

## **READY TO RUN**

It's pretty simple: either you love it or you hate it. One thing is definitely sure, if you are going to love it, you must be committed to it. Throughout Paul's writings, he uses many different metaphors about life. One of those metaphors is that life is like a race. There are many types of races, but I seem to compare this race to a cross-country race. For any of you who have ever ran or watched a cross-country race you will know exactly what I am talking about. A cross-country race is one of those things that you do that takes every last ounce of strength and determination to do. It's not something that you can do lightly and succeed. If you are not committed and determined to train your body, you will not even finish the race, and you will definitely not finish first.

Life is a lot like a cross-country race. There are times when you feel as if you are climbing uphill and then there are times when you feel as if you aren't making any ground. There are constantly roots, holes, and rocks that are in your path, trying to trip you up. There are boundaries that you must stay in, lest you get disqualified. Paul wanted us to realize that many people are running this race called life, but if we want to be successful and make a difference for Christ, we have to run for Him. This means that we must be committed to Him and discipline our lives so that we can run this race well. In cross-country, the most important parts are getting off to a good start and finishing well. The same is true in our Christian life. When you get saved, you obviously start well. The other key is remaining true to Christ and finishing well. That's what we should be striving for, finishing the race, and making our Master proud.

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

### **BE DISCIPLINED**

In order to run a clean race, your life must be disciplined. That means if you are to succeed for Christ there are certain things you cannot allow yourself to get involved in. Just as in a cross-country race, many of the runners do not drink caffeine; they do not drink alcohol, use drugs, or eat a lot of fatty foods. You must discipline your body just the same if you are running the "Christian" race. If you are going to run the "Christian" race well, there are things that you cannot allow yourself to get involved in. Sin becomes weight that is added on to you while you run. No one runs in a race with extra weight on them. It says in Hebrews 12:1, "...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." When you get involved with drugs, alcohol, premarital sex, pornography, or many other things, you become weighted down with the destruction that these sins cause. Paul says in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:27, "Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified." In order to run the Christian race well and finish strong you must discipline yourself and keep yourself out of situations where sin might bring you down.

## **BE A GOOD EXAMPLE**

Paul wanted the Corinthians to realize they were examples to others. When you are running a race there are always others who are trying to imitate what you do or pay close attention to every step that you take. As you get older and are in middle and high school, others are watching how you run your “Christian” race. As you run your race, you leave footprints behind from the steps you take and the decisions that you make. If you make good decisions and are a good example, then you could lead others to Christ through your walk. However, if you are a bad example and make bad choices, then you could lead others astray. Despite what you might believe, others are watching you. They want to see how you will deal with disappointment, despair, and disaster. Not only are they watching you, but many of them are basing the decisions they make on past choices you have made. We must constantly realize that as Christians, people are watching our lives and are looking for good examples to follow. We must run our race in a way that would be pleasing to the Father and would lead others to Christ.

## **BE MOTIVATED**

“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” You have to be motivated to run the race that God has set out before you. He has a plan and purpose for you and you must be motivated to run your race to the best of your ability. Paul says in verses 24-25, “Do you not know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one.” Think about all the motivation, time, and effort that are put into running a cross-country race. This is not something that people can do lightly or half-heartedly. You need to be motivated in order to run the best race that you possibly can for Christ. You would spend so much more time working on your shot for basketball, tackle for football, or kick for soccer. Why aren’t we motivated to work for Christ? We need to realize that we are racing to receive an imperishable crown, eternal life, while sports and events here only produce perishable rewards. How much more motivated should we be when we are working for the Lord who gives a reward that will never fade or rust.

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