



RACE TO WIN!

SECTION I. Introduction.

Most of us have won at least a few prizes during our lives.

- A. What is the best prize that you have ever won? What did you do to get the prize?

- B. Now think about the Olympic Games.
 - 1. What kind of prizes do athletes receive in those games?

 - 2. Why do people think that the prizes are valuable?

 - 3. Do you think they really are valuable? Why or why not? In 300 years will those medals have any true value?

 - 4. What kind of training do people have to do in order to win an Olympic medal?

SECTION II. Many people work very hard to win a prize in sports, business, or literature. They can be very happy about their achievement. But those prizes and accomplishments are prizes that have meaning only in this world. Jesus invites us to think about another dimension of life, the spiritual dimension. In this passage Jesus talks about *winning the world* but losing something else.

- A. Read Mark 8:34-37. What does Jesus say we must do if we want to follow him?

- B. What does He say will happen to people who try to save their lives? What do you think He means by *save their lives*?

- C. How does He say we really can save our lives?

- D. When Jesus speaks about *winning the whole world* but *losing their lives*, what do you think He means?

SECTION III. In the verses in 1 Corinthians just before this 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul is talking about how he is living, what he is doing with his life. He speaks about telling others the Good News about Jesus' love.

- A. Read I Corinthians 9:24-27.
 - 1. Paul is comparing a race to something. What is it?

 - 2. What is the prize?

NOTES

- B. In what ways is our Christian life like an Olympic race? How is it different?
1. When does our race begin?
 2. How many people can win?
 3. Do we enter more than one race?
- C. In our Christian lives, what do we do to win the prize?
1. When we run, what do we run towards?
 2. What kind of *training* do we do? How long does it last?
 3. What are some things that we might do as a part of our *training*?

SECTION IV. Christians are encouraged to focus on Jesus, train hard and run the race. The prize is eternal life, knowing God and living with Him forever.

- A. Read Hebrews 12:1-3.
- B. What surrounds us? How do you think this might help us?

- C. What do these verses tell us we must get rid of in order to win the race? How can we do that?
- D. What three things must we do if we want to win? (verses 1-2)
- E. Why should we use Jesus as our example?

disqualified. We can reject God and His gift of eternal life, *losing our (eternal) lives*. However, we need to be clear that Paul does not mean that we race and by our own efforts win eternal life. On the contrary, we begin the race already possessing the gift of eternal life. Our eternal life (the final goal) has been freely given to us when we receive Jesus' gift of forgiveness and believe in Him.

Here Paul uses the idea of a race to help us understand that we are to focus on Jesus, our goal in life. The athlete focuses all his energy on the goal of winning. We focus our energy on serving God and spreading the Good News. Just as the athlete denies himself certain things in order to win the race, so also do we *deny ourselves* in order to win the race. Just as the athlete endures hard training and must work hard, we also must train hard. Our training ought to include anything which helps us focus on Jesus and remain in Him.

SECTION IV.

Hebrews 12:1-3—In this passage the writer of Hebrews encourages us to become more aware of other Christians and how they live their lives. We can allow them and their example to encourage us. We are to focus on Jesus, run the race and never give up. Jesus and His life are our supreme example in this area.

**RACE TO WIN
LEADER'S NOTES**

Section I.

Most people have won some sort of prize in their lives and they are rightly proud of their accomplishment. They also know a lot about the Olympic Games. Most countries in the world participate. In most countries people who win in the Olympics are famous and their accomplishments are considered important to the nation as a whole. People are very interested in these athletic games and usually know quite a bit about the kind of training that athletes do in order to prepare for them. The questions here usually result in a good beginning discussion about the way athletes must concentrate and give over their whole lives if they are to win, just as Jesus asks us to focus on Him and give Him our lives.

SECTION II. Mark 8:34-37

This section discusses what it actually means to follow Jesus. The choice is clear. Deny yourself or deny Jesus. When Jesus speaks here of *taking up our crosses* and following Him, we often translate that into putting up with things in our lives which are difficult. That is certainly true, but this involves more than that. Jesus says we must say *no* to some things that we may selfishly want in life. *Taking up our crosses* means to deny ourselves and give our lives to God. Jesus wants to be first in our lives. We can put ourselves first and *save our lives* for ourselves, or we can really *save our lives* by losing them for the sake of Jesus and the Good News He brings. As Jesus points out, we can be rich in the earthly things people often consider important, such as money, power, fame, etc., but lose our eternal lives.

SECTION III. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

In this section Paul talks about eternal life being the prize in the race we are running in our Christian lives. He assumes that the people he is writing to have *taken up their crosses* and have given their lives to God. He also recognizes that it is possible to be

**VOCABULARY
RACE TO WIN**

Mark 8:34-37

crowd	a large group of people
disciples	people who believe in and follow Jesus
Good News	news that Jesus Christ is Savior to all who believe in Him
exchange	in place of

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

athletic contest	games
strict training	a course of exercises and a diet to prepare you for winning a race; people find this very hard to keep doing
temporary	something that will not continue for a long time
crown	symbol of victory, reward
permanent	something that will continue forever
goal	the object of our work (something we are working toward)
box	a sport in which two men fight with their hands in gloves, following special rules
shadow boxing	pretending to box, but without having anyone fighting you. Children often do this with a light to one side of them, so that they can see their shadows on the opposite wall.

punches to hit hard with a closed hand

slave a person who is owned by another person and who must work for his owner without pay

disqualify to be put out of a competition for breaking the rules

opposition the act of being opposite of something or in conflict with something or someone

heaven the place where God, all His holy angels and saints (believers in Jesus Christ) live

Hebrews 12:1-3

surround to put people or objects all around something so that there is a circle around the object or person in the middle

examples behavior that is to be copied

get rid of to get free of something, to throw it out or remove it

distract to pull your attention away from something you are doing

give up quit

focus to put all of your energy or attention on one object

source the place from which something comes (The sun is the source of light for the earth.)

joy feeling of deep happiness

endure to keep suffering

ignore to refuse to pay any attention to something and continue to do what we are doing

disgrace dishonor in the eyes of other people