



Christian Olympics



7th - 9th Grade
Teacher Manual



The apostle Paul likened the Christian life to running in a race. And indeed there are many similarities. In this lesson, we will examine the parallels between an athlete and a Christian and answer the question, why should I run? We will also discuss how to prepare, how to run, what happens if I fall down, and what happens if I win.



Did you know?

Every game has individuals who:

- Set the rules
- Compete in the game
- Judge the competition
- Give the prize

In the Christian race, who does each of these things?

Christian Olympics

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Christian Olympics Teacher's Guide Grades 7-9

Lesson Introduction

The apostle Paul said that the Christian life is like running in a race. In this lesson, we will answer the questions, what is the Christian race and who is to run in it? We will specifically address: preparation to run and the importance of qualifying and practice, how to run and the importance of attitude, not being a quitter, and what is our prize and how and when do we receive it.

Start off the lesson by discussing some general things about competitive games. Every game has individuals who:

- ❖ Set the rules
- ❖ Compete in the game
- ❖ Judge the competition
- ❖ Give the prize

Lead the class in a discussion about who does these things in the Christian race.

Get Ready, Get Set

Page 3

This section is intended for a discussion led by the teacher. It poses a lot of questions for class to think about. Key points:

- ❖ Only those who are Christians can start and compete.
- ❖ If you don't start, you can't compete.
- ❖ You have to know what they are and play by the rules.
- ❖ It takes practice to win.

Why are the Rules Important (page 4)

Fill in the Blanks

2 Timothy 2:5

And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

2 Timothy 3:15-17

And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in



righteousness, that the man of God may be complete,
thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Psalm 119:9-16

How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.
Blessed *are* You, O LORD!
Teach me Your statutes.
With my lips I have declared
All the judgments of Your mouth.
I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As *much as* in all riches.
I will meditate on Your precepts,
And contemplate Your ways.
I will delight myself in Your statutes;
I will not forget Your word.

Know the Rules (page 5)

Crossword

Across

2. We make melody in our hearts to God by doing this. Eph 5:19 (singing)
4. What we are to preach. 2 Timothy 4:2 (theword)
5. Whoever hates his brother is this. 1 John 3:15 (murderer)
6. We are to take care of these. James 1:27 (orphans)
8. We are to feed these. Matthew 25:31-46 (hungry)
9. We are also to take care of these. James 1:27 (widows)
11. All men everywhere are commanded to do this. Acts 17:30 (repent)
12. Paul was told to do this to wash away his sins. Acts 22:16 (bebaptized)
13. We are to obey those who ____ over us. Hebrews 13:17 (rule)

Down

1. This is made unto salvation. Romans 10:10 (confession)
3. Those who love Jesus will keep these. John 14:15-23 (commandments)
7. Love one ____ fervently with a pure heart. 1 Peter 1:22 (another)
10. We should ____ on things that are noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Phil 4:8 (meditate)



Run to Win

Page 6

This section is intended for a discussion led by the teacher. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Hebrews 12:1-2, and Philippians 3:14. Key points are:

You can't win on accident – 1 Corinthians 9:24. Can you imagine a person who is out of shape accidentally showing up at a race and somehow winding up in the winner's circle? Paul tells us we must run in a way that we can win. Winning requires much planning and practice.

Run believing you will win – 1 Corinthians 9:26. Have you ever watched a baby learn to walk? They fall down a lot, don't they? Babies believe they can do it, so they keep trying. Believing you can succeed will help you stay focused and get back up when you fall. When you don't think you can do something, are you more likely to give up and quit?

Have self-control – 1 Corinthians 9:27. Isn't it frustrating when you try to do something, but your hands just won't do exactly what your mind wants them to do? Do you think an athlete can win a race if his body doesn't do what he tells it to do? Paul says it is important to control our own bodies because otherwise, we can be disqualified. When we get upset, do we say bad things? Do we hit or break things? Practice, practice, practice is what is needed here.

Don't carry a lot of weight – Hebrews 12:1. Just think how hard it would be to run a marathon while carrying a load of bricks on your back! Paul tells us to unload! Stress the need to forgive ourselves when we do bad things and to not hold grudges against other people. Explain that we are to love each other. If we hold a grudge against Sally because she broke our favorite toy, then we won't be successful in practicing love the way God wants us to.

Don't lay down on the job – Hebrews 12:1. Remember the tortoise and the hare? The hare was winning the race. He thought he was way ahead and decided to take a break and rest. He fell asleep. What happened when he woke up?

Keep your eyes straight ahead on Jesus – Hebrews 12:2. Has your mom or dad ever taken their eyes off the road while driving, maybe to look at a house or a car? Did they start to drift off the road? Staying alert and keeping your eyes on where you are going is an important part of driving a car. It is also important in running the Christian race. If we don't keep our eyes on Jesus, we might take a wrong turn and end up somewhere other than heaven!

Press on toward the finish line – Philippians 3:14. What if you decided to go back to the starting line, or perhaps to take a side trip through the woods? Would you finish the race? We need to be focused and determined to get to the finish line!



Good Attitude, Bad Attitude

Page 7

Explain what attitude is and how it affects us and those around us. Discuss the story of Bode Miller. How did his attitude keep him from winning?

Simple rules to keep a good attitude are:

- ❖ No complaining. Refresh the class on the story of Israel wandering in the wilderness. No matter how much God did for them, the children of Israel complained constantly (Numbers 14). They were focused on what they wanted NOW and not on what they needed for the future. After all that God had done for them, they said they would rather be slaves again in Egypt!!! Complaining caused them to lose sight of their goal: the Promised Land.
- ❖ No blaming others. Adam and Eve were told by God to not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They chose to follow Satan and eat what God said not to eat. When God questioned them, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. They refused to take responsibility for their own actions, and as a result, they lost their reward: living in the garden with God. Failure to take responsibility for our own decisions and actions causes us to not fix what is wrong and can keep us from finishing our race and receiving our reward. (Genesis 3)
- ❖ No shortcuts. Jehoiakim was one of the later kings after the kingdom divided. He tried to take a short cut. He cut part of God's rules of the scrolls and burned them in the fire. Imagine his surprise when Jeremiah wrote God's words again! (Jeremiah 36) Can we ignore the parts of God's word that we don't like?
- ❖ No pouting. Jonah wanted to be the judge over Nineveh. When he disagreed with God's call, he pouted over Nineveh's repentance (Jonah 4).
- ❖ No excuses. In the beginning of his career, Moses was a man of many excuses. He didn't want to start the task God had given to him to do (Exodus 3): lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. How did God respond to each of Moses' excuses? Does God accept excuses today? What are some excuses we use to keep from doing what God wants us to do?
- ❖ Just do it. Ask the class to give examples of failures they have experienced or seen due to bad attitudes.



An Important Hidden Message (Page 8)

R B M E A D H W H T I N N E R T C D
O E N I R T C E N A N R U B C N A P
H O F A K O S E V E N T O O L E L O
O S W E E A V + + E + O M J + P E U
+ E + + R M I + N + N P J O + E B T
R + + + U E + O E A L I + S + R + +
+ + + C + + E V H A A + N H + + + +
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+ P X + + + + + A O M + + + L + O
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(Over,Down,Direction)

- ATTITUDE(3,15,E)
- BURN(14,2,W)
- CALEB(17,1,S)
- CANAAN(14,10,NW)
- CIRCUMVENT(1,10,NE)
- COMPLAIN(15,2,SW)
- DEFEATIST(9,16,W)
- EGYPT(13,16,E)
- EXCUSE(2,14,NE)
- ISRAEL(4,14,E)
- JEHOIAKIM(11,9,NW)
- JONAH(13,5,NW)
- JOSHUA(14,4,S)
- MOSES(18,12,S)
- NEGATIVE(10,16,N)
- NINEVEH(13,7,NW)
- POSITIVE(2,13,NE)
- POUT(18,2,S)
- PROMISED(12,16,N)
- REFEREE(1,1,SE)
- REPENT(16,6,N)
- REWARD(1,6,NE)
- SHORTCUT(11,11,S)
- SPIES(5,12,E)
- TWELVE(13,10,SE)

Message: Be a winner. Don't choose to lose!



Finish the Race

Page 9

This section is intended for a discussion led by the teacher. Key points are:

- ❖ You can start the race, but not finish it.
- ❖ Don't let anyone or anything hinder you from finishing.
- ❖ You must be committed to winning.
- ❖ Keep your eye on Jesus so you don't wander off track.
- ❖ Don't give up! If you fall down, get back up and get on with it!

Read 2 Timothy 4:9-10. Demas will always be known as the one who quit. He left Paul in a lurch. Paul attributes this to Demas loving the present world. He wasn't committed 100% to the goal. How would you like to be known as a "Demas"?

We are warned in 2 John 2:8 to be watchful so we don't lose what we have worked for and as a result, not receive our full reward. We are warned again by Paul in Galatians 5:7 about being hindered in our run.

Discuss the story of Mary Decker Slaney. She tripped, fell, and got discouraged. Rather than get back up and continue the race, she quit. How does that apply to us in the Christian race?

Fallen Letters (page 10)

Q	U	I	T	T	E	R	S
	N	E	V	E	R		
W	I	N	,		A	N	D
W	I	N	N	E	R	S	
	N	E	V	E	R		
	Q	U	I	T	.		

I U

N N I E R

Q N V T E

Q I E N E R R

W N E V T A N D

W U I T E R S S



Tom Dempsey was a hurdle jumper. He was born with a severe handicap, yet he didn't let that stop him from his dream: to be an NFL player. Most people would have said he could never do it. What can we learn from Tom?

Receive Your Prize

Page 10

Discuss briefly how that in a foot race, there is only one winner and compare with how everyone can win in the Christian race, if they only run it according to God's rules. Key points to stress are:

- ❖ God is the One who gives the reward.
- ❖ Our reward is an eternal, never ending crown.
- ❖ We must run until the end of our lives.
- ❖ Everyone will receive a reward according to their own works when Jesus returns.

Have the class read the verses and answer the questions as a group.

Receiving Our Reward

Page 11

Key points to stress in this section are:

- ❖ Our reward is in Heaven, not on Earth.
- ❖ Don't be a Loser!

Read Luke 6:23, Matthew 5:11-12, Luke 6:35, and Matthew 6:1-18. Help the children determine which of these statements are true and which are false. Help them correct the false statements.

True If men persecute you and falsely accuse you for Jesus' sake, you will have a great reward in heaven.

False If you love your enemies and give them loans to repay expecting nothing in repayment, you will have a great reward.

False The early Christians hypocrites did charitable deeds to be seen of men and received a great their reward ~~in heaven~~ on earth.

True God openly rewards those who do good deeds in secret.

False We are to pray on ~~the corners of the streets~~ in our rooms.

True We are to hide our fasting so only God can see it.