

more to be SUMMER SURVIVAL

*making the most
of every chance you get* Ephesians 5:16 The Message

Summer is the time for making the most of every opportunity. It is a chance to rest, renew, and refresh your mind, body, and soul. Don't simply survive summer and let each day pass by without any purpose! Instead, set some goals for your personal, emotional, and spiritual life, so that your summer vacation leaves you changed for the better, without regretting days vanished into nothingness.

Set Worthy Goals

Before the summer gets away from you, consider your time. Take a few minutes to look at the calendar, count the weeks, consider your travel plans, and decide on some basic priorities for how you want to make the best use of the months ahead.

- ✓ What is one thing I really want to accomplish this summer in each of these areas: personally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually?
- ✓ Do I want to devote time to getting physically fit or increasing my endurance?
- ✓ How much time do I want to spend online, listening to music, or watching TV and movies?
- ✓ How much time do I want to spend by myself, with old friends, making new ones?
- ✓ How much time do I want to spend with family, and what are their expectations of me?
- ✓ How can I significantly contribute to my family, in terms of chores and relationships, when I am home?
- ✓ What school work do I need to work on?
- ✓ Am I committed to going to church and participating in church things?
- ✓ When will I spend with God, and what do I want to read or learn from Scripture?

wisely
**USE
YOUR TIME**

Jot down your ideas in a notebook and hold yourself accountable by checking in on it each week.

Take a Retreat

Summer is also a great time to get away from your routine and carve out some alone time for self-evaluation. Over the course of a busy year, it is easy to let disappointments, hurts, mistakes, and guilt pile up in your heart. Instead of dealing with things, it is natural to stuff emotions, because there is just not enough time to face feelings and work things out. But

as these issues pile up in your heart, it hardens and weighs you down, causing greater problems for you in the long run.

God promises us that He desires to transform your hardened heart to flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). This process requires time with the Lord in honest reflection. Pick a day where you can spend two or three hours alone to do some "heart-work." Put on some worship music, grab a Bible and a journal, and start writing as well as listening to what the Lord would like to say to you. Use these questions as prompts:

- ✓ If I stop to think about this past year, what were the things I am most glad about? Satisfied with? Take time to give thanks to the Lord for these things.
- ✓ When I consider this past year, what moments do I regret the most? Why? How did I feel? Did I sin? Do I need to forgive? Take time to seek forgiveness from the Lord, and plan a time to seek forgiveness from others, too. Ask the Lord to heal the hurt in your heart and begin the process of healing.
- ✓ What do I feel I learned about myself from the experiences of this past year? How can I use this new knowledge in the future?
- ✓ What did I learn about God this past year? Is this consistent with what Scripture says about Him?
- ✓ Do I need to seek counsel on any issues that feel too big to handle on my own?

new HEART

I'll give you a new heart, put a new spirit in you. I'll remove the stone heart from your body and replace it with a heart that's God-willed, not self-willed. I'll put my Spirit in you and make it possible for you to do what I tell you and live by my commands.

Ezekiel 36:26 The Message

These are big questions, which may not have immediate answers. Close this time in prayer, asking the Lord to reveal His answers in His timing. Not everything needs to be dealt with today. But make a mental note to return to a particularly difficult topic, and if necessary, seek the help of a Christian counselor, parent, or mentor, when the time is right.

Get to Know God and His Word

Summer can be a busy time of balancing friends and family, summer school work, a job, and travel. But it also provides a defined period of time to devote to reading Scripture and getting to know God personally. Through using a reading plan, you can read the Word with purpose, asking personal application questions, such as "What is something new to me in the passage? Something old? Something to apply?" Take the time to turn the Word into prayer for you or someone else. Memorize it using index cards!