

DAY 9 - TRAINING WITH INTENTION



Core Value: Prayer

1 Corinthians 9:25–27 (CSB)

“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...”

Psalm 90:12 (CSB)

“Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts.”

Spiritual growth does not happen accidentally—it is trained through intentional prayer.

Paul’s language in 1 Corinthians 9 is strikingly deliberate. He does not describe vague effort or occasional motivation. He speaks of *self-control*, *discipline*, and purposeful direction. Twice he makes the same point negatively before stating it positively: *not running aimlessly, not boxing the air*. Paul is clear—effort without intention is wasted effort.

Prayer is where intention is formed.

Many believers pray reactively. We pray when circumstances overwhelm us, when decisions feel urgent, or when pain forces our attention upward. While God meets us there, Scripture invites us into something deeper: prayer as **training**, not merely crisis response.

Psalm 90:12 connects prayer to wisdom. To ask God to “number our days” is not morbid—it is clarifying. It is a prayer that says, *“I want my effort to count.”* Prayer brings our limited time, energy, and focus before God so He can shape how they are used.

Without intentional prayer, discipline easily becomes legalism. We try harder without listening better. We exert effort without alignment. But prayer slows us down long enough for God to refine our direction before we intensify our pace.

Paul did not discipline his body to prove his worth; he disciplined it because he knew his purpose. Prayer keeps discipline tethered to calling. It reminds us why we train, what we pursue, and who we depend on.

When prayer is neglected, we may still work—but we often work anxiously, defensively, or inconsistently. When prayer leads, effort becomes focused, humble, and resilient.

Core Value Practice — Prayer

Practice prayer as alignment, not just appeal.

Today’s practice centers on asking God to shape *how* you invest your effort.

Practice Steps

1. Find a quiet place.
2. Read Psalm 90:12 aloud.
3. Ask God these questions in prayer:
 - Where am I running aimlessly?
 - Where am I expending effort without clear purpose?
 - What discipline are You inviting me to train in right now?
4. Sit quietly for two minutes. Write down what surfaces.

Reflection Questions

1. How would you describe your current spiritual effort—focused, scattered, or inconsistent?
2. In what areas have you relied more on willpower than prayer?
3. How might intentional prayer change the way you approach discipline?

Daily Action Challenge: Pray before you push.

Before beginning any demanding task today—work, exercise, ministry, or study—pause for 30 seconds and pray:

“God, align my effort with Your purpose.”

Afterward, note whether that pause changed your posture or focus.

Guided Prayer

God,

You know how easily I drift into activity without direction. Forgive me for working hard without listening well. Teach me to pray before I push, to listen before I strive, and to train with intention rather than anxiety. Number my days, shape my focus, and help me discipline my life in ways that honor You and lead to lasting fruit. Amen.