

1. RUNNING THE RACE

*Lord Jesus,
help me to think about you, learn
more about you, and love you today.*

READ: HEBREWS 12:1–2

Have you ever run in a race? What did it feel like? If you run in a race it can be hard going and tiring!

The Bible tells us that the Christian life is like a long race. In Hebrews Chapter 11, we read about Moses and Daniel. Moses suffered a great deal. Pharaoh was against him. Even his own Hebrew people criticised him. Daniel was thrown into a lion's den because he worshipped the one true God. His friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were put in a fiery furnace because they would not worship the king's statue. They wanted to trust in the Lord and to serve him.

These men ran the race of faith—even although it must have felt very lonely sometimes.

You may feel that you are running this race all on your own. Perhaps there are no other Christians in your class at school. Maybe you are the only one in your family who loves Jesus? But remember this, all over the world there are millions of people who are following Jesus. They are running the Christian race, just like you, because it is the greatest race in the world.

If we run the Christian race we need to get rid of things that hold us back. These are obstacles. Hebrews Chapter 12 tells us to throw away things that keep us from following Jesus. Would you run a race with a heavy rucksack on your back? Of course not! Well, just as there are things that slow you down in a running race, there are things that get in the way in the Christian race too.

One of these things is greed. Do you spend lots of time thinking about the things that you want to get? We need to get rid of greed. Lies, bad temper and pride hold us back too. We can't run the Christian race if we hold on to these things. The good news is that the Lord Jesus promises to help us get rid of them if we ask him. It may not be easy, but the Lord Jesus will help us so that we can run the Christian race and follow him. A marathon race is twenty-six miles. It is the longest of all the races in the Olympic games. It commemorates a man who ran to Athens in order to tell the people there that the Persian army had been defeated at the Battle of Marathon.

Following Jesus is like a marathon. That is why we need to have the Holy Spirit to help us. There will be times when we don't have the strength to keep going. But the Lord Jesus says, 'When you are weak, I will come and make you strong' (See Romans 8:26; 2 Corinthians 12:9).

There are prizes for everybody who runs in the Christian race. We are told to keep our eyes on the finishing tape. One day the Christian race will be over at the end of our life on earth. But when we finish, Jesus will be there to greet us. He will have a prize for us.

Part of this prize will be that Jesus will give us our own special name (See Revelation 2:17)! It will be the greatest prize in the world! Let's run to get that prize. Jesus will help us all the way.

Lord Jesus

Thank you that you have run this race before us, right to the cross. Thank you that you died for us. Please send your Holy Spirit into our hearts so that we will be with you forever. We pray this in your name.

Amen.

2. WHERE DO YOU BELONG?

*Lord Jesus,
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READ: JOHN 15:18–19

Have you ever been asked the question, ‘Where do you belong?’ You might reply, ‘I belong to Glasgow,’ or ‘I live in England.’ Perhaps you come from another country like America or New Zealand.

If someone asks you, ‘Who do you belong to?’ would you say, ‘I belong to my mum and dad’? A married person would say, ‘I belong to my husband’ or ‘I belong to my wife.’

If you move to a new town you might feel that you don’t really belong. Things are different. Maybe someone will tell you, ‘You don’t belong here. You’re not one of us! We’re not going to play with you.’

That can really hurt!

Sometimes people don't like you when you belong to the Lord Jesus. Maybe they know that you go to church. They may even be nasty to you.

Jesus says, 'Whenever that happens, remember that you belong to me. They do this to you because they don't love me either. It's because you belong to me that they are being mean to you. It's because you love me that they hate you. It's because you want to follow me that these things are happening. Trust me and I will take care of everything' (See Matthew 10:22; Matthew 24:9; Mark 13:13; Luke 10:5-6; Luke 21:7).

Maybe one day some of the people who have been nasty to you will actually come to you and say, 'Can you help me to trust Jesus in the way you do?'

So, whenever you feel that because you belong to Jesus, you don't belong with your pals, remember this:

Jesus is with you always. You always belong to him!

Let's pray that the Lord Jesus will help us to be faithful to him. Then through our lives, he will help others to trust him too.

Loving Heavenly Father

We know that you love us. You understand how painful it is when we feel we don't belong. Sometimes our friends don't want to belong to us because we belong to you. Please help us to trust you. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.

3. A NEW WORD

*Lord Jesus,
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READ: ACTS 11:19–26

Do you like to discover new words and what they mean? What do you do when you come across a word that you don't know? Do you ask someone what it means? But what if the word hasn't been invented yet, what would you do then?

Acts 11:26 tells us, 'The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.' That means that it was in the city of Antioch that somebody thought up a new word to describe the followers of Jesus.

The new word they thought up was the word 'Christian' which means 'Christ's one'.

When I come across a word and I don't know what it means, I look it up in my dictionary. There are many

different words in a dictionary – and each one of them has its own meaning.

Perhaps your friends at school or football club don't really know what the word 'Christian' means. How are they going to find out?

They might not look up a dictionary. Perhaps your friends don't ever read the Bible. But they could find out, couldn't they? If you are a Christian they could find out what a Christian is like by looking at you!

If they watched the things that you said and did, they would be able to learn what it really means to be a Christian. Instead of having to read a dictionary, they could come to you and say, 'How do I become a Christian like you?' Wouldn't that be amazing?

That's exactly what happened in Antioch. The people in Antioch looked at the Christians and saw that they loved Jesus and that Jesus loved them. So they gave them the name 'Christ's Ones'. They knew that these people belonged to Jesus and followed him.

Let's pray that we will show our friends and family what a Christian is through our words and actions.

Lord Jesus

We thank you that you speak to us through your Word in the Bible. By your Spirit, you are able to make us more and more like you. May our friends begin to see your love and your power in our lives and want to become Christians too. We pray this in your name.

Amen.