

July 1

“Yet to all who received [Jesus Christ], to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12

“RECEIVE HIM”

In football, think of all that has to happen for a pass to be completed. The center and quarterback have to handle the snap correctly, the offensive line has to block the defenders, the receiver has to run his pattern, the QB has to make an accurate throw. The timing has to be right. And, of course, the receiver has to catch the ball or the team gains nothing.

We can relate that entire offensive scenario to our spiritual lives. John 1:12 says, “yet to all who received Him (Jesus), to those who believed in His name, He gave them the right to become children of God.” Like the wide receiver or tight end, we must receive—we must receive Jesus into our lives by believing in Him. But there’s more. When a receiver catches the ball, he doesn’t just stand there; he tries to gain as many yards as he can! Similarly, once we receive Jesus at salvation, God wants us to “do something!” He wants us gain new ground spiritually. Receive Him and keep going. That’s a good offensive strategy.

—Darren Adams

“Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6

July 2

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Looking back to when I was a kid, I always remember playing basketball with my dad. Every day after school we would go outside and we would shoot what seemed like a million shots.

At the time, I didn’t understand it. Spending that much time shooting seemed like a waste to me. But now I understand! My shot wasn’t perfect. It needed work. Through constant repetitions, I improved and eventually had a pretty good shot. No matter how long I had played, though, there were always aspects that I needed to work on!

Just as my dad pushed me to become a better ballplayer, God is constantly giving us opportunities and trials that push us to become better Christians. We all have room for improvement!

As Christians, we should take every opportunity we have to build up our faith and get closer to God. Although it may seem menial at the time, each act plays a role in our growth as Christians. God has a plan for each of our lives, and He will continue working with us until we are perfected!

—Brooke Thompson

July 3

“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:19-21

REVENGE

During my senior season of college soccer, we were playing in a game that should have been an easy win. We had control of the entire contest, but we were down by a goal when a player on the opposing team made a dirty play on one of my teammates. I decided to pay him back and went after him the next time down the field. My foul resulted in a red card, leaving my team a man down for the last few minutes of the game.

Instead of using self-control and playing by the rules, I responded to his actions with revenge. I repaid evil with evil and disappointed my entire team. Not only did I miss the last few minutes, but I also had to sit out the next game against our big rival—a game I had waited all season to play. I had to pay the consequences for my lack of restraint.

The Bible directs us in all walks of life to use self-control. Paying people back for things they have done may seem tempting, but that is not what God calls us to do. Be careful to let the Lord punish those who wrong you instead of losing your temper and saying or doing things you will later regret.

—Mark Smith

July 4

“Do everything without complaining or arguing.” Philippians 2:14

BAD CALL

“Hey, Ref! That was a bad call. Can’t you see?” “That was a foul! Blow your whistle.” “Travel? I didn’t travel. And I didn’t step out of bounds last time either.”

Have you ever heard comments like that while watching or playing a game? Maybe you’ve said or hollered something similar. While playing in a church league basketball game, I heard those exact words—and more. Every single call was argued, and both sides were growing tense. We were not setting a very good example for those watching, and we certainly were not pleasing God with our actions.

In Philippians 4, God didn’t have Paul say, “Do everything without arguing—except while playing sports because those refs can make some bad calls.” No. God says do *everything* without arguing. No exceptions.

The next time you’re watching a game or even playing in one, remember God’s command to do everything without complaining or arguing. You’ll be surprised how much better you fell and how much more fun the game will become.

—Crystal Rhodes

Weekend

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18

TRUE REFLECTIONS!

Remember the Boston Red Sox of 2004? What were they known for? In my mind, the first picture that comes into my head is the hair. Nearly every player either had some form of facial hair or a wild hairdo during every playoff game. The hair gave them distinction. It gave them a sense of team pride and brotherhood.

Of course, they Red Sox became known mostly for stopping the long World Series drought in New England, but The Look was also a reflection of the team. The Red Sox were known for something because of the way they looked.

You too are known by how you look. I’m not talking physically here, I am talking spiritually. Do you reflect the glory of God in your face? What is Paul talking about in the verse above when he says we are reflecting the Lord’s glory?

The verse above is encouraging. How amazing it is to know that we are being transformed into the likeness of the Lord and that we actually reflect God’s glory with our lives.

—Eric Jones

July 7

“If a man’s gift . . . is encouraging, let him encourage; . . . if it is leadership, let him govern diligently.” Romans 12:8

QUALITIES OF A LEADER

Every sports team has a leader. Throughout each season this key person (sometimes more than one) is the backbone of the team. A leader encourages others no matter what the situation is, he governs on and off the field, and he is humble even in triumph—never putting himself before the team.

But being a leader is a tough job. One who leads is constantly scrutinized, and every move is monitored by others.

If you are a leader, the jealous will love to see you fail, and the faithful will sometimes turn their backs on you when things aren’t going the way they want.

The apostle Paul said that some Christians are called to be leaders (Romans 12:8). In much the same way athletes experience opposition when they lead their teams, if you are a leader in the church, you will encounter those who want to see you fail. You must stay strong and continue to lead the way in God’s Kingdom. Remember this: While those you lead might turn their backs on you, God never will. He knows your every move, and He will be there to strengthen you when trouble hits (Psalm 46:1).

—Ryan DeFaber

July 8

“God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood.” Romans 3:25

THE SACRIFICE

In baseball, a sacrifice fly takes place when a batter hits a fly ball to the outfield and the runner on third base scores before the outfielder can throw him out at home. The batter doesn’t get credit for a hit, but he is credited with a run batted in. In other words, he gives up the opportunity to get a hit in order to let another player score a run for his team.

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for our lives on the cross. He made it known that He was giving Himself up in death so that we as sinners could make it “home” to heaven some day. In the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the writers make it clear that Jesus’ entire life was geared toward the sacrifice He would make for our sins. And, just as scoring runs in the game of baseball can come from a sacrifice, Jesus’ sacrifice took place so folks who trust Him can go “home” in heaven to spend eternity with Him.

—Brian Adams

July 9

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” Colossians 3:23

WHO ARE YOU RUNNING FOR?

While I was running track, there were many times when practiced was unsupervised. One time I remember in particular was on a freezing, rainy Saturday. The practice was twelve 300m repeats and was a relatively easy one. But the thought of being on the track for over an hour in the rain wasn’t too enticing, so we decided, as a team, to cut the workout in half. The coach was not there—he wouldn’t find out. Well, he never did. But we still made the wrong decision!

Although the choice of whether or not to finish the workout isn’t very significant in the whole scheme of life, the implications of that decision are important. We showed ourselves not to be trustworthy on that cold Saturday. The decisions we make are a true measure of our character, because ultimately everything we do should testify of the love we have for God!

If you have the choice between taking the easy way out or doing the right thing—take some time to think. What if God was your coach, your teacher, or your boss—which choice would you make? In reality, God **is** our ultimate coach, our ultimate teacher and our ultimate boss.

We must follow His instructions.
—Brooke Thompson

July 10

“I will praise the Lord no matter what happens.” Psalm 34:1

DIG DEEP

Nerves before the big championship game. Your team’s stubborn losing streak. A new baby, a job change, or an impending graduation. Life can come with nagging stress that can wreak havoc on our outside world and distract us from a God-centered life.

So how can we “dig deep” and instead focus on the mystifying inner peace that God promises us?

Relax. God reassures us that discouragement doesn’t last. Psalm 30:5 says, “Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.”

Prayer. Philippians 4:6-7. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Praise God with Thankfulness. Psalm 34:1-3. “I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.”

Worship through Music. Psalm 33:1-3. “Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise Him. . . . Sing to Him a new song.”

Keeping God’s law. Psalm 119:165. “Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.”

—Jennifer Snyder

July 11-

“As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.” ISAIAH 66:13

TWO GREAT COMFORTERS

Why is it that invariably when an athlete faces a TV camera and can speak from his heart, he or she says, “Hi, Mom!”

It’s because Mom does it all. She prepares the pre-game meal, carts her kids to and from practice, is the first one up when her child go down, and yells the loudest when her son or daughter scores.

For me, having Mom at all of my soccer games, swim meets, and tennis matches was a luxury I did not fully appreciate until she was gone. Because she died of cancer right before my senior year of high school, there was always an empty seat in the bleachers that year. I greatly missed her coaching, encouragement, and cheers.

Praise God that nothing can keep our heavenly Father from missing a single moment of our lives! No matter how you are doing, God is cheering you on. In fact, He’s not up in the stands—He’s with you in the action to comfort you with His presence as you go.

Thank the Lord for your mother, who undoubtedly has been a picture of God’s care and comfort in your life. And then thank God for His help—and for giving you two great sources of help.

—Alex Warner

Weekend

“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.” Romans 12:11

SOCCER DIES

Why is soccer such a popular youth sport—but not so much for American spectators? The Saturday morning fields remain packed all day, but when it comes to going to a professional soccer game in the US, you often find only a few thousand fans. For some reason, soccer seems to die when it becomes a spectator sport.

Everybody loves to watch their child or grandchild play soccer. For a sport so popular with young children and even in high school and college, it is surprising that there is not a large adult fan base. Why is that? For most adults, football rules on weekend across our country—college on Saturday and Sunday and Monday NFL games. Somehow, soccer loses its steam.

Many times in our Christian life, we lose steam and begin to lack zeal for what we first were so excited about—the Scriptures, for instance. Often our motivation and energy is put toward other things that seem more exciting or more important or offer better social benefits.

Remember! The only thing that matters is what you do for Jesus! Our time is short. Don't lose focus of the end game—the true excitement comes from serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

—Robert Walker

July 14

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature.” Galatians 5:13

NO SUCH THING AS PERFECTION

In football, there is no single perfect play. Coverage is blown, passes are dropped, blocks are missed, and penalties pile up. Football coaches know that perfection is unattainable. But does this keep them and the players from trying to be perfect? Absolutely not!

I've never heard a player say, “Well, because someone is bound to mess up on this play, then it might as well be my turn.” Or I've never heard a coach say, “Someone is likely to make a mistake if we run a play, so we won't bother.” This would be absurd! Coaches and athletes give their best each on every play as they strive for perfection.

In living the Christian life, the same is true—no one person is perfect. We mess up. “All have sinned and fall short of God's glory” (Romans 3:23). But just as in football, this should never keep us from striving for perfection. According to Galatians, we are “called to be free,” but we cannot use the “no one is perfect” excuse to intentionally make mistakes and sin against God. We would then be like the coach or athlete who purposefully messes up his or her part of the play.

Even though it's not quite obtainable on this earth, strive for perfection. Strive to be like Jesus!

—Darren Adams

July 15

SKATE IT AROUND

Janet Lynn was an Olympic ice skater who charmed the American public in the 1960s and 70s. Although one of the most talented skaters of all time, she seemed to fall short each year at international competitions. She eventually took home a silver medal at the 1973 World Championships but not after numerous personal struggles.

Through all of the disappointments and victories, Janet stayed true to her Christian faith. She believed that God had given her this incredible gift of skating, and she wanted to use it to influence others. Even legacies have their struggles and discouragements.

Janet Lynn is a great source of inspiration for others. She didn't blame God for her disappointments—she thanked Him for her talent for skating. Even though she was never a World or Olympic champion, she remains a legacy for her grace, strength, and faith.

When life doesn't pan out quite the way we'd like, we still need to remember to give God the glory He deserves. After all, He's the one with the plan!

—Natalie Creech

July 16

"There He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light."
Matthew 17:2

HOW BRIGHT IS YOUR LIGHT?

You might think baseball players wear sunglasses to be fashionable, but there are times when the accessory is a real error-saver. A routine fly ball becomes challenging when the ball crosses in front of the sun. It is easily lost due to the intensity of the light. Just like other weather conditions such as wind and rain, a sunny day can dramatically affect a game.

Sometimes when I look at the sun, even if I merely glimpse in its direction, the brightness can affect my sight afterward anywhere from five seconds to five minutes! While on earth, Jesus had radiance so bright that He changed lives. When Jesus was with people, the effect was so powerful that He hardly had to do anything but be true.

When others are watching us, we can have a variety of influences. As the world observed Michael Jackson, he changed the dance world with a few seconds of "moonwalking," and as people sat spellbound, Neil Armstrong actually walked on the moon! As a Christian, how bright is your influence? You are being watched. When people see you for five seconds or five minutes, do you leave a lasting effect on them? Are you shining your light on the truth—on Jesus?

—Felisha Broughton

July 17

“For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to . . . give you victory.” Deuteronomy 20:4

ALREADY WON

I love college basketball.

The other day I was watching the replay on television of a classic game between two great rivals. I had already seen the game before and I knew my team won, but I wanted to enjoy the victory again. One team took a huge lead in the first half, but since I already knew the outcome, I was at ease as I eagerly anticipated the inevitable comeback.

Sometimes we allow trials and circumstances in our lives to get us down early in the game because we forget that God is on our side and that He is fighting with us to give us victory. We need to constantly be reminded that Jesus Christ has already won the ultimate victory over sin and death through His death and resurrection.

So today, treat life like a classic basketball game. Enjoy the victory again. Take comfort and rejoice knowing that the game has already been won, and give God the glory for the peace that only He can bring.

—Alex Warner

July 18

“I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? Psalm 121:1

BLUE SKIES

There is nothing like going to an athletic event outside under with Blue Skies. In North Carolina we call them Carolina Blue Skies. I guess that is what most UNC fans think. When I think of blue sky, I think of the verse that says, “I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?” (Psalm 121:1).

I am amazed at how a blue sky can set the mood for how someone feels. Those cloudy, rainy days may be a little discouraging or make our spirit feel down, but again remember to lift up your eyes. It does not matter if the sun is shining outside or not, the key is the *Son* shining inside. As we follow athletics, we will sometimes be up and sometimes be down because of wins and losses. But look up—maybe at a Carolina Blue Sky day or a Blue Sky wherever you live—and let that help you remember that your help comes from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

—Robert Walker

Weekend

“If from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul.” Deuteronomy 4:29

Who Moved?

My personal walk with Christ has never been easy. I'll be the first to admit that I have fallen more than once. Still, as unsteady as I once was in my servitude for the Lord, His love for me was always pure and perfect.

Christians, like athletes, are prone to slumps—times when things aren't going the way the athlete would like it. The difference between a slumping Christian and a slumping athlete is that we as Christians can always know who is at fault. We are.

As Christians we must remember that God's love for us remains unconditional through our spiritual wins and losses. Even when we stray from him, he knows every secret of our soul. God is everywhere and the temple of the Lord has a permanent address in our hearts.

So when we feel we have lost touch with God, we must ask ourselves: *Who moved? The answer. We did. We caused the slump.*

—Emily Briggs

July 21

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”
James 1:8 (KJV)

DO YOU MIND?

Have you ever tried to put up a tent in the middle of a storm? How about inhaling while under water or in a smoky room? Well, there is nothing wrong with putting up a tent or inhaling, but the right thing at the wrong time can be just as devastating as the wrong thing at the same time. The same principle applies to life and our minds. Try making a decision in the heat of the moment or try calming your own mind to understand one person in a room full of shouting babies.

The Bible says that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. Therefore, it is imperative that we set our minds on one stable fact. God is God, He is in control, and no one or no thing is greater than He who dwells within us. So set your mind, and do it before a crisis comes—before the heat of the battle or before you hear thousands of other voices. Set your mind on Him and the truth that he says about you. Then and only then can you truly walk in the midst of any situation with confidence and with the right mindset.

—Eric Harris

July 22

“The Lord has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands He has rewarded me.” 2 Samuel 22:21

STRATEGY

A good coach or manager will always attempt to stay at least one step ahead as the game progresses. He or she has a strategy—a plan for the game, or at least for the next few plays. The job of the players is to follow the plan and carry out the coach’s wishes and designs.

There are, however, obstacles to that plan. For example, the other team will counter his attack with plans of its own. The opponent attempts to find ways to make the plan fail.

There’s a similarity here between sports and the Christian life. As athletes try to carry out a coach’s plan, we as Christians are seeking to please God by following the strategy He laid out in the Bible. Satan, however, is always looking to derail God’s plan for us with temptation, lust, greed, and any number of other negative strategies.

But we must remember that God has a plan for all of us, and if we follow the Word our lives will be rewarded.
—Ryan DeFaber

July 23

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

THE FAIR-WEATHER FAN

We know them all too well! I’m talking about those notorious fair-weather fans. They love their team when they’re winning, but they can’t stand to support the team when they’re losing.

Every day we see examples of players or teams falling in and out of the graces of their “loyal fans.” Coaches are fired for not meeting expectations, and athletes are rated based on their performance. It is a tough position to be in (just ask University of Michigan’s head football coach Lloyd Carr), but every coach and athlete will tell you that this is what they expect. The career or life they’ve chosen is one based on winning or losing, and many times their significance is based on that fact.

We can also become fair-weather fans in our relationship with God. We love Him when life is great, but as soon as life throws us a curve we’re quick to question His guidance in our life. Thankfully, God does not value us based on

our performance. He has always loved you, and even while we were at our worst—lost sinners—He loved us. And He always will.
—Nathan Krum

July 24

“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31

HELP FROM ABOVE

I currently finished my second season of professional baseball in the St. Louis Cardinals organization, and I have seen the difficulties and frustrations associated with playing pro ball. Sometimes I felt as if everything was stacked against me. Why am I struggling pitching? Why are the coaches all over me? Why can't there be more Christians around for encouragement?

As the season progressed, the Lord revealed to me that as long as I am seeking His will and growing spiritually, He cares deeply about these things. All of the struggles we have in our careers are no match for God.

I found comfort from Paul's words: “Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Romans 8:34). Isn't it awesome to know that the Father and His Son are both in heaven interceding for us? We can't let our failures, struggles, and frustrations cloud up our lives. Give them up to God. Nothing is too small for him to notice

—Matt Trent, minor leaguer pitcher, St Louis Cardinals organization

July 25

“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” 1 Timothy 4:8

SPIRITUAL TRAINING

Training is a crucial part of life—it's the way we grow and mature. We train babies to walk and talk. We train to gain skills for our jobs. We train to build strength and athleticism. But training should also be a vital part of our spiritual lives.

What a shame it would be if we got saved and never grew in depth or maturity as Christians. We are, in fact, commanded in the Bible to train ourselves to be godly. In 1 Timothy 4:8, Timothy says that “physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” So even more important than all the training and discipline we undergo for our physical lives is the preparation we should do to make sure we are growing spiritually as we should. It takes work, but it is what God requires.

—Krystil Wade

Weekend

“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.’ ” Genesis 4:6-7

CROUCHING SIN, HIDDEN HATRED

Jared hated Brian, his own teammate. They both won a lot of games for their team as starting pitchers, but somehow, Brian received all the credit. Jealousy grew to utter contempt. Halfway through the season, Jared began to despise Brian for being such a strong leader on the team, for working so hard on his curveball, and for staying after practice to throw a few more fastballs. He even despised Brian for offering him words of encouragement.

Jared had grown to hate what was good. How does that happen? Look at Genesis 4. Instead of rejoicing with his brother Abel for finding God's favor, Cain killed him! Apparently, it's part of our sin nature that sometimes, instead of celebrating the success of others, we hope for disaster.

In the Cain story, God personifies sin as something that crouches at the door. And once we let it in the door, it can do some serious damage.

Don't let that happen! Ask God to guard your heart as you strive to master sin in your life—and take time today to celebrate the success of someone else.

—Alex Warner

July 28

"Immediately, Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' He said, 'why did you doubt?' " Matthew 14:31

"WHY DID YOU DOUBT?"

Doubt is something every athlete has to deal with. That's what sometimes causes infielders to have trouble doing such a simple thing as throwing the ball to first base. They may have made a couple of throwing errors, and suddenly every time they pick up a ground ball, they begin to doubt their ability to deliver the ball. It is normal to doubt your ability at some points; it is human nature to have doubt.

But what do we do with doubt when it comes up in our Christian life? Peter had taken a step of confidence when he got out of the boat and walked on the water as Jesus did. But then the doubts crept in, and he began to sink. Jesus reached out to the sinking disciple and said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). Soon, however, Peter learned that he didn't need to doubt that God could sustain him. In the next verse, we read that the disciples worshiped Jesus as "the Son of God." Peter's doubt gave way to true faith. When we doubt God, like Peter, let's return to worship and see our faith restored.

—Ryan DeFaber

July 29

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him." 2 Chronicles 16:9 (NKJV)

ARE YOU TRUSTWORTHY?

The relationship between a quarterback and his receivers has to be one of trust. The quarterback has to trust the receiver to get open on his specific route of the play and to be prepared to catch the ball. Likewise, the receiver has to trust the quarterback to throw him a good pass exactly where the play calls for him to throw it—and away from the defense.

Our relationship with God should be built on a similar idea of trust. God is trustworthy and faithful. As the Bible tells us in Numbers 23:19, "God is not a man, that he should lie." There is no reason we cannot trust God. The question remains, however, "Can He trust us?" God wants to do so much through us, but can He trust us to be loyal to Him? Can He trust us not to compromise, or even falter, amid the pressures of life? To stand our ground and be faithful to Him as He is to us? He is looking to show Himself strong on our behalf. But first we need to show Him He can trust us to be where He needs us to be.

—Leah Metcalf

July 30

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.” Ephesians 1:13-14

A SUBSTANTIAL SIGNING BONUS

NFL training camps are in session, and while many nervous free agents fight for a contract and a spot on the roster, the top draft picks work out with a strong sense of security. This is because they have guaranteed money—a signing bonus. Last year's top draft pick, Alex Smith, agreed to a 6-year deal with San Francisco worth almost \$50 million, but nearly half of it, \$24 million, is guaranteed! The 49ers would owe Smith this money regardless of whether or not he ever played a down of football.

Not a bad guarantee. But here's a better one. When a person believes the true gospel of salvation, he is marked with a seal. God invests in us immediately by sending His Holy Spirit into our lives. Real-life results may depend on how we respond, but His promised presence accompanies the free gift of salvation. As soon as we join the team, these gifts from God are ours. Guaranteed.

Help for this life and a promise of eternity. Now, that's a great bonus!
—Alex Warner

July 31

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” Hebrews 10:24

ACCOUNTABILITY

A friend and I go to the YMCA every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. We lift weights, run on the treadmill . . . and we run our mouths. Sometimes the mouth gets the better workout! We also spend time encouraging each other and lifting each other up in prayer. When you say, “Let's work out at 5:00 am,” most people would say, “No way!” And believe me, many days I travel or stay up late on the phone with clients, so 5:00 am comes too quickly. Then why do I go? Accountability! I know my friend will be there, and if I don't go, the phone will ring, asking me where I am and giving me a hard time. I go because of the accountability.

Do you have anyone who holds you accountable for your spiritual walk? The Lord commands us to encourage each other and pray for and with each other. So find a friend, and whether it is at the YMCA working out or in a small group, hold each other up.
—Robert Walker