

# Running the Race



Disciples of Jesus (4)  
Closer to God 2022 (47)



## Previously

- As we continue to study “discipleship”, we have noted some passages in the gospels that identify the true disciple of Jesus.
  - Luke 9:23-24 - deny yourself...
  - Luke 14:26-33 - counting the cost
  - John 9:31-32 - abiding in His word
  - John 13:34-35 - love one another
  - John 15:8 - bearing fruit



## Previously

- In today's lesson, we begin to note some descriptions of a Christian that help us understand what it means to be a disciple (both in your living and trying to win others).
- Often the NT would use commonly understood tasks & jobs to help relate what the Christian's walk was to be like.
- Today, the disciple is like an athlete!



## A Disciple - an athlete

- Athletics was an integral part of Greek and Roman culture.  
At least 4 “games” were held in various cities:
  - Olympic games every 4 years in Olympia, Greece
  - Isthmian games every 2 years near Corinth, Etc.Competing in these events required at least 1 year of training.  
Winning brought great honors



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete is about **commitment!**
- **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**
- He enters the race intending to “win” (finish)
  - Many “athletes” engage in sports for exercise, etc. - it is not about winning anything
  - Good bodily - **1 Timothy 4:8**, but of “little profit” spiritually



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete is about **commitment!**
- **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**
- We need to be SERIOUS about this race for our eternity.
  - Consider what is at stake!
  - Run intending to finish well
  - **cf. Luke 14:28ff** - count the cost



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete is “temperate”
- **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**
- An athlete preparing for his/her event trains in a way that impacts EVERY area of life.
  - Self-denial
  - Regimented discipline
  - Focus on preparation - remove any distractions



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete is “temperate”
- **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**
- The disciple needs self-control
  - Self-denial - **Luke 14:33**
  - Self-control - **2 Peter 1:6, Galatians 5:22-23, Titus 2:11-12, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7, etc.**
  - He will remove any distractions





## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete **competes with certainty**
- **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**
- Competing in sports is clearly physical, but there is also a mental aspect. You need to know why you are running, that you can complete the course, including obstacles. The one whose mind is clear has an advantage!



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete **competes with certainty**
- **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**
- We cannot doubt our goal or the path!
  - Know the rules and course - **2 Timothy 1:12 (4:7-8** - Paul's certainty)
  - You CAN know - **1 John 5:13,**
  - 2 Corinthians 5:1** – we know we have a building from God.
- **Our “race” is NOT for nothing!**



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete **competes with certainty**
- **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**
- Fighting, but not just swinging - not “shadow boxing”, but one swinging wildly and wasting energy
- We must participate with purpose for eternity! **Romans 12:2** – we are transformed with renewed minds  
**Philippians 3:12-14** - we are pressing toward the goal



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete **disciplines his body** - **1 Corinthians 9:27**
- Discipline - to punish, to beat (as in causing a black eye).
- Paul's point - he took measures to ensure he would not fall into temptations and become disqualified. Sometimes, we need to deliberately do things that might not be pleasant, to keep us in optimal shape spiritually.



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete **disciplines his body** - **1 Corinthians 9:27**
- Associated with temperance  
Sometimes we need to “test ourselves” - **2 Corinthians 13:5**  
NOTE: Paul “has to” do this, lest he be disqualified. We can forfeit our salvation! **2 Timothy 2:5** – you **HAVE TO** follow the rules!



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete **is not alone** - **Hebrews 12:1-2**
- Great examples - **cf. Hebrews 11**, Jesus, our ultimate example - **Hebrews 12:2.**
- Remember **John 13:34-35** - as disciples, we love one another



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete **sets aside all hindrances - Hebrews 12:1-2**
- In training, an athlete might use “resistance” to build himself up. But during the race, everything that resists is “cast off”.
- Casting off sin is obvious! **1 John 3:6-9**
- But there may be things, not inherently sinful, but they are hindrances - **1 Corinthians 6:12, cf. Matthew 19:21ff** – the rich, young ruler. See **1 Timothy 6:9-10**



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete **runs with endurance** - **Hebrews 12:1-2**
- Simply stated, we CANNOT quit!  
**Hebrews 10:36ff, Galatians 6:9**





## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete **exercises himself toward godliness -**  
**1 Timothy 4:7-8**
- “Bodily exercise profits little”
- Toward godliness - a word meaning with reverence, awe and respect for God. Our attitude toward God will impact HOW we run our race!



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete **exercises himself toward godliness** -  
**1 Timothy 4:7-8**
- Exercise - (γυμνάζω, gymnazō) our English word “gymnasium” is derived from this word.
- We are to be “working out” continually hoping to draw closer to God -  
**Colossians 3:2**  
“Get into God’s gymnasium” - **Hebrews 5:14** - to discern both good and evil



## A Disciple - an athlete

- The disciple as an athlete **will finish the race - 2 Timothy 4:7-8**
- Several of our texts have addressed this  
- **1 Corinthians 9:24, Hebrews 12:1-2**
- When we run this race as God tells us, we can have confidence of receiving “the crown of righteousness”  
Greek games - often a perishable wreath. Our reward is eternity in heaven!



**HOW  
are you running  
your race?**

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