

HOH
HOUSE of HOPE

Spiritual Strength Training

5 DAYS OF DEVOTIONAL
TRAINING FOR TEEN GUYS

What's Your Strength Level?

"With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.

—2 Samuel 22:30, NLT

If you're a guy who likes to hit the gym and lift weights, you know you can't just bust through the door for the first time and lift a 200-pound dumbbell over your head. That's just crazy!

The smartest thing is to start at your current strength level and work your way up from there. You don't want to be cringe and act tougher than you are, right?

So, what about your spiritual strength? Where should you start?

The answer is the same as it is for the weights in the gym.

You don't need to dive in and read your Bible for an hour a day, pray for two hours, and memorize 100 scriptures on day one. In fact, even the spiritual heavyweights would tell you that how much you lift (how much time you spend) is not a sign of true strength. It can get judge-y and religious if you only think about a timer and not what you get from your personal time with God.

How can you build spiritual muscle and be ready for anything life throws at you?

You can get major POWER out of 10 minutes with God. And it's possible to get nothing out of an hour with Him if your heart isn't in it. It's about QUALITY, not quantity. And when you have God with you in every part of your life, you can overcome the biggest challenges and achieve the greatest victories, and the Bible says you can even have the desires of your heart!

So, set a spiritual weightlifting goal this week for yourself (and maybe one for the gym, too!). Start with 5 minutes of reading some cool battle scriptures in First and Second Kings and 5 minutes of praying (just telling God what's on your mind and asking for help).

It may not seem like it, but you'll get stronger sooner than you think and have a lot more confidence and happiness, too!

EXTRA SET OF REPS

Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 6:10

GAME PLAN:

How can you start spending time with God?

- Read a few verses in your Bible before you leave for school each day.
- Say a quiet prayer on your way to school.
- Try talking to God about everything—even the small stuff—and look for His answers.

PRAYER:

God, thank You for giving me the power to grow stronger every day with Your Word.

Help me to spend more time with You and talk to You about everything.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

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A Deep-Down Kind of Strength

"Does my strength come from mountains? No, my strength comes from God..."

—Psalm 121:1-2, MSG

If you've ever watched Olympic weightlifting, you might have noticed that even the most muscular men don't just walk up to a 500-pound barbell and pick it up. They've prepared in advance for that moment. They've trained, and they've found the perfect strategy. Then, once they're under pressure, they're ready. They have a plan. They've learned to reach down to a deep-down kind of strength to turn something potentially damaging into a total victory.

You can do the same in your life.

When challenges come your way—and they come to all of us!—you can develop a deep-down kind of strength that takes something meant to harm you and turn it into a victory.

Are you facing a challenging situation in your life today?

Maybe people at school have made you feel like an outcast, or perhaps a parent or sibling has caused you to feel like you're not enough. Or maybe you've been struggling with school or even battling depression.

What should you do?

You can learn to take the heavy burdens in life and turn them into a total victory! But you have to have a strategy. That strategy comes from God. Part of that strategy is knowing who you are in Christ. No matter what anyone else says, God says:

- You are loved and fully accepted. (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4)
- You are chosen. (1 Peter 2:9)
- You are more than a conqueror! (Romans 8:37)
- You are the head in life—not the tail. Above every situation, not beneath it. (Deuteronomy 28:13)
- You are forgiven. (Ephesians 1:7)
- You have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5)

- You can do ANYTHING with God's help. (Philippians 4:13)

The next time you're tempted to listen to the opinions of others or the negative voice in your own head, look at this list and read it out loud. Remind yourself of the TRUTH—the Bible says it's the truth that will set you free!

That's a deep-down strength that can conquer any trouble in your life!

EXTRA SET OF REPS

Ephesians 2:10

GAME PLAN:

What problem in your life needs a strategy?

Most likely, it is something happening in your mind. If you can change your thinking, you can change your world.

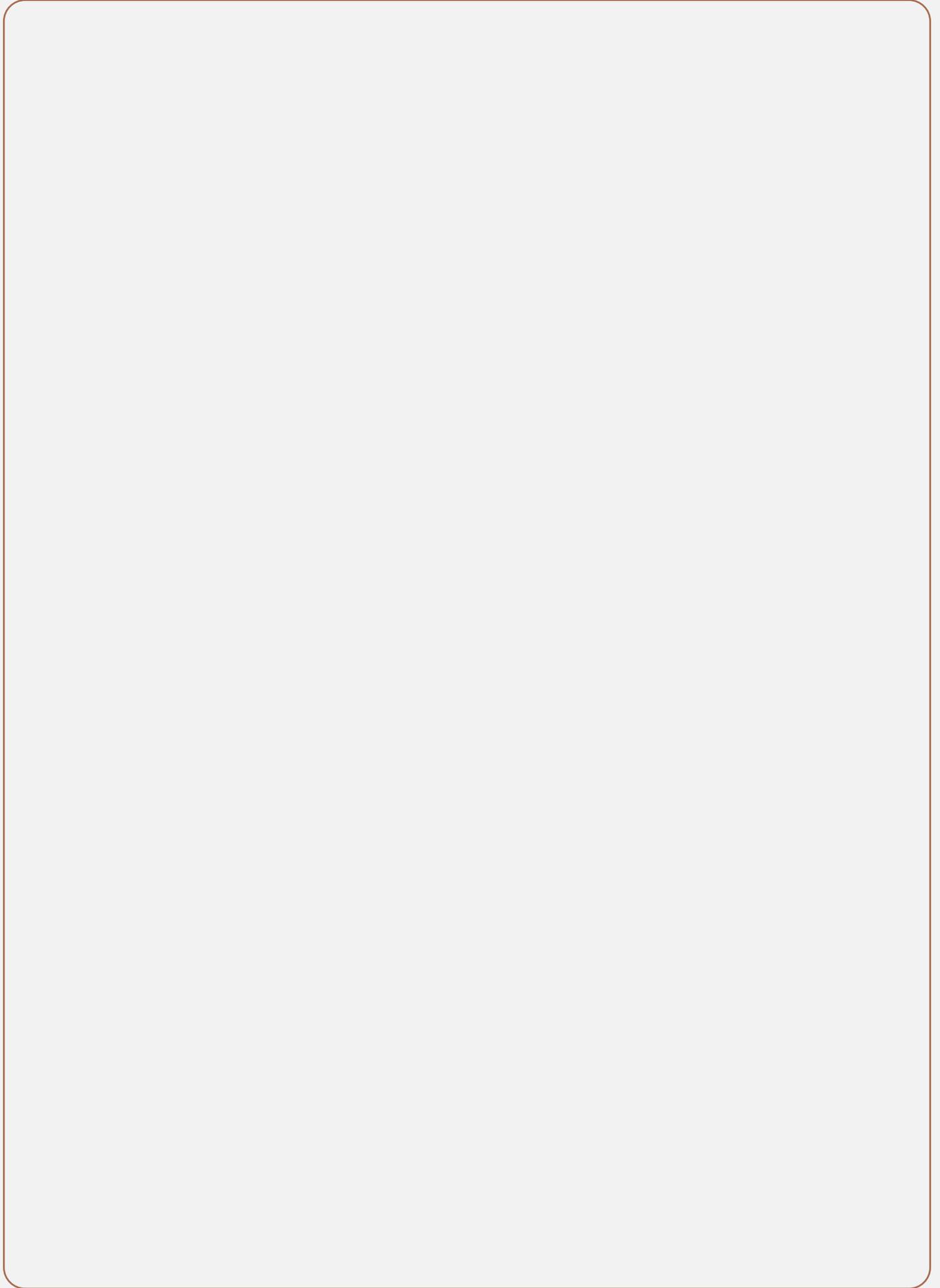
Are there any situations you can change today? Changing your circle of friends? Leaving an activity? Joining a new one?

PRAYER:

God, thank You for giving me strategies to help me conquer the hard things that happen in my life. Help me to know what I can do today to change my life for the better.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

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Finding a Good Spotter

"Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm."

—Proverbs 13:20, NIV

When you move to heavier weights in the gym, it's time to find a good spotter.

A spotter is there for two reasons: safety and motivation.

When you push your limits physically, a spotter keeps you from crushing yourself under the load. And if they're good, they'll also encourage and inspire you to push past the pain and get the lift!

In our spiritual lives, we need good spotters, too. It can be a strong Christian friend, a parent, a coach, or a youth leader. Just like in the gym, the spotter should be stronger than you are—but spiritually, in this case.

A spiritual "spotter" will encourage you in your walk with God, inspire you to make good life choices, and support you when your spiritual muscles get a little weak and shaky.

It's essential that none of us tries to go it alone in life. The devil likes to isolate people because he can tell his lies uninterrupted. But a good spotter in your life will always encourage you and remind you of the truth.

If you haven't found one yet, ask God to help you. Think and pray about who could be your spiritual spotter—then ask them to step into the role. Everyone wants to be needed, so chances are they'll be honored!

And you get the energizing feeling of knowing someone always has your back.

EXTRA SET OF REPS

Proverbs 27:17

GAME PLAN:

Who do you know who would be a good spotter? Ask God to help you think of someone—maybe one person who is your own age and another who is older—who would help you become a stronger man.

Then, ask them! Most people would consider this request an honor.

PRAYER:

God, thank You for the gift of friendship. I ask that You send good friends into my life who will help me live for You. I also ask that You show me who I should spend more time and who would be a good mentor for me in my life.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

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Created for Strength & Courage

"Be strong and courageous." — Joshua 1:9, NIV

God created YOU to be strong and courageous. Did you know that?

In fact, the command to "be strong and courageous" appears 25 times in the Bible. It sounds like God is serious about it! Among other things, God designed a man to be physically and spiritually strong. That's because He has a very specific job for you.

Men are created for three crucial roles: leader, provider, and protector (Genesis 2:15; Ephesians 5:23; 1 Peter 3:7). Each of these takes a lot of strength, both physically and spiritually.

It can sometimes get confusing when you're a teenager—'Am I a kid or am I a man?'

One day people treat you like a kid; the next day, they expect you to man up! So which is it?

Let's think about some of the greatest Bible heroes who probably felt the same.

David was only about 17 years old when he challenged Goliath (and won!). But not everyone respected him as a man. His brothers told him to go home, King Saul questioned if he could handle this manly duty when no one else would, and Goliath laughed in his face! But God had called David to be a strong and courageous man even while he was still a teen. And, as you may know, David went on to become king!

What about Joseph? Another great hero of the Bible. He, too, was called by God as a teenager when God gave him a dream about his future. But his family didn't see him as a man—he was 17 years old—and his brothers betrayed him by selling him into slavery. Joseph went from teenager to man very quickly, with one challenging experience after another. He went on to become the most powerful man in Egypt!

Those are only two examples of teenage boys God called to step into powerful and victorious roles. There are many more!

You may not feel like it right now, but you are a David and a Joseph. You are a teenager and have a BIG call on your life. No matter how others might see you, God already sees you as a man.

During this time of transition, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Becoming a man doesn't mean you need to resist your parents. In fact, honoring them is what will get you promoted quicker.
- Being a man doesn't mean you have it all figured out—it means you work to honor God and become a better person day by day.

God created you to make an impact on this world. You'll be surprised how things will come together as you move forward one day at a time, doing what is right in front of you with excellence. Then, one day, like David and Joseph, you might find yourself in a palace.

EXTRA SET OF REPS

Joshua 1:6; 1 Chronicles 28:20; 1 Corinthians 16:13, Daniel 10:19

GAME PLAN:

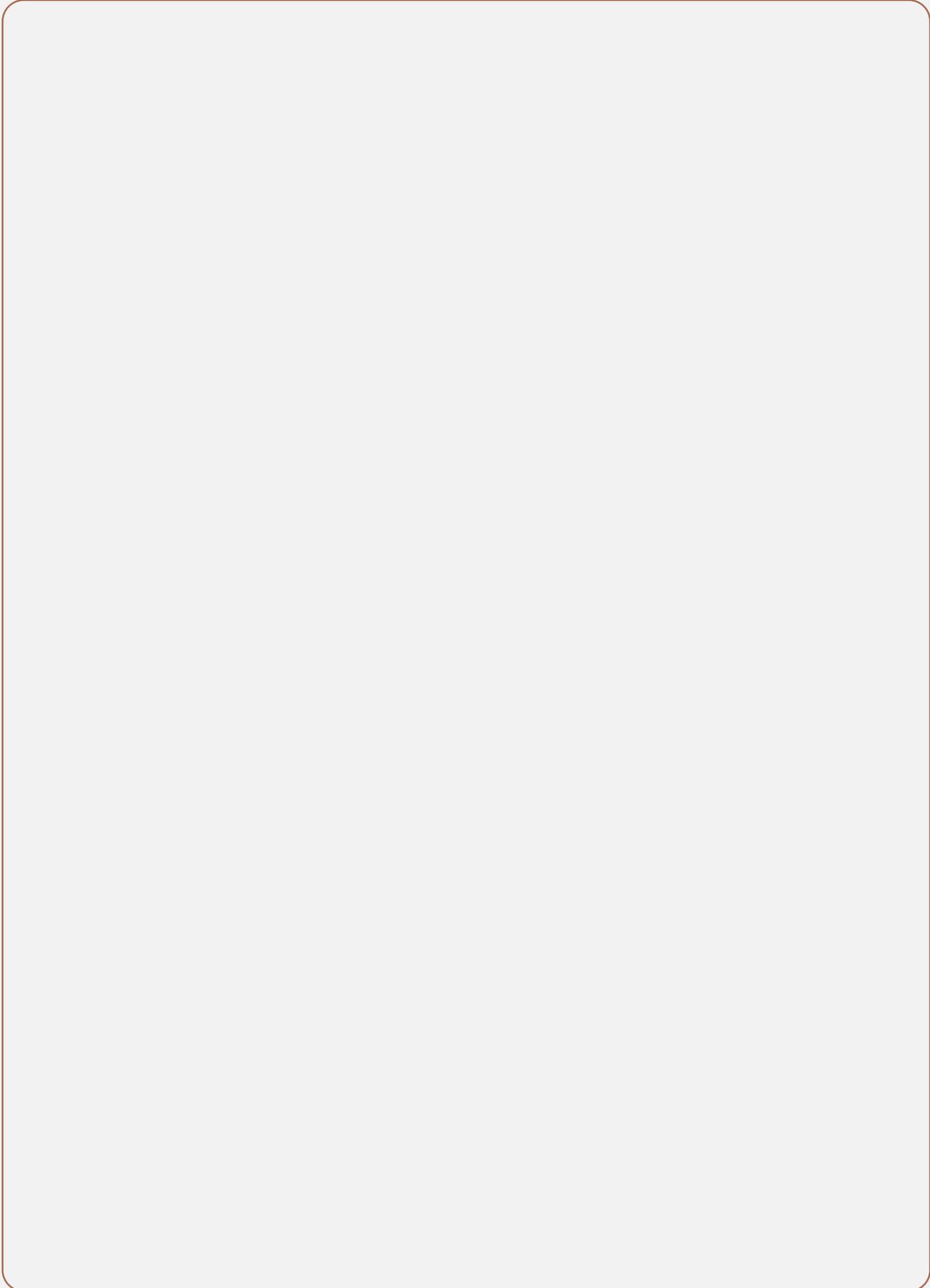
If you've never journaled before, give it a try. Write down how you're feeling about going from kid to man. Think about a few things you'd like to accomplish one day and write those down, too.

PRAYER:

God, thank You for creating me to become a strong and faithful man. Help me to know how to become a man while I still feel young and give me the courage to live for You in all things.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

NOTES



Measuring your Progress

"Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might." —Ephesians 6:10

Building physical strength can be measured in two ways: increasing muscle mass and the ability to lift heavier weights. But how do you measure and increase in spiritual strength?

If you spend time with God and work to obey what He says is good and right, you will grow stronger. Sometimes it may be imperceptible at first.

An excellent way to gauge your spiritual strength is by asking yourself this question:

'Am I a better person than I was this time last year? Last month?'

Maybe you used to have a temper, but after setting a goal to read your Bible and pray each day, you've noticed that temper is much less or even gone now. Or perhaps you used to feel depressed a lot, but now, you're happy most of the time. Those things are awesome progress in building your spiritual strength!

Give yourself credit and celebrate those moments. Remember it is progress, not perfection, you're going after.

God tells us the secret to getting stronger in Ephesians 6:10-18 where Paul describes the importance of putting on the whole armor of God. Here is a quick guide to getting suited up in that armor.

1. Belt of Truth. The devil lies. But if we ask, God gives us the ability to recognize the lies and know His truth.
2. Breastplate of Righteousness. Anything that makes you feel guilty or unworthy is not from God and is sapping your spiritual strength. To stay strong, remember God's unconditional love and your position in Christ.
3. Shoes of Peace. A soldier's shoes give him a solid foundation. When you pray, God will give you strength and boldness in every situation.
4. Shield of Faith. When you admit your weaknesses, temptations, and failures to God and ask for His help, He will give you the strength to overcome them.
5. Helmet of Salvation. A soldier's helmet is his most important piece of protection because it covers his head.

When you are born again, you have that helmet, but it is vital that you continue to turn back to that truth when the devil comes to put wrong thinking in your mind.

6. The Sword of the Spirit. A sword isn't for hanging on the wall for decoration—it's meant for fighting! The sword of the Spirit is the Bible—the Word of God. Is your sword collecting dust on a shelf, or do you read it so you can speak it out like a weapon?
7. Prayer. Praying will make you stronger faster than anything else. A praying man is a strong man.

You can check your spiritual strength by checking your armor. If anything is missing, it is a weak spot. And the devil is constantly looking for weak spots to attack. The devil is really good at what he does. You have to be better at what you do. You have to be (and stay) strong in the Lord and the power of His might.

EXTRA SET OF REPS

Ephesians 6:10-18

GAME PLAN:

Choose one or two areas of your life where you'd like to get stronger. Maybe you want to show more self-control when you're angry or maybe you'd like to be more thoughtful with your parents, a sibling, or a friend. Pray about those areas, think about how you can improve and take action!

PRAYER:

God, thank You that I don't have to try to become a stronger person on my own and that You are willing to help me. Today, I ask that you help me to know where I have weak spots that Satan might try to access and help me to put on the right armor to fight my battle.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

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