

8-SESSION BIBLE STUDY FOR TEEN GUYS

NO MORE EXCUSES

BE THE MAN GOD MADE YOU TO BE!



TONY EVANS

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Published by Lifeway Press® • © 2021 Tony Evans

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ISBN 978-1-0877-5836-7 • Item 005836432

Dewey decimal classification: 248.842

Subject headings: RELIGION / CHRISTIAN MINISTRY / YOUTH

My deepest thanks go to Mrs. Heather Hair for her skills and insights in collaboration on this manuscript.

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Printed in the United States of America

Student Ministry Publishing • Lifeway Resources • One Lifeway Plaza • Nashville, TN 37234

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR. TONY EVANS is one of America's most respected leaders in evangelical circles. He's a pastor, a best-selling author, and a frequent speaker at Bible conferences and seminars throughout the nation. He has served as the senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship for more than forty years, witnessing its growth from ten people in 1976 to more than ten thousand with more than one hundred ministries.

Dr. Evans also serves as the president of The Urban Alternative, a national ministry that seeks to restore hope and transform lives through the proclamation and application of God's Word. His daily radio broadcast, *The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans*, can be heard on more than 1,400 radio outlets throughout the United States and in more than 130 countries.

Dr. Evans holds the honor of writing and publishing the first full-Bible commentary and study Bible by an African American. A former chaplain for the Dallas Cowboys, he's currently the chaplain for the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, a team he has served for more than thirty years.

Through his local church and national ministry, Dr. Evans has set in motion a kingdom-agenda philosophy of ministry that teaches God's comprehensive rule over every area of life, as demonstrated through the individual, family, church, and society.

Dr. Evans was married to Lois, his wife and ministry partner for nearly fifty years, before her passing in 2019. They are the proud parents of four—Chrystal, Priscilla, Anthony Jr., and Jonathan—and have a number of grandchildren.

ABOUT THE URBAN ALTERNATIVE

The Urban Alternative (TUA) is a Christian broadcast and teaching ministry founded more than thirty-five years ago by Dr. Tony Evans. TUA seeks to promote a kingdom-agenda philosophy designed to enable people to live all of life underneath the comprehensive rule of God. This is accomplished through a variety of means, including media, resources, ministries, and community-impact training.

HOW TO GET
THE MOST
FROM THIS
STUDY

How to Get the Most from This Study

This Bible-study book includes eight weeks of content for group and personal study.

GROUP SESSIONS

Regardless of what day of the week your group meets, each week of content begins with the group session. Each session uses the following format to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among students, with God's Word, and with the teaching of Dr. Evans.

START. This page includes questions to get the conversation started and to introduce the video teaching.

WATCH. Use the fill-in-the-blanks from Dr. Evans's teaching so students can follow along as they watch the video.

MAN UP. This page includes questions and statements that guide the group to respond to Dr. Evans's video teaching and to relevant Bible passages.

PERSONAL STUDY

Each week provides three days of Bible study and learning activities for individual engagement between group sessions.

DAY 1: HIT THE STREETS. This section highlights practical steps for taking the week's teaching and putting it into practice.

DAYS 2-3: These personal studies go deeper into the sessions, revisiting stories, Scriptures, and themes Dr. Evans introduced in the videos and in your group time, so students can understand and apply what they've learned on a deeper level. Students should use the other days of the week to reflect on what God is teaching them and to practice putting the biblical principles into action.

D-GROUP GUIDES

In addition to the group sessions and personal studies, D-Group guides are provided at the back of this Bible-study book. These guides correspond to the eight weeks of study and are designed to be used in a smaller group of three or four for deeper discussion and accountability. Each week's guide includes a devotional written by one of Dr. Evans's sons, Anthony or Jonathan, as well as a guide for smaller group discussion. Each guide provides helpful thoughts on the week's content and suggests a few questions for discussion and accountability among the group.

TIPS FOR LEADING A SMALL GROUP

Follow these tips to prepare for each group session.

PRAYERFULLY PREPARE

REVIEW. Review the weekly video, teaching material, and group questions ahead of time in order to be best prepared for your time with your guys.

PRAY. Be intentional about praying for each person in the group. Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you point to Jesus each week through God's Word.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

Create an environment that doesn't distract. Ask students not to use their phones and to bring a physical Bible. Plan ahead by considering these details, include seating, temperature, lighting, snacks, and general cleanliness. While most young men aren't terribly concerned with these things (other than snacks), it will help them not be distracted. Do everything in your ability to help students focus on what's most important: connecting with God, the Bible, and each other.

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

A good small-group experience has the following characteristics.

EVERYONE IS INCLUDED. Your goal is to foster a community in which guys are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually. Always be aware of opportunities to include any students who visit the group and to invite new guys to join your group.

EVERYONE PARTICIPATES. Encourage everyone to ask questions, share responses, or read aloud.

Tips for Leading a Small Group

NO ONE DOMINATES—NOT EVEN THE LEADER. Be sure that your time speaking as a leader takes up less than half of your time together as a group. Politely guide discussion if anyone dominates.

NOBODY IS RUSHED THROUGH QUESTIONS. Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. Students often need time to think about their responses to questions they've just heard or to gain courage to share what God is stirring in their hearts.

INPUT IS AFFIRMED AND FOLLOWED UP. Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking how other people have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. People are less likely to speak up if they fear that you don't actually want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer.

GOD AND HIS WORD ARE CENTRAL. Opinions and experiences can be helpful, but God has given us the truth. Trust God's Word to be the authority and God's Spirit to work in people's lives. You can't change anyone, but God can. Continually point students to the Word and to active steps of faith.

KEEP CONNECTING

Think of ways to connect with students during the week. Participation during the group session is always improved when guys spend time connecting with one another outside the group sessions. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of just attending.

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS with thoughts, commitments, or questions from the session by connecting through these communication channels: texts, social media, and schools visits (where permissible).

BUILD DEEPER FRIENDSHIPS by planning or spontaneously inviting group members to join you outside your regularly scheduled group time for activities like these: meals, fun activities, and projects around your school, church or community.

NO MORE EXCUSES

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TONY EVANS

SESSION I

NO MORE
HIDING
BEHIND
THE PAST

START

Welcome to Session 1 of *No More Excuses*.

Welcome to *No More Excuses*. In this Bible study we're going to identify and overcome the excuses men, young, old, and everywhere in between, use to keep from being the people God has called them to be. We'll begin by looking at the past.

Good or bad, what's an event in your past that you often think about?

Even though you are young, your past is made up of the good, the bad, and the ugly. Many of your experiences have been positive, but many have also been bad or painful. Painful pasts come in all shapes, sizes, and degrees of intensity. Like it or not, your past often influences your present.

What's an example of something from your past that influences the way you live in the present?

What can you do to overcome the negative influences of your past? The Bible has a lot to teach us on this subject. Let's watch Session 1, where we'll explore the life of Joseph, a man who overcame a lot of obstacles and opposition to rise to a position of great power, authority, and influence for God's purposes in the world.

Ask someone to pray before watching the video teaching.

No More Hiding Behind the Past

WATCH

NOTE: In these videos Dr. Evans will refer to the guys in your group as “men” no matter what stage of manhood they are in. Use this to encourage them to begin rising to the level of manhood in their hearts and minds. Even though they are still teens, encourage them to see Dr. Evans’s teaching as a building block toward manhood in their lives.

Fill in the blanks to follow along
as you watch video Session 1.

God does not want us to make _____ for the failures in our lives. He wants us to take _____ .

We can no longer hide behind the _____. We can no longer let _____ define us.

We men need God to deliver us from _____ because too many of us are chained to _____.

God wants to deliver us from the _____ taking the _____ has done in our lives.

God can take your _____ and turn it into an awesome _____.

Forgiving does not mean you don't _____ it happened. It means you're no longer seeking _____ because it happened.

God can take the mess of _____ and turn it into the miracle of _____.

“You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.”

GENESIS 50:20

MAN UP

Use the following guide and questions to discuss the video teaching.

Read Genesis 50:20.

Joseph embraced his past because he recognized that God had used it to turn around his present and give him a productive future. Joseph made this statement found in Genesis 50:20 when he was second in command of Egypt and was clearly fulfilling God's plan for himself and for the survival of the nation of Israel. To be honest, he was already on top. But God has called us to live according to this truth even when we haven't yet seen Him turn our circumstances around. He asks us to do that by faith.

What makes it harder to live out the truth of Genesis 50:20 before we've seen God turn our situation around?

What are some of the benefits of embracing the truth of Genesis 50:20 in full faith and in spite of our circumstances?

In sports you've probably seen a player start limping after making a bad play. Then, minutes later, you notice their limp is gone. Why is this? The player is hoping that the limp will offer them an excuse for the bad play. Then after the play is forgotten, so is the limp. A player uses that kind of limp, what Dr. Evans's called a loser's limp, to imply that he failed because of an injury, not through any fault of his own.

The limp is an excuse. It implies that if the player had been at full capacity, he would have made the play. It's meant to draw attention away from the failure of the present by directing that attention to an excuse that came before it.

In what ways might guys use this loser's limp excuse in everyday life?

In the video Dr. Evans said, "God does not want us to make excuses for the failures in our lives. He wants us to take responsibility and ownership. That means we can no longer hide behind the past. We can no longer let yesterday define us." Injury or not,

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painful past or not, God opposes the use of negative situations in our lives as excuses for personal failures. We have to own our failures, get up, and move forward.

What does it look like to own a personal setback or challenge in the present instead of making an excuse for it?

Dr. Evans used the example of an enormous adult elephant staying chained to a small stake due to its memory of the past. As a younger, less powerful elephant, it couldn't pull away from the stake. As an adult, it could easily get loose, but the memory of the past keeps the older, stronger elephant chained because the chain convinces the animal it can't break free.

Name common mindsets that hold guys back from fully living out their strength in Christ and continuing to dwell in the past.

All of us have gone through difficult experiences. Joseph's example is unique but he is not alone in having challenging days. Joseph got through those hard days by recognizing that God was with him. God is with you as well. And He didn't abandon you during the challenging experiences of your past.

Dr. Evans said Joseph had to forgive yesterday. This meant no longer seeking revenge, sulking, or staring at the past, but trusting that God knew how to turn it around for good.

Do you need to forgive someone or something? It might even be yourself. What are benefits of forgiveness that you learned from the video teaching?

PRAYER

Close the session with prayer.

Father, in a world full of excuses, You've asked us to rise above them and live with personal responsibility and ownership. Help each of us identify past hurts and experiences we need to let go of, forgive, and see in the light of Your power and purpose.

Help us live as young men without excuses as we trust in Your ability to transform our lives. In Christ's name, amen.

DAY I

HIT THE STREETS

THREE STEPS TO WINNING THE RACE

Every Thanksgiving the Evans family takes part in what's known as the Turkey Trot. This 5K run/walk brings thousands of people together with the goal of raising funds for the Dallas YMCA. In this race, simply finishing is winning because all proceeds go to a good cause. But not so for competitive races. Most races award a first-place finisher with a medal, trophy, or another symbol of victory. In those races, coming in fifth, tenth, or one-hundredth is never the goal. Athletes train and compete in order to come in first.

Paul pictured the Christian life as a race. He wrote:

Do you not know that those who run in a
race all run, but only one receives the prize?
Run in such a way that you may win.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24

Following these three strategic steps can help you accomplish your goals and develop a passion to be a winner for God.

I. GO FOR THE GOLD

A nice track suit doesn't make you a runner, just as wearing a football jersey doesn't make you an NFL player. To go for the gold, you need to do more than be a part of the pack. Never settle for simply getting on the field or in the race. Run to win! The glory of God, for all who know Him, is eternal and unfading. One day God is going to reward you for what you do for Him. Because of the nature of that reward, pursue "the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14) with all you have. Living a life filled with excuses keeps you from pursuing the finish line with passion and intensity equal to the stakes of your eternal race.

2. KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE PRIZE

Athletes who compete take part in strict training. Strict training and hard work are just that—hard. They're disciplines you have to make yourself do. Unless you stay focused on the *why* behind the *what*, you might quit.

There is an Olympic gold medalist who attends Dr. Evans's church. He's known her since she was a kid. The hours, days, weeks, and months she put into preparing for the Olympics were possible only because she kept her eye on the prize. Every decision she made in the years leading up to her gold medal was influenced by that one pursuit. We ought to pursue God's eternal prize with no less effort.

Young kingdom men must train daily in godliness, invest in the eternal, seek to spend time with the Lord in prayer and Bible study, serve others, and give sacrificially of themselves to the cause of the kingdom.

3. REMOVE DISTRACTIONS

The writer of Hebrews expressed the last step this way:

Let us lay aside every hindrance and the
sin that so easily ensnares us.

HEBREWS 12:1, CSB

What's distracting you? In what ways are you spending your time on things that aren't of eternal value? Get rid of it. Stop watching it. Stop talking to them. Stop going there. Whatever stands in the way of fully living out God's plan and gaining victory over sin ought to have no place in your life.

LACE 'EM UP

Go for the gold this week. Identify one element of your life that is keeping you from pursuing your relationship with God whole-heartedly and eliminate it from your life. Keep your eyes on the prize by removing the distractions!

DAY 2

IF YOU'RE NOT DEAD, GOD'S NOT DONE

Various passages in the Bible picture the Christian life as a race or other athletic competition (see 1 Tim. 4:7-8; Gal. 5:7; Heb. 12:1; James 1:12). Both require attention and effort. Both require sacrifice and perseverance. Both have a clearly defined finish line to strive for. The finish line of this study is to become a young kingdom man—a young man who places himself under God's control and submits his life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. A young kingdom man lives according to God's rule. Now that you have a goal in mind, let's begin making strides toward the finish line.

Unlike athletic competition, the race for the Christian lasts a lifetime. If you're not dead, you aren't finished yet. You still have time to push forward in the race and win. You may be coming to the starting blocks with regrets over personal or spiritual failure. You may have stumbled coming out of the blocks. You may have tripped during the race. You may even be starting the race a little late, but God can help you make up for lost time. He can help you pick up speed and make up ground.

Read the following verse and answer the questions.

I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

What confidence comes from knowing that God began and will complete the work in your life?

Our relationship with God begins with God. Paul was saying that what God starts, He finishes. What God initiates, He completes. God wants us to be involved in His mission in the world to make Himself known by making His people more like His Son. He always

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helps us finish. Sometimes it may appear that God is doing nothing and everything is up to us. Yet God is constantly working behind the scenes to lead us toward the finish line.

How do you rest in the confidence that God will carry out His work in your life from start to finish? How should this assurance influence your emotions, prayers, and actions?

Paul knew how to persevere. He knew how to let go of the past. Paul had a dark past. He persecuted and oppressed the church. But one day Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. That encounter changed Paul's life. He knew the wisdom of forgetting failures and even successes. He wrote about it in Philippians 3. Paul pressed on:

Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14 (HCSB)

What failures from you past are you holding on to and using as an excuse?

You may not be able to completely forget your past, but in what ways can you follow Paul's example of "forgetting what is behind" and looking forward to what's ahead?

Paul had a kingdom-man attitude. He let go of the things that were behind him. His eyes were straight ahead, focused on the goal. Runners don't win a race looking backward. They have to keep their eyes on the finish line. You can't change yesterday, but you can do a lot about what happens tomorrow. Don't let other people stop you from running for God. Don't let other people distract you from seeking His approval.

NO MORE EXCUSES

The truth is that if you know Jesus, you already have God's approval. When you believed the gospel, God exchanged all the sin in your past, present, and future, for the perfect life of His Son. You're now in Christ, so when God sees you, He doesn't see your past; He sees Jesus' perfect record. God isn't concerned about your past failures; however, He has an unmistakable and amazing way of using even failure to bring about success.

Often we spend too much time focusing on what other people think about us and allow it to hold us back. Why is it important to focus only on God and His view of you instead of what others think about you?

God has a purpose for your life, a destiny for you to live out, a plan that He uniquely created you to fulfill. You advance toward that goal by focusing each day on aligning your thoughts, attitudes, and behavior with His Word and His will. Be faithful in the small things, and He will put you in charge of many things (see Matt. 25:21). If you drop a pass or miss a tackle, don't blame others. Don't fake a limp. Get back up; admit your failure to God, trusting in His provision for your forgiveness (the Bible calls this step repentance); let it go; and move forward in the knowledge that your past doesn't define you. Because you're accepted and forgiven, you're living under God's approval.

Living in God's approval allows us to bear spiritual fruit, which is the outward evidence that we're being inwardly changed by God's work in our lives. For example, when a guy lifts weights, the hours in the gym show up as muscles begin to develop and his body responds to the work it has endured. Similarly, spiritual sculpting takes place when you let go of your past and take responsibility for your sins and your spiritual development. Fruit can include greater patience, tolerance, self-control, love, diligence, leadership, wisdom, grace, and a ton of other traits and actions that lead to eternal rewards.

Why would an unhealthy fixation on our past keep us from bearing fruit in the present?

Why is it important that we bear fruit after repenting of sin? What does it reveal if we don't?

No More Hiding Behind the Past

For Paul, bearing fruit was rooted in self-control. He wrote:

Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:25-27

The best athletes exhibit self-control. The Greek word Paul used for *self-control* in verse 25 referred to athletes in his day who abstained from unhealthy food, alcohol, and sex prior to competition. These athletes understood the need for their bodies to be at full capacity for victory. They were willing to invest in themselves to win the prize set before them.

The prize in the Christian life is in the future. Hiding behind the past is harmful because it focuses our attention in the wrong place. It causes us to feel shame and guilt over past failings instead of resting in the approval we have in Jesus and in the confidence that comes from knowing He will finish the work He began. We need to exercise diligence and self-control to let go of the past.

What's one area of your life in which you're willing to exercise self-control in order to have a greater capacity for spiritual focus and commitment?

PRAY

Pray about your personal commitment to God and His expression of greatness through you. Ask Him to give you a glimpse of His plans for your future and to inspire you on your path of spiritual development. Ask for His help in reducing distractions that keep you from fully pursuing Him. Thank Him for the work He has begun in your life and ask Him to increase your faith and bring it to completion.

DAY 3

CROWN ME

Ever played checkers? Once you're able to move a checker to the other side of the board, you get to say, "King me." That means your checker is rewarded with all of the rights and privileges of the crown. Now that you're wearing a crown, you can move forward or backwards around the board, and your odds of winning increase

The kingdom life comes with its own rewards as well. When you obtain these, either in time or in eternity, you're entitled to all of the rights and privileges they supply. Scripture calls them crowns. Today we'll look at five of them.

As a young kingdom man, you have all it takes to obtain each of these crowns. You just need to pursue them the way God has instructed. But I have to point out that it won't be easy. Unlike compliments in our culture, crowns don't come cheap. The crowns the Bible describes are different from earthly treasure, which is subject to decay and corruption.

Read Jesus's words in Matthew 6:19-21.

Describe the difference between treasure on earth and treasure in heaven.

THE CROWN OF MASTERY. The first crown is the crown of mastery, the reward for faithful obedience, which we've already read about in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25. You win this crown by committing to discipline in order to compete successfully. No one ever becomes good at anything without disciplining himself. Maybe you've heard of the ten-thousand-hour rule that Malcolm Gladwell made famous.¹ The principle is that it requires ten thousand hours of doing something again and again until you master it. Although ten thousand hours may not be the exact requirement, the point is that consistency creates competency, and competency leads to mastery. You must be consistent in your spiritual walk and development over a long period of time in order to win this crown.

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Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-25. How can you become more consistent in your spiritual development?

We develop spiritually by engaging in spiritual disciplines like Bible reading, prayer, fasting, giving, serving, and others. Which of these do you struggle with the most? How will you grow in your mastery of this discipline?

THE CROWN OF REJOICING. In 1 Thessalonians 2:19, we're told about our next crown—the crown of rejoicing. This crown is associated with faithfulness in the work of evangelism. God will honor those who made winning others to Christ the passion of their lives. It's good for you as a young kingdom man to stop regularly and take inventory of how often you have gospel conversations with others.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:19. When was the most recent time you talked to someone about Jesus?

With whom could you share your faith this week? How are you building that relationship?

THE CROWN OF GLORY. The third crown is the crown of glory, given for faithfulness in discipleship. The apostle Peter described this crown in 1 Peter 5:2-4. The idea of discipling is to lead someone in such a way that he desires to follow you in your Christian walk. According to Peter, those who lead others to maturity in Christ will be rewarded. They'll be put in God's hall of fame.

NO MORE EXCUSES

Dr. Evans visited the NFL headquarters in New York when he filmed for the feature documentary *Kingdom Men Rising*. On one of the upper floors was a magnificent display cabinet running the length of the room. Behind glass was displayed each Super Bowl ring going back to the beginning of the game. Also displayed was the Lombardi Trophy. It was a sight to see! Although these treasures will fade one day, the display case of your discipleship in eternity will last forever. If you're a young man who desires to disciple others, people will see your rewards in heaven and say, "Wow!"

Read 1 Peter 5:2-4. Who has or is discipling you? What did you learn from them?

What are some ways you can help disciple others even as a teenager?

THE CROWN OF LIFE. The risen Christ told the church in Smyrna about this crown.

Read Revelation 2:10.

Some young men seem to go from one trial to another. God says your hardship doesn't go unnoticed in heaven. You endure when you refuse to throw in the towel and make excuses. When this is your practice, God has a crown waiting for you. If you hang in there through suffering, knowing God is working His purposes in your life, even if you don't know exactly all He's doing, you'll receive this crown.

Identify times in your life when you've thrown in the towel because it got too hard.

Now repent and make a plan to begin pursuing Christ's purpose for you in this area of your life. If you can't recall giving up, thank God for His faithfulness in seeing you through difficult times and ask Him to give you strength to continue.

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THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. The crown of righteousness is given for faithfulness in ministry. Described in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, it comes through keeping the faith all the way to the end.

The good news about all five of these crowns is that you don't have to know a special secret to qualify for them. They aren't just for super-saints. Receiving them is a matter of everyday, consistent faithfulness, of getting up every morning and saying, "Lord, I give You my life today. I want to obey You and to honor You in everything I say and do."

It's important for us to realize that these crowns await us in the future. However, to receive them, we must be faithful in the present. Continuing to hide behind our past will keep us from living in the present and from looking toward the future. All of these crowns are attainable as Christ works in and through your life. He's the goal; He awards us these crowns as we faithfully pursue Him.

Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8. How does the hope of a future reward in heaven help us remain faithful in the present? Why does faithfulness require us to let go of our past?

How does knowing that these crowns come as we faithfully pursue Christ help you to lead a genuine and authentic life before God?

PRAY

Pray and commit your day, week, and year to Christ. Submit to Him and ask Him to help you pursue Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.