



# Christian Olympics



5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Teacher's Guide

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 4-5**

### ***Lesson Introduction***

#### **Lesson Text**

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***

**Key points:** We must follow the rules of the game. The Bible is our rule book

- ❖ Only those who are Christians can start and compete in the race.
- ❖ 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.

**Reference text:** Hebrews 10:36, Ephesians 6:10, 1 Corinthians 9:26-27, 2 Timothy 2:5, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:15-17, Romans 10:17, Psalm 119:9-16

#### **Lesson Text**

Are you ready to win the race? Are you sure? In order to succeed, we must first and foremost realize we are in a race and prepare for it. Preparation requires that we learn what the rules are, practice to win, and be ready for the start by qualifying to run in the race.

Preparing for the Christian race is no different. Why do you think this might be so? What will happen if we do not properly prepare to run the race?

[ The next sections are intended to be used to drive a discussion – have the children answer the questions interactively as the discussion proceeds. ]

## ***Christian Olympics***



### ***Know the Rules (page 3)***

It is important to understand the rules of any game you plan to play.

1. What might happen if you do not understand the rules? (2 Timothy 2:5) You may not compete according to the rules and therefore not be crowned..
2. God has rules for us to follow. What is God's rulebook for the Christian life? (2 Timothy 3:15-17) The Holy Scriptures – ALL scripture
3. How can we learn God's rules? (Romans 10:17, 2 Timothy 2:15, Psalm 119:9-16) By hearing and studying God's word.

### ***Practice to Win (page 3)***

If you want to be good at something, you must practice. Marathon runners practice running for several hours each day, trying to improve their time at every practice. They practice to grow strong and be able to endure to the end of the race. Archers practice shooting so they can hit the bull's eye. Pianists perform finger strengthening exercises. A good student will look for their weak points and practice those things over and over again to improve.

1. Should we also practice? (Hebrews 10:36) Yes, in order to be able to endure.
2. What are we to be strong in? (Ephesians 6:10) The Lord and in the power of His might.
3. What will happen if we do not practice enough? (1 Corinthians 9:26-27) We might become disqualified.
4. Name some things Christians should practice in order to improve as a Christian. e.g., Having patience, showing love, teaching others about Jesus.

### ***Qualify to Run (page 4)***

Races have qualifying events. A qualifying event is an activity used to prove an athlete is capable and that he meets the requirements. Athletes must qualify to be eligible to run the race. *What will happen if an athlete does not qualify to run in a race?* Similarly, we need to qualify to run in the Christian race. Write what each scripture says we need to do to qualify to run in the race.

Romans 10:17 Hear God's word.

Hebrews 11:6 Have faith

Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38 Repent of your sins.



Romans 10:9-10 Confess Jesus with your mouth.

Acts 22:16 Be baptized to wash away your sins.

**Think!** In order to prepare to run a race, the runner must put on his running shoes and line up at the starting line, awaiting the “go” command. We are told to put something on as well. *What are we to put on and how do we put this on?*

Galatians 3:27 Those who are baptized into Christ put on Christ.

**Activity: Know the Rules Crossword Puzzle (page 5)**

**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**

### **Key points:**

- ❖ Winning doesn't happen by accident.
- ❖ We should run with the confidence that we will win.
- ❖ We must have self-control to win.
- ❖ Carrying a lot of weight around will slow us down and keep us from winning.
- ❖ Don't take a break from being a Christian!
- ❖ Press on toward the goal line.

**Reference text:** 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Hebrews 12:1-2, and Philippians 3:14

### **Lesson Text**

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.

1. We are to run in a way to win. (1 Corinthians 9:24).

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?

2. We are not to run with uncertainty or doubt. (1 Corinthians 9:26)

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.

3. We should discipline our bodies and bring them into subjection (1 Corinthians 9:27).

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.

4. We shouldn't carry a lot of weight. (Hebrews 12:1).



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? If we get tired and take a rest from being a Christian, what might happen to us? Would an athlete win a race if he did this? Will we?

5. We are to run with endurance. (Hebrews 12:1).

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!

6. We are to look to Jesus. (Hebrews 12:2).

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!

7. We are to continue to press toward the goal. (Philippians 3:14).



## **Good Attitude, Bad Attitude**

### **Key points:**

- ❖ A bad attitude can cause you to lose sight of your goal.
- ❖ A good attitude can keep you going when times get rough.

**Reference text:** Numbers 14, Genesis 3, Jeremiah 36, Jonah 4, Exodus 3

### **Lesson Text**

Attitude is a set of beliefs and feelings that make someone act a certain way. Does your attitude make any difference in whether or not you succeed? Ask the twelve spies sent to Canaan if attitude matters (Numbers 13-14). Ten of the twelve had a bad attitude. They didn't think Israel could win. Only Joshua and Caleb believed that Israel could win with God's help. Who received the reward and who did not?

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.

**Activity: An Important Hidden Message (page 8)**

M E L T C B E A P N W I N N E  
 P I D E W A R D O I O N T C H  
 O R K U A E L O U A S E S O M  
 S E O A T R L E T L T S O L O  
 S E + M I I S V B P + P + + +  
 + + + + I O T I E M + I + + B  
 + + + + S H T + O + E + U E  
 T R + + + + E E A C N S R + X  
 + U E + + + + D J + I N N + C  
 + + C P R E W A R D N + A H U  
 + + + T E + + + T + E + A A S  
 + + + + R N + + P + V + N N E  
 + + + + + O T + Y + E + A O +  
 J O S H U A H + G + H + C J +  
 + + + + + + S E + + + + +

(Over,Down,Direction)

- ATTITUDE(9,8,NW)
- BURN(15,6,SW)
- CALEB(5,1,SE)
- CANAAN(13,14,N)
- COMPLAIN(10,8,N)
- EGYPT(9,15,N)
- EXCUSE(15,7,S)
- ISRAEL(8,6,NW)
- JEHOIAKIM(9,9,NW)
- JONAH(14,14,N)
- JOSHUA(1,14,E)
- MOSES(15,3,W)
- NINEVEH(11,8,S)
- POUT(9,1,S)
- PROMISED(1,2,SE)
- REPENT(2,8,SE)
- REWARD(5,10,E)
- SHORTCUT(8,15,NW)
- SPIES(12,4,S)
- TWELVE(4,1,SE)

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



## **Finish the Race**

### **Key points:**

- ❖ 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!

**Reference text:** Numbers 14, Genesis 3, Jeremiah 36, Jonah 4, Exodus 3, 2 Timothy 4:7, 9-10, 2 John 2:8, Galatians 5:7.

### **Lesson Text**

Some people never get around to starting important tasks. These people are called “procrastinators”. Then there are people who start lots of tasks and never finish any of them. These people never accomplish anything because they are not fully committed to any one goal. In 2 Timothy 4:9-10, Paul speaks of Demas as one who didn't complete his task. Demas gave up. He didn't finish, and he left Paul in a lurch. Paul says that Demas loved the present world. He wasn't 100% committed to the goal! Demas didn't follow Paul's instructions on how to run to win. His allegiance was split and ultimately the things of the world were of more importance to him than were heavenly things. What did Jesus say about those who have split allegiance? (Matt. 6:24-34, Luke 16:13) Demas will be known throughout history for this. How would you like to be known as a “Demas”?

Paul speaks clearly about finishing our spiritual race in 2 Timothy 4:7:

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

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.

Listen to the story of distance runner Mary Decker Slaney. Mary ruled U.S. track and field in the early 1980s. Despite her myriad accomplishments, Decker is best remembered for failing to finish a race, during what should have been the shining moment of her career.

At the 1984 Olympic Games, Slaney, who held seven records, was considered a shoe-in to medal in the 3,000 meters. At midpoint of the race, Decker began jostling for position with Zola Budd, South Africa's barefoot wonder. Budd ended up accidentally tripping Decker, who crashed to her hands and knees. Once she had rolled to the infield of the track, Decker writhed in pain in a near fetal position and, with the only energy she could muster, limped off to the showers. What can we learn from this story to help us in running the Christian race?



Tom Dempsey was a hurdle jumper. He was born with no right hand and a right club foot (he had no toes!) He wore a modified shoe with a flattened and enlarged toe area, giving somewhat the appearance of a hammer. Despite this handicap, Tom Dempsey became the kicker for five different NFL teams. He is most widely known for his NFL record 63 yard field goal, kicked in the final 5 seconds to give the New Orleans Saints a 19-17 win over the Detroit Lions in 1970. This record still stands as of 2006, although it was tied by Jason Elam of the Denver Broncos in 1998. What can we learn from Tom?

**Activity: Be a Hurdle Jumper Maze (page 10)**

**Help Joey get to his prize.**

**You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? Galatians 5:7**



## **Receive Your Prize**

### **Key points:**

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

**Reference text:** Hebrews 11:6, 1 Corinthians 9:25, Revelation 2:10, 3:11, 22:12, Matthew 16:27, Luke 6:23, Matthew 5:11-12, Luke 6:35, and Matthew 6:1-18.

### **Lesson Text**

In Olympic and other races, there is only one first place winner. This can be demoralizing for those who work hard but do not win. The Christian race is very different: each person competes against himself and is rewarded by God based on his own works.

1. Who does God reward? (Hebrews 11:6) Those who diligently seek him.
2. What is our reward? (1 Corinthians 9:25) An imperishable crown.
3. How long must we run to receive our reward? (Revelation 2:10) Until we die.
4. What must we do to prevent someone from stealing our reward? (Revelation 3:11) Hold fast to what we have.
5. How and when are rewards given out? (Revelation 22:12, Matthew 16:27) Every man will be rewarded according to his own works when Jesus comes again with His angels.

### **Activity: Receiving Our Reward (page 12)**

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.