

## I want to be a Christian because I want to win the race — receive the crown!

### Intro:

#### ➤ → How badly do you want to go to heaven?

- ! **story:** after church Wednesday evening, 2004 Summer Olympics, Dawn reading story to me while I was sitting in the chair watching the Olympics with the sound down, ladies running a hurdles race, one woman ahead of everyone else, near end of the race another woman slowly catches up, at end the lady that was behind lunges forward to win the race while the woman in the lead did not lunge
  - ! **thought to myself:** the woman who won, wanted to win more than the other woman — the other woman would have won if she wanted to win as badly as the other woman
  - ! **thought to myself:** we have to want to go to heaven as badly as a gold medal Olympian
- ! **Do you want to go to heaven, as much as a gold medal Olympian — win the crown?**
  - ! spiritual Olympian

#### → This lesson:

- ! **Title:** I want to be a Christian because I want to win the race — receive the crown!
- ! **Purpose:** to review the athletic metaphors in the New Testament, and compare our lives to them

#### ➤ #1 Athletic metaphors in the Bible help us understand what it's like to be a Christian:

##### → 1 Cor. 9:23-27 lesson text

- ! How is a Christian like an athlete?

#### #2 Five characteristics of a spiritual athlete (1 Cor. 9:23-27):

##### ➤ → #1 A spiritual athlete does what he has to do, to win — win the crown!

- ! **1 Cor. 9:24b** run in such a way that you may win

##### ! application:

- ! don't try to cheat — you'll be caught, will not win the prize

##### ➤ ! **Gal. 6:7-9** do not be deceived, God is not mocked, whatever a man sows this he will also reap, not lose heart

- ! work hard, don't try to get by with the bare minimum

##### ! **illus.:** Coach Wooden, UCLA basketball coach, started with socks

- ! no one is successful (e.g., athlete) by doing the bare minimum - just enough to get by

- ! successful people go beyond what most people do

##### ! **illus.:** Jerry Rice, one of greatest football players to catch the ball, there was one reason that he was better than everyone else — he worked harder, practiced more

##### ➤ → #2 A spiritual athlete doesn't waste time doing things that won't help him win — so he'll win the crown!

- ! **1 Cor. 9:26** run, not without aim, box not beating the air

##### ! application:

- ! engaging in sin is a waste of time — thoughts, physical actions — will not help us win

- ! putting ourselves in tempting situations is a waste of time — should put ourselves in situations that build us up spiritually

- ! putting other people and things (idols) before God is a waste of time — God, obedience, church

- ! we must make the best use of our time, or we'll run out of time

##### ➤ ! **Eph. 5:15-17** be careful how you walk, make the most of your time

- → #3 **A spiritual athlete exercises bodily control — disciplines his body — so he'll win the crown!**
  - ! **1 Cor. 9:25a, 27a** exercises self-control in all things, discipline body, make it your slave
  - ! **illus.:**
    - ! Olympics, young skaters: schedule
    - ! Olympics, gymnasts: rigorous training
    - ! high school football player: diet, train with weights, memorize play book, no smoking or drinking or drugs, bed on time
  - ! **application:**
    - ! we must exercise self-control in all things — control mind and body — control self in regard to all things (tongue, dress, eat, where we go and what we do)
    - ! take total responsibility for everything — illus. "it's not my fault"
    - ! to exercise bodily control, we must first exercise control over our minds
- ! **Matt. 15:18-19** sin comes from your heart
  - ! **saying:** a person who cannot control their body is a person who does not have control over their mind (unless there are other physical reasons)
- → #4 **A spiritual athlete knows he can lose the race, until he crosses the finish line — he doesn't give up before reaching the finish line — so he'll win the crown!**
  - ! **1 Cor. 9:27** discipline your body and obey God, not become disqualified (lost)
  - ! **illus.:** Olympics, man running hurdles, stumbles over a hurdle and falls to the ground and laid there — disqualified
  - ! **application:**
    - ! we must continue to run the race till the end — not give up
    - ! **saying:** no one wins a race without crossing the finish line
- ! **Phil. 3:7-14** press on (straining to run), press on toward the goal (athlete)
- → #5 **A spiritual athlete will win the prize, if he doesn't give up — the crown of life!**
  - ! **1 Cor. 9:24-25** compete as if only one person will be saved
  - ! **application:**
    - ! run as if there's only one winner (1<sup>st</sup> place) - as if only one get to go to heaven
    - ! in a real athletic race there is only one winner (1<sup>st</sup> place), but in life everyone who faithfully serves God is a winner
    - ! Paul's exhortation: run life's race as if there is only one winner, and you want to win
    - ! everyone who finishes the race in Christ, wins a crown
    - ! quitters don't win:
      - ! **illus.: interview with gold medal olympian:** The race isn't over till you cross the finish line.
      - ! have to run as hard as you can, not give up, anything can happen
      - ! **illus.: Thursday night, man from USA running hurdles,** was passed by a man and knew he would lose the gold medal - instead of running as fast as he could to the end he slowed significantly and was passed by 2 other men — he didn't get any medal
      - ! **commentators:**
        - ! he was running for the gold, when he knew he lost it, he gave up
        - ! **application:** we may not be able to do what others can do in service to God, but we should not give up — none of us are a Peter or a Paul
        - ! he could of won the bronze medal if he wouldn't have given up
        - ! **application:** we may not be a Paul, but if we give up we will not lose our prize

! **illus.: you'll be a winner if you don't quit**

! **Bill Broadhurst was running in the Omaha, Nebraska, Pepsi 10k**, a race of 6.2 miles.

! was **slowed by a brain aneurism** he suffered as a young man, leaving him **partially paralyzed** on the left side.

! **some finished in 30 minutes**, joggers even finished in 60 minutes

! **It took Bill Broadhurst much longer.**

! **As he ran, some kids didn't understand** he was competing and said, "Hey mister, you missed a good race."

! **As he ran, his left side** got so numb he wanted to quit.

! **After two hours**, the cars were back in the streets, it was getting dark on Saturday afternoon, and running through intersections became difficult.

! **One policeman** stopped cars to let him across; a nice lady handed him some water.

! **At two hours and twenty minutes** he said the pain was so bad and so throbbing, "I didn't want to make it; I didn't want to go on."

! **Then he saw the end.**

! They had already **taken the banner down.**

! Broadhurst ran down the street on the sidewalk, **saw the banner was gone, and his heart sank because everybody had left.**

! **He thought**, What's the use? But he decided to finish.

! **When he got to the end, out of the alleyway stepped Bill Rogers** (the man who had won the race) and a **gang of people.**

! They were **waiting for him.** Rogers **opened his arms, welcomed** Broadhurst across the finish line, and **hugged him.**

! **After Broadhurst willed his partially paralyzed body the last few steps** to the end of the race, **Rogers took the gold medal from around his own neck, and put it around the neck of the last runner to cross the line.** Rogers said, "**Broadhurst, you're the winner; take the gold.**"

! winners in Christ, receive an imperishable crown:

➤ ! **2 Tim. 4:7-8** fought the good fight, finished the course, kept the faith, crown of righteousness, the Lord will award to me, all who have loved His appearing

! **saying:** Jesus wore a crown of thorns, so that we could wear a crown of righteousness.

➔ **Summary: five things we must do as spiritual athletes from 1 Cor. 9:23-27**

! #1 An athlete **does what he has to do, to win!**

! #2 An athlete **doesn't waste time doing things that won't help him win!**

! #3 An athlete **exercises bodily control** — disciplines his body — so he'll win the crown!

! #4 An athlete **knows he can lose the race, until he crosses the finish line!**

! #5 A spiritual athlete will **win a prize, if he doesn't give up** — the crown of life!

**Inv.:**

➤ ➔ **A spiritual athlete competes according to the rules.**

! **2 Tim. 2:5** athlete, compete according to the rules

! **What are the spiritual rules?**

Audio sermon notes:

! ➤ denotes the place to proceed to the next PowerPoint slide.

! All Scriptures are NASB unless otherwise noted.

! Sermons recorded 11-6-05, Church of Christ, South Livingston congregation in Lutz, FL.