

# EXCEL

*Live your life. Be free.*

*“Excel still more...*

*For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is,  
that you abstain from sexual immorality...”*

— 1 THESSALONIANS 4.1B,3 —

*Excel* is designed to help you think through some of the most important decisions in your life. Specifically, it is designed to help you resist the world’s pressure toward sexual activity by drawing near to the Lord and following His plan for your life. *Excel* is about learning to resist the desire to live for self and choosing instead to live for the glory of God. If this is your desire, tell God you intend to live for Him and let this book be a tool to strengthen your resolve. If you’re not sure what you should do in this area, pray that God will speak to you through His Word and give you a clear understanding of His will for your life.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

Thanks to **BarlowGirl** for sharing their story in Chapters 1 and 5.  
BarlowGirl is dedicated to serving the Lord by reaching today's teens  
with a message of Trust in God, Purity, and Not Dating.

*More information about BarlowGirl and their travel schedule is available at:*  
**www.BarlowGirl.com**

Thanks to **Ty** and **Renee Gooch** for sharing their story in Chapter 5.  
*For information on scheduling Ty Gooch to speak at your event, please contact at:*  
**www.ampartnership.org**

Thanks to **Matt** and **Debbie Stowell** for sharing their story in Chapter 6.  
Matt serves as Worship Leader at Harvest Bible Chapel near Chicago.

*More information about Harvest Bible Chapel is available at:*  
**www.HarvestBible.org**

Thanks to **Rick** and **Barbara Wise** for sharing their true story in Chapter 7.  
Rick and Barb travel the country speaking at churches and schools telling their story,  
and sharing the power of the message of abstinence to teens.

*For information on scheduling Rick and Barb to speak at your event please contact them at:*  
**www.Wise-Choices.org**  
**303-979-3260**

Thanks to **Kristen Stephens** for sharing **Staci's Story**.

*For more information about Staci Stephens and the Staci Stephens Fund, please visit:*  
**www.StaciStephens.com**

Thanks to **Campus Crusade for Christ** for production of the DVD "A Heart to Change."

*For more information or to order this DVD please visit:*  
**www.StaciStory.com**

## **THANKS ALSO TO:**

**Pastor James MacDonald** for his personal encouragement and support.

**Dan** and **Colette Plantz** and **Harvest Bible Chapel Student Ministries**  
for their input and feedback during the preparation of these materials.

**Robb Hansen** of Next Level Insights for management and project assistance.

**Craig Steiner**, as well as the leaders and staff of Harvest Bible Chapel Student Ministries  
for providing supplementary notes and resources found in the appendices.

**Bethany Keena**, **Debbie Bope**, **Jennifer Phelps** and **Megan Phelps** for help  
in preparing the Excel Leader's Guide

**Virginia Nurmi**, **Donna Berg** and **Megan Phelps** for editing.

**Gary & Carol Franz**, **Bill & Kelly Helsper**, and **Scott & Sandy McKibben**  
for their friendship and encouragement.

**Most importantly thanks to Carrie, Jennifer, Megan, Jonathan, and Matthew Phelps**  
for their love and support.

## **Our Commitment to Excellence**

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# EXCEL

*Live your life. Be free.*

**T**he Joseph account is an incredible story of a life well lived. It is a story that occurred thousands of years ago – but is in many ways more relevant today than when it was written. The Word of God is “living and active,” and Joseph’s story is more beneficial for us today than anything that you can buy at a bookstore. The lessons for your life are clear, and if you will allow the Word of God to teach you and guide you day by day, the results will be of significant benefit to your life, and will have eternal results.

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Life is short. Live well.

I cried out with no reply  
And I can't feel you by my side  
So I'll hold tight to what I know  
You're here and I'm never alone

*From Never Alone,  
BarlowGirl*





## Chapter Overview

**Goal:** Help students consider God's purpose for their life and live it out.

**Essential Chapter Highlights:**

- ✓ Consider and list their dreams and goals for the future.
- ✓ Put into perspective this "critical moment" in relationship to rest of their life.
- ✓ Learn to define and explain the meaning of sexual abstinence.

**Affirmation #1:** With God's help: I will live my life for the glory of God.

## Living Life on Purpose

— Genesis 37.1-11 —

<sup>1</sup>Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. <sup>2</sup>These are the records of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. <sup>3</sup>Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. <sup>4</sup>His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms. <sup>5</sup>Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. <sup>6</sup>He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; <sup>7</sup>for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." <sup>8</sup>Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. <sup>9</sup>Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." <sup>10</sup>He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" <sup>11</sup>His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind."

*God wants to do GREAT THINGS through you*

# Created for a Purpose

**T**his is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work You have given Me to do. From Jesus' prayer on the night before he died.  
— John 17:3-4 —

**E**veryone is created for a purpose. Even before you were born, God knew all about you. You did not decide to be born. You didn't do anything to be born. You have nothing to do with the fact that you even exist. It was God who created you and gave you the life you now have. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding your entry into the world, it was no surprise to God. No one is born as a matter of chance. In the same way that God created the heavens and the earth for His eternal glory, so too He has created you for this purpose —to live your life for the glory of God.

1. Have you ever given much thought as to why you exist? Do you know why you're here? Do you have an idea of the Lord's plan for your life?

- I have a clear idea of God's plan for my life.
- I have some idea of God's plan for my life.
- I have never really thought much about God's plan for my life.

Joseph was a teenager who had a dream for his life. He knew deep down inside that God wanted to do something great through him. He believed that one day he would be a ruler who would be used by God to care for His people. Even though others around him — especially his own family — laughed at him and told him it would never happen, Joseph knew God had created him for a purpose, and he believed deep in his heart that God would accomplish his dream.

2. Do you believe that God wants to do great things through you?  Yes  No  Not Sure

God doesn't write His plan for your life in the sky. Rather, it is revealed step by step as you grow closer to Him. In John 17:4, Jesus says that He glorified the Father by accomplishing His work. This is what it means to live life on purpose. It is living for the glory of God. It is letting go of what you want to do and living for what God wants you to do. Living life on purpose is about bringing glory to God in all that you are and all that you do.

Although God has a purpose for your life, He doesn't force it on you. You can choose whether to live for God's purposes or not. People often press ahead in life without considering God's plan. Years later they are discontent and discouraged.

3. Why is it especially important to choose to live for the glory of God before you launch out into adulthood?

Habits and patterns developed during the teen years often carry over into the adult years. If you're not living for God's glory now, you're not likely to live for His glory later. Now is the time to set your course in life.

Most of the answers to these questions have been provided by a teenager to give a sense of how teens are likely to answer. In some cases, additional commentary has been provided.





# Looking Forward

1. As you consider God's purpose for your life, think about the special talents, gifts, and abilities that he has given you to fulfill His purpose. List some of your interests and abilities.

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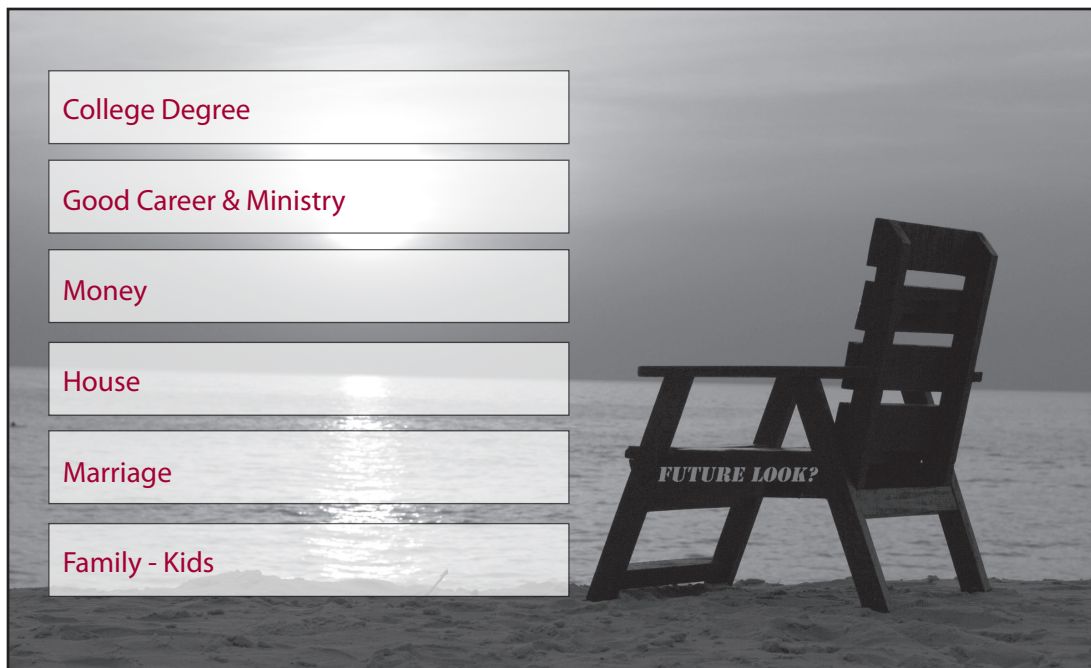
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2. What might your life look like in the years ahead if you choose to live for Christ? Use one-word descriptions to list some of the goals and dreams that the Lord has given you for your future.



- Are you planning to go to college?  Yes  No
- What are some of your hopes for a career? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- If you are hoping to get married and have a family someday, do you have an idea of what you would like your family to be like? Describe:

**This question helps students begin to consider this particular goal and make it concrete by putting it in writing.**

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- Do you plan to serve the Lord? What might that look like?

**This question can help students to connect their possible careers with how they can use them to serve the Lord.**

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# Life Hike

1. Think of your life as a hiking trip through the Rocky Mountains. You've got a number of peaks to climb as you go through life and each one represents opportunities and accomplishments. Below, the numbers represent the years of your life. Put an "X" on the line below to indicate your age. How much of your life is behind you, and how much is ahead?



2. Consider your present location. What is the significance of where you are right now?

You have so much of your life ahead of you. The decisions that you make now will greatly affect what happens in your future. The decisions made now can have long term results in your life.

How far along this hike will your life take you? Will everyone make it to that last mountain or beyond? Will you make it to the end? Even if we make it to the "end" of the hike – life is short. It is important for us to choose wisely what we will do with our lives, and how we will spend our days. Every day is a gift from God.

3. Look over the six time periods represented by the mountains above and think about the major life decisions that will take place during each of them. Which mountain would you say represents the most important period of time for you to be thinking about now and why?

The 2nd mountain (15-30) is the most important because it represents the time in which major decisions will take place such as college, career, marriage, etc.

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# The Critical Moment

- As you stand at the base of the second mountain or time period, consider the significance of the decisions that you will make between the ages of 15 and 30. Make a list of the major decisions and events that will take place during this period and write them on the mountain at right.
- As you stand at the base of this second mountain, consider that by the end of this time period, you will probably have made many or all of the most important decisions in your life. In light of this, how important are the decisions you will make now and over the next few years?
  - My choices now will have *no* effect on my future.
  - My choices now will have *some* effect on my future.
  - My choices now will have a *significant* effect on my future.

College

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Car

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Career/Ministry

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Marriage

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Home

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City to live in

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15                  20                  25                  30

- Agnes 15 to 20 represent the “critical moment” of your life. What specifically is the relationship between decisions made between ages 15 and 20 and the opportunities you will have between ages 20 and 30?

**15-20 represents the beginning of what is the most influential time in your life. Choices and events during these years have a lot to do with whether or not, and to what extent, these life events will be accomplished the way you desire.**

- Looking at the mountains in the diagram on the preceding page, what would you say is the most significant difference between the first and second time periods in your life? Why is this important to consider?

**Dependence vs. Independence. During 0-15, your parents make most of your choices for you. In 15-30 you begin to make your own decisions and actually take responsibility. Right now you are in a transition time between these two time periods. Handling this transition well has important implications for your future.**

The valley between the first and second mountain is steep and the river running through it is difficult to cross. Some get caught in the current. Others slip on the rocks. Successfully crossing the valley of these transition years is critical in protecting your future and living out God’s plan for your life. Fortunately, the Lord is able to guide you safely across if you will allow Him to take your hand and lead you through. Where are you in this transition? Have you felt the current of the river? Stepped on the sharp rocks? Are you making it across? Are you trusting the Lord to guide you? What is your plan for getting across the river?



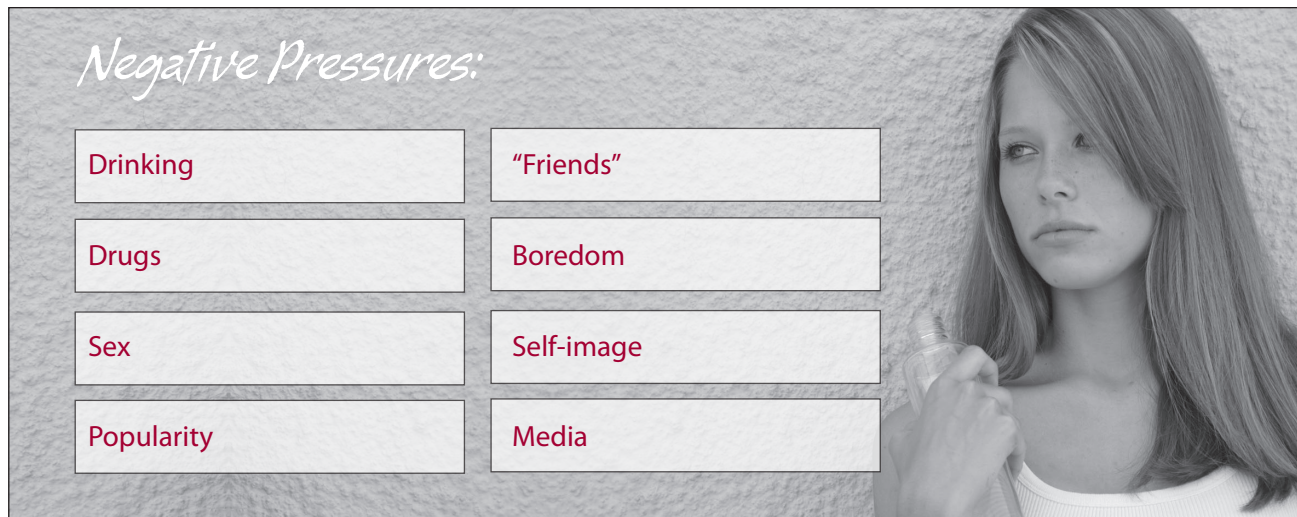
## The Future is Now!

This is the best possible time in your life to consider some of the most important decisions that you will ever make. Everyone’s life has times when critical choices and decisions must be made. That time is now. It’s not enough to just hang around at church or youth group, or even go on a missions trip. Those are good things, but following Jesus is more than that – it’s placing your trust in Him, no matter what others might think or say, and living your life according to His purpose. It’s resisting the pressure to live for self, and choosing instead to live for the glory of God.

# Pressed on Every Side

Joseph's brothers were angry at him for his dream. They were so angry that they tried to stop him – to derail his plans and destroy his dream by sending him to Egypt and selling him as a slave. There will always be people who try to stop you. It may not be your family. It may be some of your friends – who aren't really your friends.

1. Although the importance of making good choices and decisions for the future may be clear, there is constant pressure from every side to compromise and make poor choices. Using one-word descriptions, identify some of the negative pressures teens face that could significantly compromise their future.



2. Which of these negative pressures do you think have the greatest potential to keep a person from experiencing God's plan in the future? Explain:

**No right answer. The purpose of this question is to get students to think about the consequences of each of the items on their list.**

**Although Excel is addressing the pressure of sexual activity, it is important to point out and discuss the relationship between all of these pressures and behaviors.**

One of the pressure spots that causes many people to miss out on God's great plan for the future is the pressure to be sexually active before marriage. Fortunately, increasing numbers of teens are realizing that choosing to resist this pressure provides significant benefits and greatly increases their chances of experiencing all God has for them. Even those who have been sexually active in the past are realizing that it's never too late to start over again, and are now choosing abstinence for their future.<sup>1</sup>

3. What is abstinence? If someone at your school were to ask you what abstinence means, how would you explain it?

**The term is defined on the following page, but this question gives students an opportunity to share what they already know about abstinence. Challenge the students to share their thoughts on the subject. Press them to defend their answer.**

# Considering the Benefits of Abstinence

In reference to sexual activity:

**Abstinence is choosing to save all sexual activity for marriage.**

*“Sexual activity” includes any type of genital contact or sexual stimulation. Abstinence is the only sure way to protect your body, mind, and heart from the various consequences of premarital sexual activity. Abstinence is the safest, healthiest, lifestyle and one of the best ways to prepare for a healthy future marriage.*

1. Why is it important to have a clear understanding of what “abstinence” means?

Students may not know what “abstinence” means, or may have a faulty understanding of what it means. Common misconceptions are that it only refers to intercourse, or that it means waiting until you’re “ready” or “old enough” rather than “until marriage.”

2. Consider the *three key components* of the abstinence definition above:

• **Choosing:** Abstinence is described as a choice. Whose choice is it, and why is this an important part of the definition?

It’s not your boyfriend’s choice or your girlfriend’s choice. It’s not your teacher’s choice or your parents’ choice. You should respect your parents but they won’t be there when pressure comes.

• **Sexual Activity:** Why does abstinence refer to “all sexual activity?”

Because sexual activity short of intercourse can lead to intercourse and can also spread STDs and can cause emotional pain. Not safest, healthiest choice.

• **Marriage:** Why is abstinence defined as until “marriage?”

Because “ready,” or “older” is subjective and is not safe. It doesn’t matter how old you are. Sex outside of marriage has consequences.

3. Do you believe it is possible for someone who has already been sexually active to still choose abstinence?  Yes  No  Not sure

**A**bstinence is an option for everyone whether or not you have been sexually active in the past. If you’ve already chosen abstinence for yourself, **Excel** will encourage you to remain committed to that decision by giving you practical and helpful guidance in this area. It can also help you be an encouragement to others who might be wondering what they should do.

This is the “critical moment.” The decisions you make now will likely shape your life for years to come. The high school years are a time when the pressure is the greatest, and sexual activity has the potential to take your life in a very different direction than you ever imagined. Resisting pressures toward sexual activity is one of the best things you can do to keep your life on track and to accomplish God’s purposes in this world.



# Living for Christ in Purity



Alyssa

Lauren

Rebecca

BarlowGirl is a band made up of three sisters: Rebecca, Alyssa and Lauren Barlow. They've been traveling around the country touring with artists such as Todd Agnew, Kutless, Building 429, and others. Rebecca, Alyssa, and Lauren love to worship the Lord, and to lead others in worshipping Him as well. Their passion is in helping teens avoid the pressures of the world, and to save themselves for marriage. All three girls are dedicated to purity.

When asked about their future goals, Alyssa explains: I think as much as we can, our prayer is that God will allow us more and more to allow Isaiah 61 to be fulfilled in our concerts, through our CDs, through interviews, and other ministry opportunities. Our hope is that we would open a door and give Him a platform to heal the broken hearted. There are so many broken hearted people in this world. There's so much brokenness. We see that more and more as we travel. I would love to

see us having the ability to help people by bringing hope and truth. Ultimately that we would have our concerts be a time to usher God in as much as possible and to see all that He is going to do in this world.

**Our life's goal isn't what BarlowGirl can do in this world -- but what God can do through us.** Our desire is that we would allow our God to have His way in our lives and accomplish His will at the venues where we perform. That's our prayer every day and that's our greatest goal – to spread His love and His healing grace to people wherever we go.<sup>2</sup>

1. As you read the BarlowGirl story, what is the relationship between their commitment to abstinence and their life's goal of caring for others and serving the Lord?

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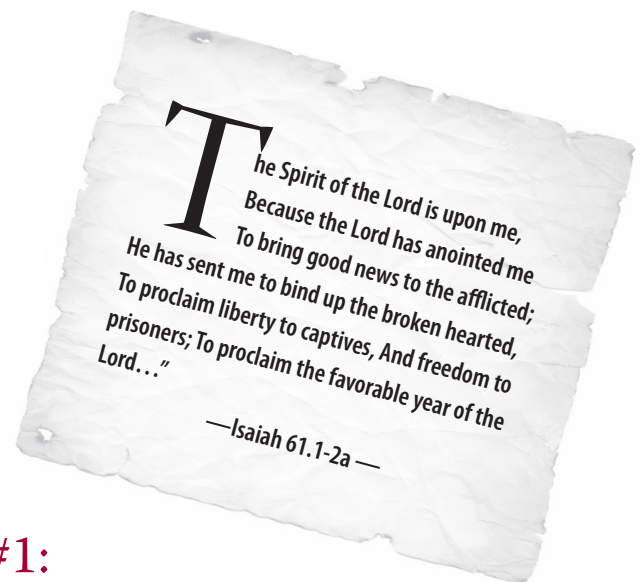
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2. Do you suppose that your decision regarding abstinence will have anything to do with your ability to live life on purpose and to positively influence others for the Lord?  Yes  No Explain:

**Yes, it will make me able to be a light to those in darkness and live out God's purpose daily.**

3. Living life on purpose is about having a sense of the great things that God wants to do through you. Do you have a passage of Scripture that captures your sense of God's purpose for your life? If so, list it below. If not, perhaps during this study you can ask God to show you a passage that would help you to focus on living for Him.

**Students can write their life verse or a verse that really speaks to their walk with Christ.**



## Affirmation #1:

*With God's help: I will live my life for the glory of God.*

## Vertical View: Future Goals

Paul was committed to the spread of the gospel. The goal of his life was to share the love of Jesus with as many people as possible, and he was remarkably successful in doing so. We who are followers of Jesus today, are so, in large measure, because of Paul's dedication to carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth.

1. If you were to ask Paul what his purpose was in life, what would he say, according to verse 23?

**Paul's purpose was to do all things for the sake of the Gospel.**

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2. If someone were to ask you about your purpose in life, what would you say?

**Sample: My purpose is to glorify God by helping teens make good decisions now that will protect their future marriage and ministry in order that they might lead God honoring lives.**

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3. Paul says: "run in such a way that you may win." What does he mean? What is he saying to you specifically about the way you should live your life?

**Live your life victoriously, as if you've already won the challenge. Live it for Christ and His glory only.**

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4. Why does he say that an athlete needs to "exercise self-control in all things (verse 25)"?

**Self control is important in sports and throughout life so you will stay focused on accomplishing your goal. There's nothing wrong with eating deep dish pizza and coke, but you won't win many races on that diet. If I am serious about living out God's purpose, I must choose self control in order to accomplish this goal.**

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5. Consider how hard an Olympic athlete must train. What is the difference between the prize of an athlete and the prize of a believer?

**The prize for an athlete is physical and temporary, but the prize for a believer is spiritual and eternal.**

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6. Why does Paul say that he disciplines his body, and what does this mean?

**His body will want to do things that are contrary to his goal. He must be master over the desires of his body.**

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7. What is Paul's concern in verse 27, and what does this mean? Do you share his concern? Why or why not?

**If he does not live out what he is preaching, he will compromise his message. People will not believe the message if he is not living it.**

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**I** do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. <sup>24</sup> Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; <sup>27</sup> 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 9.23-27 —



# Talking It Over

*This section is designed for parents to review and discuss the chapter with their student.  
Parents may want to answer these questions on a separate sheet and compare answers with the student.*

1. Joseph had a dream of what God could do through his life. How would you summarize the hopes and dreams that God has laid on your heart?

**Parents. This is a great conversation starter with your son or daughter. In all of these exercises, your primary task should be to LISTEN to your teen. Use these questions as a springboard, and keep asking questions. Let your teen speak. Let them share their thoughts and dreams about what the Lord wants to do through their lives using their talents and abilities.**

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2. On a scale of 1-10, how much do you think decisions made in the teen years affect a person's future?

(1 = None 10 = A lot)



3. Of all the events that will take place in your life between ages 15 and 30, which do you value most (p. 9)?

**The ones that we live for God's purpose and for His glory.**

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4. Why are ages 15 to 20 considered the "critical moment" of your life (p. 9), and what are some of the important decisions you will have to make during this time?

**Decisions during this time particularly in sexual activity can have long term effects. Students need to be encouraged to think about how their decisions during this time have the potential to shape their future.**

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5. How can choosing abstinence help you to live out God's plan for your life?

**The central theme of this workbook is to help students discover for themselves that resisting the pressure of sexual activity will help them to prepare for the future and will provide a certain degree of protection for their future marriage and family.**

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6. Why do you think that increasing numbers of teens are choosing abstinence?

**The reality is the number of teens choosing abstinence is increasing. Many teens are realizing that sex isn't risk free as it is often portrayed in media and pop culture. They are realizing that abstinence has benefits and provides freedom.**

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