is it different? (*The stakes are much higher! God knows our weaknesses very well. God's love is the basis for his choosing.*)
 - Let's now read **Romans 8:38-39** to see how we're loved by God. (Read text)
 - From what you read in these verses, what is there that could tear you away from God's love for you? (*Absolutely nothing...*)
 - How have you experienced God's relentless kind of love in your life of sport? (*Assurance after a loss or injury, encouragement from friends and teammates...*)
- **Session Summary:**
 1. We are 100% accepted by God through Christ Jesus.
 2. We are completely secure in God's love through Christ Jesus.

8. Daily Death to Self

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading, Prayer and Fellowship – (*For whom are you praying most consistently? What is your favorite part of the Bible to read? Do those in your groups of three and twelve know how important they are to you?*)
- **Discussion Questions:**
- What has it cost you to become the athlete/coach you've become? (*Time, pain, injury, inconvenience...*)
- What might it cost you to progress still further in your sport? (*More of the same, missed opportunities for other things...*)
- Let's read **Luke 9:23** to see what Jesus expects of those who will follow Him. (Read text)
- What does Jesus say is the price of being His disciple? (*Self-denial, taking up the cross daily and following Him...*)
- What does carrying a cross daily look like in your world of sport? (*Less selfish play, serving my teammates...*)
- Let's now read **John 12:24** and hear the metaphor Jesus uses for daily death to self. (Read text)
- How productive is the seed that doesn't get buried? (*Not at all, it stays by itself...*)
- What kind of fruit could you bear through daily death to self? (*Fruit of Spirit – Galatians 5:22, Christ-like character traits, new believers in Christ through my witness...*)
- **Death to Self Exercises:**
- Place these statements on your bathroom mirror for daily challenge and review;

I will take up the cross of Jesus today.

I will pay whatever it costs to be His disciple.

I will die to myself in order to bear much fruit for Christ.

- **Session Summary:**
 1. There are costs to be paid for being a highly committed follower of Christ.
 2. Death to oneself is the key to being a fruitful disciple of Jesus.

9. I Am Indwelt by the Holy Spirit

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading, Prayer, Fellowship and Death to Self – (*What has it cost you to be Christ's disciple this week? How did that affect your prayer time this week? How will that affect your choices regarding fellowship? How is God speaking to you as you read?*)
- **Discussion Questions:**
- If you could unzip your skin and have another player step inside your skin to play through you, who would it be? (*Your favorite player? An M.V.P? A Hall of Famer? Who would it be?*)
- How well would that person play the game through you? (*At the highest level possible? Perfectly? Seemingly without effort?*)
- Let's read **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** and see who plays through the believer in Jesus. (Read text)
- How do you sense the Spirit of God's indwelling presence? (*Peace, excitement, guidance, love, acceptance...*)
- In what ways can we honor the Lord's residence in our bodies through our sport? (*Compete wisely, sleep and eat well, don't abuse it with drugs, etc, treat injuries...*)
- **Session Summary:**
 1. The Spirit of Christ Jesus is alive and lives in us.
 2. We must honor His presence by making wise choices about the use of our bodies.

10. Daily Obedience to Christ

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading, Prayer, Fellowship and Death to Self – *(Have you put the Death to Self statements on your mirror? How many days a week are you reading your Bible? What is the best time of day for you to pray? What makes for the most satisfying fellowship?)*
- **Discussion Questions:**
- Which of the drills or training methods your coach has you perform were the toughest to obey? *(Running, weight training, sit ups, dietary restrictions...)*
- Let's read **1 Samuel 15:22-23** to see the value of daily obedience. (Read text)
- Which seems to be more pleasing to God, offerings and sacrifices or obedience? *(Obedience is better than sacrifice...)*
- Which is more pleasing to your coach, running for punishment or competing correctly? *(Obedience again...Leave room for some questions and a few laughs...)*
- Why would God prefer obedience? *(Because it's an indicator of our love for Him... If we love Him, we'll keep his commandments.)*
- In which of the daily exercises have you been most obedient? *(Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, death to self...)*
- In which ones the least obedient? *(You might offer your least to start discussion...)*
- **Obedience Exercises:**

Give your self a weekly percentage grade
on each of the daily exercises:

Bible reading	_____%
Prayer	_____%
Fellowship	_____%
Death to self	_____%
- **Session Summary:**
 1. Obedience is much better than sacrifice.
 2. Greater degrees of obedience lead to greater freedom and enjoyment in our relationship with God.

11. I Am Forgiven and Free From Condemnation

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading, Prayer, Fellowship, Death to Self and Daily Obedience – *(In which of the exercises did you have the highest obedience percentage this week? Which one was the least? Which is most satisfying to you? Which one is most difficult?)*
- **Discussion Questions:**
- When have you failed your teammates or violated a team rule for which you needed forgiveness? Tell us about it. *(Missed practice, failed a class, broke a team rule, disqualified from a competition...)*
- How did it feel when those you hurt gave the forgiveness to you? *(Relief, freedom, relationship restored...)*
- Let's read **1 John 1:9** for a view of God's forgiveness extended to us. (Read text)
- From what you read here, which of God's character traits seem to be most important to our forgiveness? *(Faithfulness and justice.)*
- How and when do you sense the Lord's forgiveness and cleansing? *(When I confess sin, when I worship, when I pray...)*
- Let's now read **Romans 8:1-2** for a view of the freedom from condemnation enjoyed by disciples of Jesus. (Read text)
- For what kinds of things would a player or a coach be condemned? *(Abuse of a player, drug use, cheating...)*
- Why would believers in Jesus be free from such condemnation? *(Because we've been released from the law of sin and death...)*
- How will this freedom change the way you compete in life outside sport? *(With a clear conscience, with confidence, without fear...)*
- **Session Summary:**
 1. We are completely forgiven by God through our relationship with Jesus.
 2. We are 100% free from condemnation because of Christ's love and mercy.

12. Daily Witnessing

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading, Prayer, Fellowship, Death to Self and Daily Obedience – *(Which of the Daily Exercises requires the most effort from you? Which one is presently producing the most fruit?)*
- **Discussion Questions:**
- What is your favorite story to tell about a teammate or coach? *(A game situation, something happened at practice, something he/she said...)*
- Do you tell more stories about those you love and respect or about those you don't like so much? *(Probably they tell stories about their favorite people.)*
- Let's read **1 Peter 3:15** to see a great model for daily witnessing. (Read text)
- How are these daily exercises helping you to “set apart Christ as Lord” in your heart? *(They make my life in Christ an everyday reality in my lifestyle...)*
- What sorts of questions are you asked about your faith by teammates or coaches? *(Why do you? Why don't you? Where do you go to church?)*
- What are some keys to how you share your faith with gentleness and respect? *(Don't use “churchy” language, share how Jesus has changed my life, respect their opinions...)*
- **Witnessing Exercises:**
- **Here's a very simple way to share your faith story:**
When, where and why?
 - Answer these three questions in the most simple and brief way possible:
 - **When** did you commit your life to Christ?
 - **Where** were you when you committed your life to Christ?
 - **Why** did you decide to commit your life to Christ?
 - Try to answer these questions in the form of a brief story. Let's try it now among our group. Who will be first? *(Volunteer to be first if no one else steps up quickly...)*
- **Session Summary:**
 1. Our stories of faith are very powerful ways to witness for Christ.
 2. Our Daily Exercises will change our lives and will present opportunities for us to share Christ with others.

13. I Have Eternal Life in Christ

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading, Prayer, Fellowship, Death to Self, Daily Obedience and Daily Witnessing – (*Were you able to share your faith story with anyone this week? How might the other Daily Exercises provide an opportunity for witnessing?*)
- **Discussion Questions:**
- What is there about your sport experience that is most temporary? (*Athletic ability, skills, rewards, time with teammates...*)
- What in your sport experience has the longest lasting value? (*Relationships, lessons learned, values...*)
- Let's read **John 5:24** to see how Jesus says one obtains eternal life. (Read text)
- What are the three key verbs in this verse about eternal life? (*Hear, believe, has...*)
- How does my relationship with Jesus and eternal life affect how I relate to God's judgment? (*We will not come into judgment. Our relationship with Christ has us bypassing judgment...*)
- Let's now read **1 John 5:11-13** to see how secure our eternal life in Christ is. (Read text)
- Through whom does the text say eternal life comes? (*Through the Son, Jesus Christ.*)
- What gives you the most confidence related to your eternal life in Christ? (*Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, worship...*)
- **Session Summary:**
 1. Our lives in Christ are eternal.
 2. We possess a life that goes beyond the grave.
 3. We can have great confidence in our eternal life because of Christ Jesus.

14. Daily Praise

- Welcome and opening prayer.
- **Review the Daily Exercises:** Reading, Prayer, Fellowship, Death to Self, Daily Obedience and Daily Witnessing – (*Which of the Daily Exercises are receiving the highest obedience scores now? Which ones are becoming very natural to you? Which ones will require even more discipline?*)
- **Discussion Questions:**
- In your world of sport, who or what is worthy of being praised? (*The game itself, your teammates, your coach(es)...*)
- What makes them praiseworthy? (*Attitudes, actions, faithfulness, loyalty...*)
- Let's read **Psalm 119:164** to see how often the writer praises God daily. (Read text)
- This text says that the writer praised God seven times a day, for what? (*Because of His righteous ordinances...*)
- For what do you praise the Lord most often? (*His grace, His mercy, His love... Focus on the attributes of God.*)
- Let's read **Acts 2:46-47** to see a model of how early disciples of Jesus made praise a part of their daily lives. (Read text)
- Where and how often did these people praise God? (*Daily, in the Temple, house to house...*)
- What kinds of attitudes were visible in their community? (*Having one mind, gladness and sincerity of heart, favor with the people, growth...*)
- How are those attitudes evident in your life or on your team through daily praise? (*Unity on the team, fun in the game, favor with those in and around the team...*)
- **Praise Exercises:**
- Try various ones of these to develop a daily habit of praising God:
- Praise God through the alphabet. (Reference session #4) (*Walk through the alphabet one time praising God with the group.*)
- Reading the Psalms out aloud. (*Suggestions: 23, 92, 95-100, 144-150*)
- What are your favorite praise songs from church or camp? (*Make a list...*)
Make one your personal theme song. (*What will yours be?*)
- **Session Summary:**
 1. God is always worthy of our praise, in any form.
 2. Praise is a very important part of a disciple's life.
 3. Let's build a life of praise to God through knowing our position and our Daily Exercises.