

**“I am starting with the man in the mirror... I am asking him to change his ways...”**

After our week studying worship and listening to music more than I normally would, I am starting to get rhythms and songs stuck in my head again. The kind of songs that make me want to start dancing while I am doing the dishes. Or vacuuming. Or when I am cooking and have a hot pan in my hand. I am a walking hazard, honestly.

But for some reason, this old Michael Jackson song pops into my head whenever I read our scripture memory for this week (that song is *Man in the Mirror* in case you didn't catch that from the title of this packet...). Because this week is about setting the example. It is about being the model, being the first one to do a hard thing so that other people follow along. You be the leader.

Sometimes, it is really easy to look at the world around you and think that the problem is too big to solve. And maybe it is... For one person.

That's the amazing thing about Christianity. You're not alone. You don't have to do it alone.

We hear that a lot. But how often do we actually have the chance to feel it? When do we let ourselves believe it?

The Holy Spirit lives inside your very skin. In the air you breathe, in every beat of your heart, the Holy Spirit is there.

When Jesus died on the cross, He told his disciples not to despair. They weren't going to be alone. They were going to receive an Advocate, the great Counsellor: the Holy Spirit. While Jesus might not be walking with them on Earth every day, He might not be somewhere that people can see and touch, the solution is even better.

The solution is to let the Holy Spirit live inside your very bones. Your life is a prayer.

That is kind of an interesting way to think about it. Your life is a prayer to God.... Hmm. It makes me think. Is everything I do in life something that I want to talk to God about? Do I want the Holy Spirit be a part of all of the decisions that I make?

In our scripture for this week, it talks about EVERYTHING that you do being done in the name of the Lord.

When Jesus says everything, He means EVERYTHING!

Every text you send, every piece of homework you do, every argument you have with your parents, the music you listen to, the television shows you



watch: are all done in the name of the Lord. Are all done with Jesus walking with you.

I don't know about you, but I am suddenly second guessing writing this message with the Bachelor on in the background.

Here is the thing, I am not trying to shame you for any of the choices that you make. That is never my goal. I think that shame is never the way to fix anything (though if you are maybe doing something that you really wish God wouldn't know about you doing or you would not want to talk about it with Him.... That might be a sign. I am just saying).

I do, however, want you to be inspired by this. I want it to be encouraging to you. That when you choose to tackle something big, when you choose to fight the good fight: you have the Holy Spirit backing you. You have God on your side.

Do the big things! Don't let fear or doubt or the outside world get into your way. When things are done in the name of the Lord, when you do things that you feel God is calling you to do: you. Will. Not. Fail.

Now, I am not saying things will be easy. I am not saying that there won't be stumbling blocks or setbacks. I am not saying you won't lose a few battles. But, you will win the war.

That's God promise to you. That's the promise to all of us.

So, what are you going to do with all of that? What are you going to tackle? What battle are you going to choose to fight?

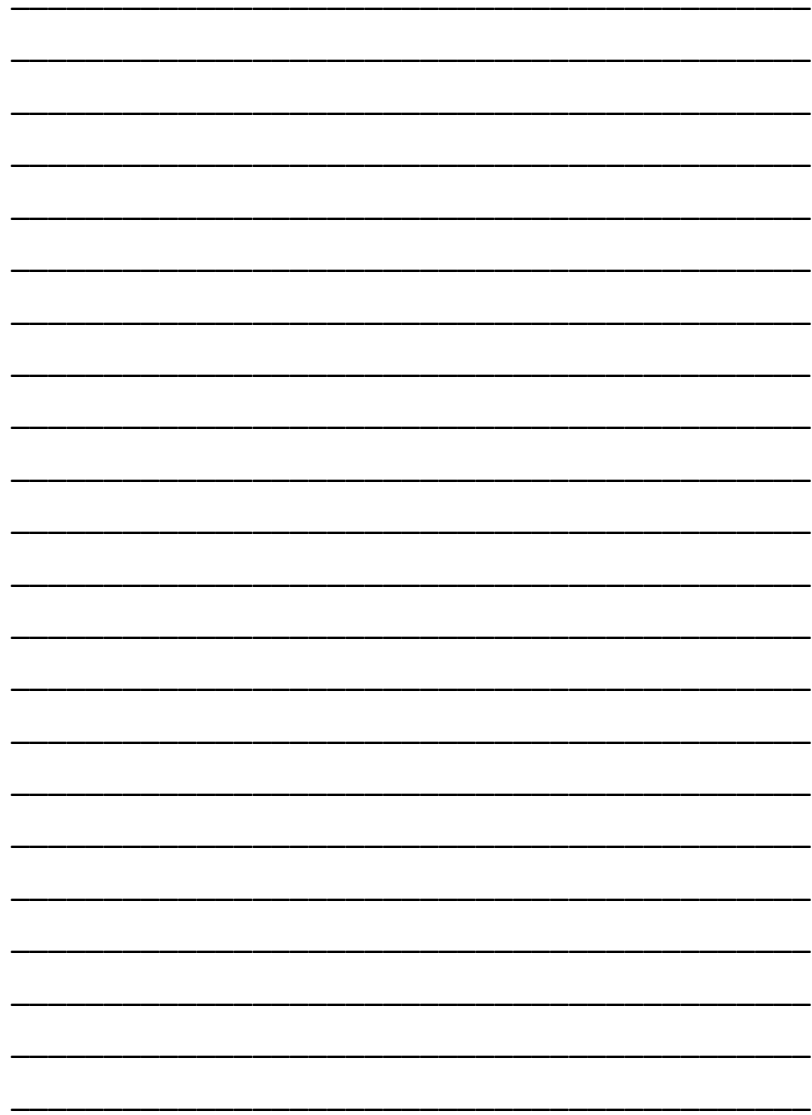
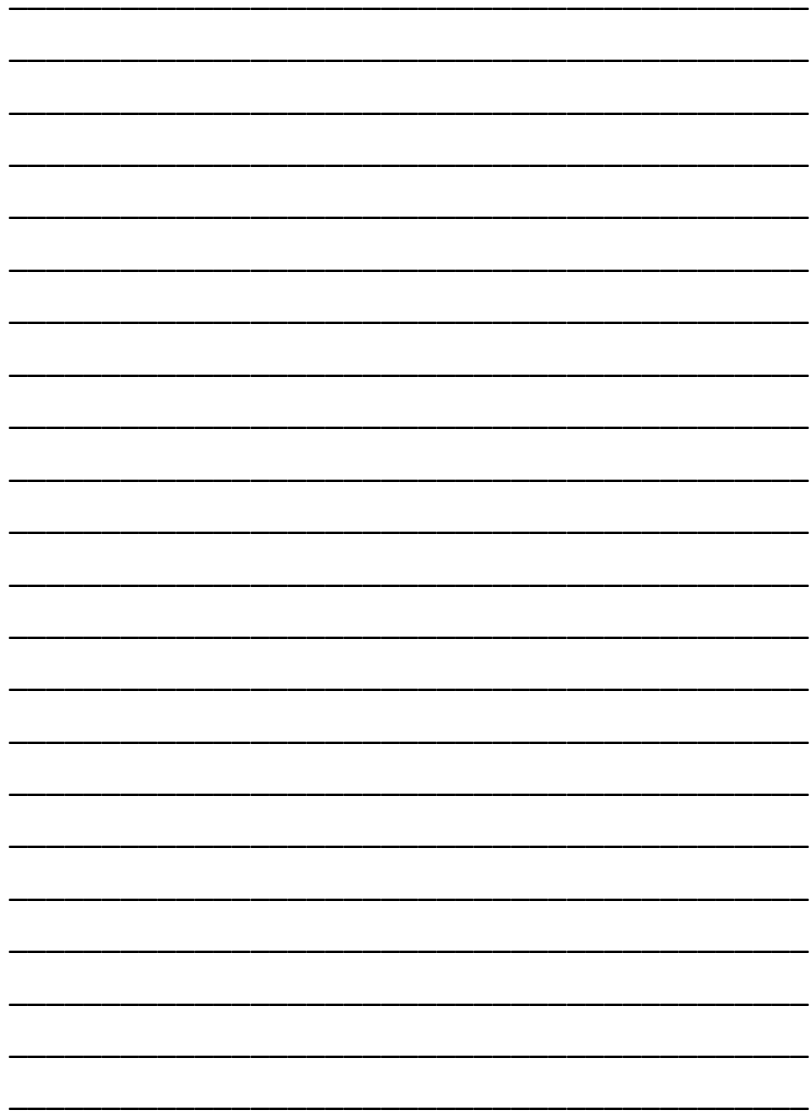
If you only learn one thing from me, please know that you have to pray before you act. Pray alone and silently, pray out loud, journal your prayers, pray with others, have others pray for you. Wrap yourself up in a whole lot of prayer and use it as your armor. Then, you know what battle to go into.

*"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."*

- *Colossians 3:17*

So, when you succeed, when you get to the top of the mountain, don't forget to look back (I promise, you won't turn into a pillar of salt...probably). For it is when we get to the top of the mountain and we are able to see just how far we have come.

Depending on how tall your mountain is, you can likely see a lot. You can see all the things you had to overcome, all the peaks that were difficult. But



never forget who helped you get here. Never forget how you got here and who helped you get there.

Sometimes, we can misunderstand God's calling. Sometimes our voices and our desires can be louder than God's. Other times, we think we understand where God wants us to go and in reality, God was calling us elsewhere.

We are human. It happens. Don't freak out.

Instead, be open to the changes. Be open to your path not being exactly what you think it might be. There is beauty in the fact that God knows us better than we know ourselves. When you give Him control, you can let go of the need and desire to be perfect.

So, when and if things start to not work out, if you are facing more roadblocks than successes, take a deep breath. You can always change directions and it is never too late.

I think this is a really important message for your age in particular. You have been being trained since elementary school to figure out your life as soon as possible to that you can make all the right choices and decisions to get there.

This breaks my heart.

I talk to my mom on the phone every morning when I walk Hiccup and one of the things she asked me to put in this packet was that she is 50 years old

and she still doesn't know what she wants to be when she grows up.

It's a big world. There are many options. But when we take our lives and our wills and align them with God, when we allow EVERYTHING we do and all the decisions we make to be made with God at the center of it all, He will guide you in the right direction. He will wrap His arms around you and walk with you up the mountain. You will win the war.

After all, God really does have a plan for you. A plan for your future, not to bring you harm. But to bring you hope and a future.

He loves you. I love you. And we cannot wait to see how far you go and where this crazy life leads you.

Amen.

