

## The Big Win

### Train Hard, Rest Hard

#### Week 3

by Mandy Barkhaus

Good morning everyone. Last weekend, we talked about teamwork, that we're all equal parts of the team with different gifts that we use to make up the team. Yet we're one body. We're one team for Jesus. Last week, our Scripture came from First Corinthians chapter 12. In the last verse of Chapter 12, Paul talks about our gifts and that we're all equal. And then, in the last verse, Paul says, Use your ambition to try to get the greater gifts, and I'm going to show you an even better way. So that's how Chapter 12 of First Corinthians ends. And then, we move into Chapter 13 of First Corinthians, also known as the Love chapter.

This love chapter is about Paul saying, we are given these amazing gifts, and if we have these gifts but don't have love with it, we're just a noisy gong or a clashing cymbal. Then, in chapter 13, it goes into the verses that are often said at weddings. Love is patience. Love is kind.

It does not envy, it does not boast, it's not rude. Right? That's a beautiful sentiment for the foundation of a marriage. But Paul is writing to the church. He's saying this kind of love needs to be in the church. All of these spiritual gifts that we are given. He's saying we need to put them into practice.

Paul says we need to do that with love. Love is not a spiritual gift but a fruit of the spirit. But for us to even understand that kind of love, the kind of love that Jesus had, we need to train now. Paul loved to talk about training and races and such, and he wrote this letter to the church in Corinth from 586 BCE until the fourth century.

Every other year, the Isthmian games were held in Corinth. Now, if we're going to rate the importance of games, we have number one, the Olympic Games. Number two, which was important at that time, was the Isthmian Games. These games included boxing, wrestling, and racing, and they were held in the town of Corinth. There were winners and losers in these games, and you can bet that the church that was in the city where these games were held, you can bet that they understood that they needed to train in order to win, that they needed to train in order to get the prize.

Paul, in First Corinthians chapter nine, writes this to the Corinthians and says, Don't you know that all the runners in the stadium run, but only one gets the prize? So run to win;

everyone who competes for practice has self-discipline in everything. The runners do this to get a crown of leaves that shrivel up and die.

We do it to receive a crown that never dies. So now this is how I run. Not without a clear goal in sight. I fight like a boxer in the ring, not like someone who is shadowboxing. Rather, I'm landing punches on my own body and subduing it like a slave. And I do this to be sure that I won't be disqualified after preaching to others.

Now, we'll get back to this scripture in a minute. But my husband, Tom, and I have an 18-week disc golf streak going that we're pretty proud of. We're training to get better at Disc golf now. We started disc golfing because Joe Reeder took Tom out for the first time, and then Tom took me out.

Then we've been hooked ever since. We love traveling around and trying new courses. We went to New Mexico last year, and now we're up to 29 different courses in seven states. And since we've been keeping track, we've disc golfed every week, at least once a week for 18 weeks in a row, even when it was cold.

When we told people this a few weeks ago, people were like, You're crazy. Like, why would you do that? But we didn't care because we would bundle up, were dedicated, and enjoyed being out there. I could justify going out there in the cold because I'm passionate about this golfing. But here's what I don't understand. The people we saw outside were running when the temperature was -1 million degrees below zero, right? We all passed those people, and we're like, what are they doing? Well, I have a picture of this. It is Lori McCarthy, and she is part of our Horizons family. And she posted this picture on Facebook the other day. And it's a picture, and she's outside running and smiling.

She seems happy. Like she's one of those crazy people that we saw running around. It is pretty impressive. I thought, well, that's pretty cool, then I scrolled down, and she posted this snap screenshot, saying it's an 1826-day streak.

Let's say this is not running once a week like we do golf once a week. But this is 1826 days. That's five years every day running outside. I reached out to her, and I said, Lori, I have a few questions for you, like, would you help me out? And then she joked, she's like, Yeah, sure. Meet me in the morning, and we'll run together to answer whatever questions you want.

She didn't make me run. She answered my questions. I said, Lori why? Why did you start this? What was the motivation behind this? She said she wanted to be healthier. She knew she wanted to do something and didn't love running, or running wasn't her thing before this, but she knew she wanted to do something.

She said people also surrounded her. Her husband has an even longer running streak than she does. So, her husband was a runner. The people that she worked with loved running. So, she surrounded herself with people who love to run, move, and be active. These people were also invitational. They were like, hey, you should come with us.

Then she said there was also a link. The Lincoln Running Company did like the challenge of running outside every day in January. And she said she saw that about five years ago or five years ago. All these things motivated her to get started. I asked, what did you have to have learned some lessons as you were doing this?

She said that she felt good and healthy right after starting this run. And she can keep up with her son, which is important to her. And then she said she could eat extra calories without guilt. Pretty cool. Then she said it's a good way to multitask. She said she sometimes ran with coworkers to catch up on life or work.

She said she also listens to audiobooks when she runs. And so, if you love to read, but you're like, I don't have time to read. She found a way to both be active and read and also learned about grace, as in she gives herself the grace to run shorter distances if needed.

She said that she made up the rules for this. She doesn't play by anybody else's rules; this is the journey that she is on. So, then I asked her, like, What's your end goal? Do you hope to run six years in a row or every day for six years? Every day for ten years? I'm like, What?

What's the end goal? And she said she's just going to keep running until something gets in the way, like a major illness or something else. And she said it's part of her daily life. She said that she started running every day because running every day was easier than deciding which days to run and which days not to run.

What if we apply that same thing to our faith that we're going to follow Jesus regardless of our situation? We're going to do things like reading the Bible, praying, connecting with others, worshipping, or being in service. We're going to train every day to be more like Jesus instead of deciding when following Jesus will fit into our schedule.

Now, Karen Harold and D.J. Hock, both part of our church family here, have just finished a Bible reading streak. I challenged everyone to read the whole Bible in January, and they both finished this task. It was a big deal. I did it last year. I'm doing it this year, but it's already February, and I'm still going. But they're done. They finished this streak. It's a lot of reading that they dedicated time to. Karen said they dedicated every day then, and for her, doing the 30-day Bible shred was a great way to keep her rooted in Christ. And she said it gave her a good reminder of the full story of God and Jesus.

And he had all sorts of wisdom. Every day, he would text me something he learned from reading. And it was so cool to see him. He's read the Bible a lot of times all the way through, but he was still learning things every day. And then he said, okay, now I'm done. I'm ready for something a little less intense.

He said that he loves to be challenged, but despite this being overwhelmed, I think that's important for us to consider, too, because I don't think that God wants us to be overwhelmed either. But then we read in Scripture moments ago that Paul's telling us to train hard. He says I'm landing punches on my own body and subduing it like a slave. That sounds more like running every day for five years or reading the Bible in 30 days rather than just casually following Jesus.

Paul, in this passage, is trying to emphasize that following Jesus is important. And because of how we act, what we say, and what we do, we will either give credit to or discredit Jesus. For those who don't know Jesus, Paul also said in this Scripture that we need self-discipline in everything, including training and resting.

Self-discipline is when we move from being overwhelmed to being challenged and moving toward Jesus instead of maybe you are at the point where you are like. I can't hear another sermon. Where did you hear that you need to pray more or read the Bible more, you need to share the good news of Jesus more, you need to serve more, or maybe you need to hear today that God wants you to rest, take a Sabbath, and take a break. And this Sabbath is modeled by God.

When resting on the seventh day in Exodus chapter 20, verses 9 through 11, Moses just brought the Ten Commandments down from the mountain, and he says, Six days you may work and do all your tasks, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord Your God. Do not do any work on it, not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your animals, or the immigrant who is living with you because the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that is in them in six days, but rested on the seventh day. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Now, if you've ever been to a personal trainer or are a personal trainer, you know the importance of moving and working your muscles, using them to build them up, and resting and recovering. So we need to do both, right? We need to both train hard, but we also need to rest hard because first, in Genesis, on the seventh day, we learn that God rested, and then Moses brings these tablets down with the Ten Commandments on them.

And one of those commandments is to rest. Isn't it interesting, like all of all the Ten Commandments, Like, that's the one that we break most often, like murder and stealing

and commit to committing adultery, like those things, like we're not going to do those things, you know, for some of us ever, at least probably not once a week?

But God is saying here, rest. And we're like, man, we don't need that one hike. We ignore that one. In Ezekiel 20:12, the Lord says he's saying, I gave the Sabbath as a sign between us that that the Sabbath was something that would set the Lord's people apart from everyone else. So what are we? What are we known for?

How do we set ourselves apart from the world? I mean, people may know that we are followers of Jesus by our works, our love, or when they see division in the world, but yet they see the church unified wide. But what if people knew that we were Christians, by the way, we honor God by slowing down?

What if people knew that we were followers of Jesus because of the way we rested? If we turn to Jesus, Jesus worked on the Sabbath, right? He and his disciples were out in the fields doing things and an end. And if we're to follow Jesus, well, maybe we don't. We don't need that rest time. The Pharisees certainly called Jesus out on it.

The Pharisees saw the work being done on the Sabbath and went to Jesus and asked, Why are you allowing your disciples to work on the Sabbath? The Pharisees were so interested in following the law exactly the way it is. And then, in Mark, the Pharisees questioned and challenged Jesus, and Jesus first responded with passages from the Old Testament and a story about King David.

Then Jesus said, The Sabbath was created for humans. Humans weren't created for the Sabbath. Jesus claims authority over everything, even the Sabbath. I've probably used this quote before, but it's one that I often remind myself of, and it's from a really popular book called Soul Feast by Margery Thompson. I read it for two different seminary classes. Years and years ago, my mentor had me read it, and it's the Soul Feast.

It's a book about spiritual training or spiritual disciplines. This quote in this book says this: If the word I hear on Sunday morning or during my private prayer has no bearing on the way I relate to my family, friend, and foe, or how I make decisions, spend my resources, and cast my vote, then my faith is fantasy.

Then, it goes on to say God is the Lord of our whole life. And so we honor God when we train, and we honor God when we rest. The way we rest proves how much we believe God is who God is. But too often, we overschedule ourselves, you know, You know what I'm talking about. The year 2022 was the busiest year that I've ever had in my whole life.

It wasn't the most challenging year by far, but it was the busiest year that I've ever had in my whole life. So, in 2022, I'm in full-time seminary. I'm finishing that up. So, I'm going to

school in seminary full-time. I'm working as a full-time pastor in February of 2022; Tom and I found out that we were moving in and would start at Horizons in July.

So that meant we started looking for a house here in Lincoln and getting a house ready to sell. So, I graduated in May. Then Lex, our youngest son, graduated high school in May. So, with all the busyness of having a high school senior, I was commissioned as a provisional elder in June.

We traveled to Israel and Germany for two weeks. We arrived back at the end of June on a late Sunday night. Monday morning, the moving truck came to move us to Lincoln. We moved to Lincoln into a temporary house because our other house was not ready. And then we moved. And then, like, four days later, I started here.

Then Tom also started a new job. So that was a transition, and we were getting ready to, or we were figuring out the new church, our new church home, and our new city. And there was so much adjusting we had to do. And then, at the very end of 2022, we also became empty nesters. Now it's 2024, we've adjusted to Lincoln.

We love horizons. I finished residency, but I forgot that I started residency in 2022, so I finished that. We've adjusted to being empty nesters. Our dog died last year, so now we don't even have a dog to take care of anymore. So, we are less busy now than we were in 2022. And now, when I am resting, sometimes I feel guilty, and God doesn't want us to feel guilty when we rest.

Of course, there are different seasons in our lives where they're just busier. But God wants us to take that time and rest. Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for humans, not humans for the Sabbath, like the Sabbath is not getting anything out of it. If we decide not to rest the Sabbath, it's okay. It's us who benefit.

Now you. I will invite you to take a step today, and I am trying to figure out what that step looks like for you. Maybe it's putting the Sabbath on your calendar and deciding how to honor God that way. Perhaps it's starting your running or movement streak to honor God by caring for your body. Maybe it's starting a Bible plan with others.

Our Arise students. So that's our high school students. Eighteen started a reading plan in the YouVersion of the Bible app. So they're reading a plan together.

Maybe your Sabbath will come when you schedule a time when you're stepping away from your phone. I don't know what it looks like for you, but you probably know now Laurie said she can eat extra calories without guilt because she runs every day. And I like thinking about it that way: when we train and follow Jesus as we do, we get to rest without guilt.

That doesn't mean that we don't follow Jesus in our rest, but that we allow our body to be, and that is honoring God.