



# Christian Olympics



7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Student Workbook

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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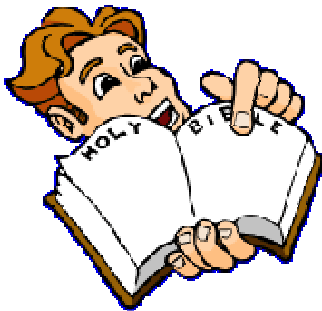


# Get Ready! Get Set!

In order to succeed, we must first and foremost realize we are in a race and prepare for it. Preparing to compete in an Olympic sporting event requires several key things:

- ❖ Learning what the rules are
- ❖ Qualifying to participate in the event
- ❖ Practicing to be able to win 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?



## **Know the Rules**

It is important to understand the rules of any game you plan to play. What might happen if you do not understand the rules? (2 Timothy 2:5) God has rules for us to follow. What is God's rulebook for the Christian life? (2 Timothy 3:15-17) How can we learn God's rules? (Romans 10:17, 2 Timothy 2:15, Psalm 119:9-16)

## **Qualify to Run**

Races have qualifying events. A qualifying event is an activity used to prove an athlete is capable or fit 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 the race? Similarly, we need to qualify to run in the Christian race. Where do we learn how to qualify? What do we need to do to qualify? (See Romans 10:17, Hebrews 11:6, Luke 13:3, Romans 10:9-10, Acts 2:38)

## **Practice to Win**

Athletes practice to win the events in which they plan to participate. They practice to grow strong and be able to endure to the end of the race. Should we also practice? (Hebrews 10:36) What are we to be strong in? (Ephesians 6:10) What will happen if we do not practice enough? (1 Corinthians 9:26-27) What do you think might happen if we practice without our hearts in it? Will we win?



# Why are the Rules Important?

## **2 Timothy 2:5**

And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ unless he competes \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_.

## **2 Timothy 3:15-17**

And that from childhood you have known the \_\_\_\_\_,  
which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith  
which is in Christ Jesus. All \_\_\_\_\_ 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  
\_\_\_\_\_ for every good work.

## **Psalms 119:9-16**

How can a young man cleanse his way?

By taking heed \_\_\_\_\_.

With my whole heart I have sought You;

Oh, let me not wander from \_\_\_\_\_!

\_\_\_\_\_ I have hidden in my heart,

That I might not \_\_\_\_\_.

Blessed are You, O LORD!

Teach me \_\_\_\_\_.

With my lips I have declared

All the judgments of Your mouth.

I have rejoiced in the way of \_\_\_\_\_,

As much as in all riches.

I will \_\_\_\_\_ on Your precepts,

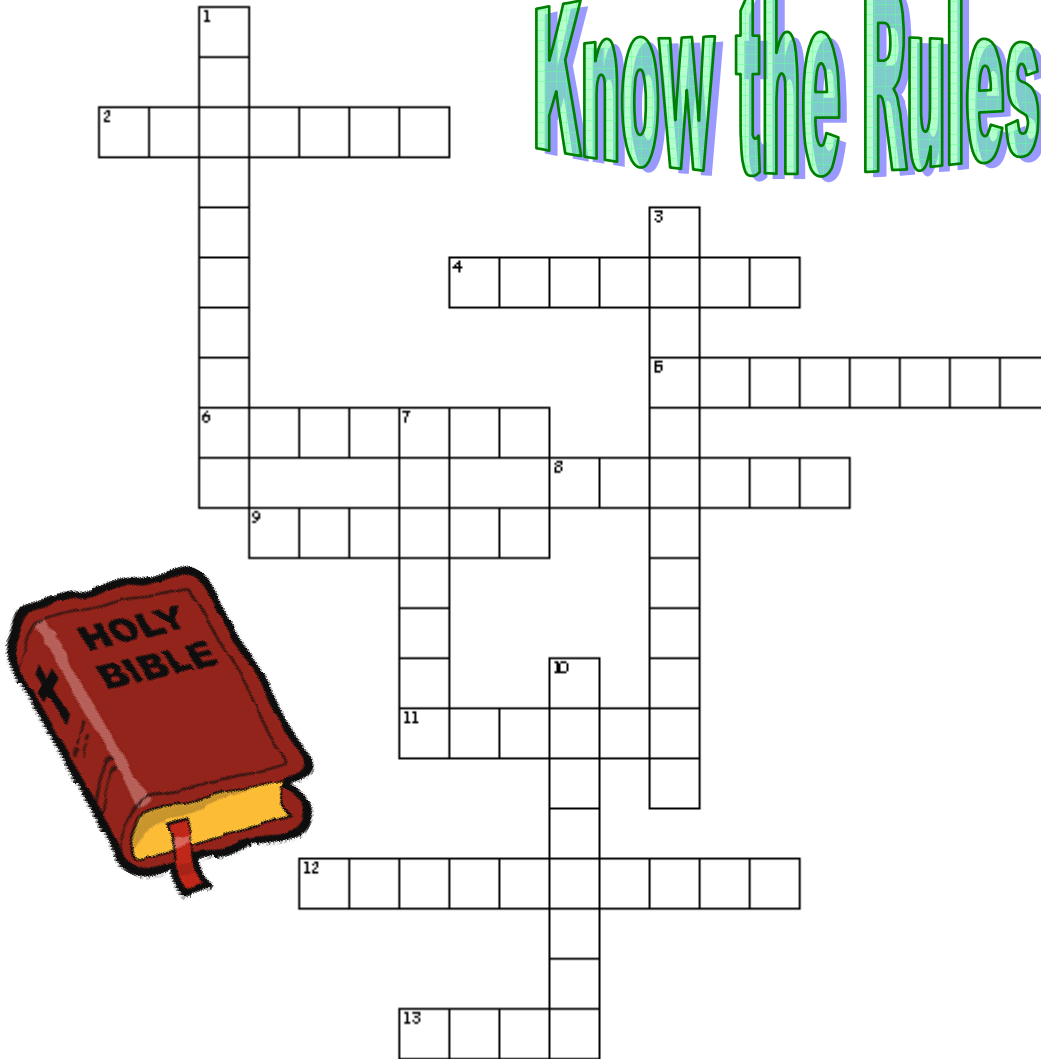
And \_\_\_\_\_ Your ways.

I will delight myself in Your statutes;

I will not \_\_\_\_\_.



# Know the Rules!



**Across**

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

**Down**

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



# Run to Win

The Bible gives us some good information on how to run to win. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Hebrews 12:1-2, and Philippians 3:14.

1. We are to run in a way to win (1 Corinthians 9:24).  
Athletes rarely win on accident. Winning requires much planning and practice, as we have already discussed. We must have our minds set on winning.
2. We are not to run with uncertainty (1 Corinthians 9:26).  
That means we are not to run with doubt. We are to run knowing we will win. Why do you think this is? If we have doubts, will we be more likely to give up and quit when we trip up?
3. We are to be masters over our own bodies (1 Corinthians 9:27). Do you think an athlete can win a race if his body doesn't do what he tells it to do? Paul says that if he doesn't control his own body and preaches to others, he will become disqualified from the race. What do you think he means?
4. We are to lay aside every 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! What are we to unload? The sin, which catches us in a trap.
5. We are to run with endurance (Hebrews 12:1). If we get tired and lay down to take a rest, what might happen to us? Would an athlete win a race if he did this?



6. We are to look to Jesus (Hebrews 12:2) and keep our eyes on him. What might happen if we take our eyes off of Jesus?
7. We are to continue to press on to the finish line (Philippians 3:14). If we don't press on to the finish line, will we win? Why not?



# Good Attitude, Bad Attitude

## *Does it Matter?*



We just read in 1 Corinthians 9:26 that we are not to run with doubt. But going a step further, does your attitude really matter? Ask the twelve spies sent to Canaan if attitude matters (Numbers 13-14). Ten of the twelve had a defeatist attitude. Only two, Joshua and Caleb, believed that Israel could succeed with God's help. Who received the reward and who did not?

Here are some simple rules to get our attitudes straight so we can win the race:

- ❖ **No Complaining!** No matter how much God did for them, the children of Israel complained constantly (Numbers 14). They were too focused on the here and now and not on the finish line. Complaining caused them to lose sight of the Promised Land and desire to go back to the beginning, where they were slaves in Egypt.
- ❖ **No Shortcuts!** Jehoiakim tried to skirt the rules and take a short cut by cutting out the part of God's word he didn't want to follow and then burning it in the fire (Jeremiah 36). Was he successful in circumventing God's rules?
- ❖ **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!** Moses made many excuses to avoid starting the task God had given to him to do (Exodus 3). Did it work?

### **The Road to Defeat**

Bode Miller was the perfect candidate for the packaged American Hero. He was good-looking, very athletic, had won 2 silver medals in a prior Olympics, and was loved by the media. He ran with the hype and the credit card ads to the 2006 Olympics.

Miller was a symbol of American lone rangers, the guy who did it his way and reached for the gold. Except he didn't reach. He turned up hollow and empty and unwilling to sacrifice. He was more interested in having a good time than in winning his races. He skied off the course, and right off the news story-line, having received no medals at the 2006 winter Olympics.

**JUST DO IT!**



# An Important Hidden Message

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

Circle the following words. Then copy the first 25 unused letters to the blanks below to reveal an important hidden message.



- |            |           |          |          |
|------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| ATTITUDE   | EGYPT     | MOSES    | REFEREE  |
| BURN       | EXCUSE    | NEGATIVE | REPENT   |
| CALEB      | ISRAEL    | NINEVEH  | REWARD   |
| CANAAN     | JEHOIAKIM | POSITIVE | SHORTCUT |
| CIRCUMVENT | JONAH     | POUT     | SPIES    |
| COMPLAIN   | JOSHUA    | PROMISED | TWELVE   |
| DEFEATIST  |           |          |          |

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ !





## ***FINISH WHAT YOU START***

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. 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)

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.

### **Almost, But Lost**

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

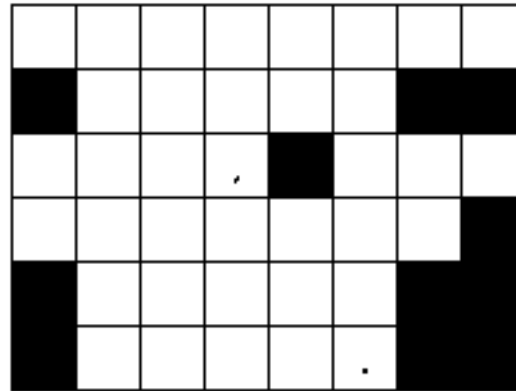
At the 1984 Olympic Games, Slaney, who held seven records, was considered a shoe-in to medal in the 3,000 meters. At midpoint of the race, Decker began jostling for position with Zola Budd, South Africa's barefoot wonder. Budd ended up accidentally tripping Decker, who crashed to her hands and knees. 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.

**Don't be a "Demas"**





Place the fallen letters into the correct box to reveal a truism.



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

Overcome Satan's obstacles. Be a

# Hurdle Jumper

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





**Improbable Success**

Tom Dempsey 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.



**RECEIVE YOUR PRIZE**

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.

Who does God reward? (Hebrews 11:6) \_\_\_\_\_

What is our reward? (1 Corinthians 9:25) \_\_\_\_\_

How long must we run to receive our reward?  
(Revelation 2:10)

\_\_\_\_\_



What must we do to prevent someone from stealing our reward? (Revelation 3:11)

How and when are rewards given out? (Revelation 22:12, Matthew 16:27)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Receiving Our Reward

Jesus instructs us on some of the ways we must run to receive our reward. Read Luke 6:23, Matthew 5:11-12, Luke 6:35, and Matthew 6:1-18. Answer with true or false and correct each false statement.

- T or F If men persecute you and falsely accuse you for Jesus' sake, you will have a great reward in heaven.
- T or F If you love your enemies and give them loans to repay, you will have a great reward.
- T or F The early Christians did charitable deeds to be seen of men and received a great reward in heaven.
- T or F God openly rewards those who do good deeds in secret.
- T or F We are to pray on the corners of the streets..
- T or F We are to hide our fasting so only God can see it.

