

DAY 8 — UNDERSTANDING THE CALL



Core Value: Scripture

1 Corinthians 9:24–27 (CSB)

“Don’t you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize. Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown. So I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air. Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control...”

Effort matters when the goal is eternal.

Paul assumes something many believers quietly resist: spiritual growth requires intentional effort. Not earning salvation—but responding to grace with discipline. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul uses athletic imagery not to motivate emotion, but to clarify responsibility.

Scripture does not portray the Christian life as passive drift. Paul speaks of running *to win*, exercising *self-control*, and disciplining the body. These are not metaphors of convenience—they are metaphors of commitment.

Scripture helps us understand the *nature of the work*. Paul contrasts perishable crowns with an imperishable one. Athletes willingly submit to discomfort, structure, and sacrifice for rewards that fade. How much more should believers take seriously the work that shapes eternal faithfulness?

When Scripture is neglected, effort becomes misguided. We may work hard at the wrong things—busyness instead of obedience, activity instead of formation. Scripture clarifies not only *that* we are called to do the work, but *what kind* of work matters.

Paul’s concern is not intensity alone, but **aim**. He refuses to run aimlessly. Scripture keeps our effort aligned. It reminds us why discipline matters, where our strength comes from, and what we are ultimately pursuing.

Before discipline becomes practice, it must become conviction. Scripture forms that conviction.

Core Value Practice — Scripture

Practice reading Scripture as instruction, not inspiration alone.

Today’s practice is about letting Scripture shape expectations.

Practice Steps

1. Slowly read 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 twice.
 2. Underline every word related to effort, discipline, or intentionality.
 3. Ask:
 - What assumptions does this passage challenge?
 - What kind of effort does Paul commend?
 4. Write one sentence beginning with:
“According to Scripture, spiritual growth requires...”
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Reflection Questions

1. How comfortable are you with the idea that faith requires discipline and effort?
 2. Where have you confused spiritual activity with spiritual formation?
 3. What motivates your obedience more—habit, emotion, or conviction shaped by Scripture?
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Daily Action Challenge: Clarify the work.

Take five minutes today and write out:

- One spiritual discipline you’ve avoided
- One area where effort feels unfocused or inconsistent

End by praying:

“God, align my effort with Your Word.”

Guided Prayer

God,
Thank You for Your Word that speaks honestly about the life of faith. Forgive me for the ways I have drifted instead of trained, or worked hard without clear purpose. Let Scripture shape my expectations, my effort, and my obedience. Teach me to do the work that leads to life, not for a fading reward, but for the imperishable prize You promise. Amen.