

RUNNING THE RACE

The Christian Race

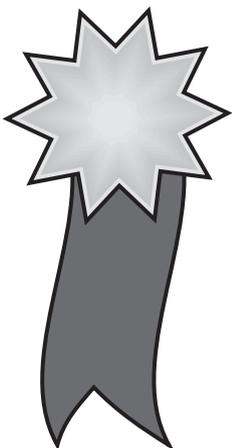
If you run in a race it can be hard going and very tiring! The Bible tells us that the Christian life is like a long race.



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.

Eric Liddell was a famous athlete. In 1924 he won a gold medal in the Olympic games, but his most important race was the Christian race. He ran in this race because he loved the Lord Jesus. Eric went to China as a missionary and he died there. He ran the Christian race right to the end. It was hard at times, but he knew the Lord Jesus was with him.

You may feel that you are running this race all on your own. Perhaps there are no other Christians in your 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.



READ: Hebrews 12: 1-2.

LESSON: The Bible tells us that following Jesus is like a race. Today's story tells us what it means to run for Jesus. This will help us to understand why the Christian life is like a race.

An Obstacle Race

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 the things that keep us from following Jesus. Would you run in a race with a heavy rucksack on your back? Of course not! Well – just as there are things that make you slow 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 your parents to get you? 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

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 a long way to Athens in order to tell the people that their army had defeated the Persians at the Battle of Marathon.

Following Jesus is like a marathon. That is why we need to have the Holy Spirit to help us keep going. 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'.

A Prize Race

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 arrive at the finishing tape 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 his own special name (Revelation 2: 17)! It will be the greatest prize in the world!

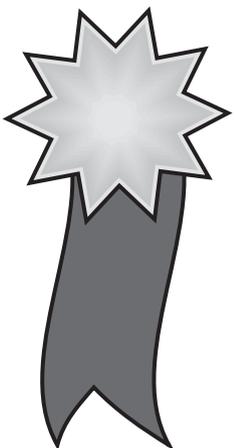
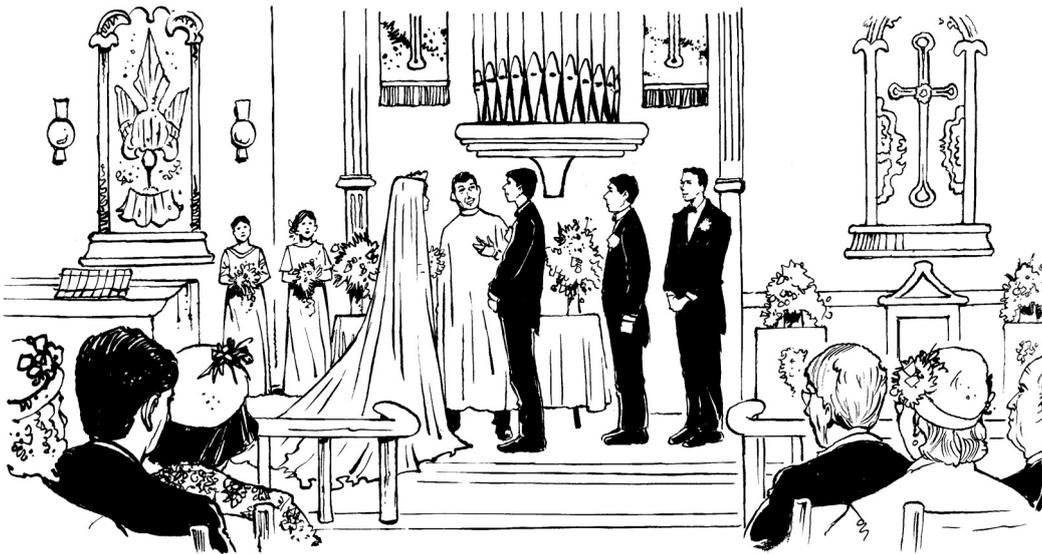
Let's run to get that prize. Jesus will help us all the way.

PRAYER: 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 when we get to the end of the Christian race we will see your wonderful face and be with you forever. We pray this in your name. Amen.

BELONGING TO JESUS

Where do you Belong?

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



READ: John 15: 18-19

LESSON: What does it mean to belong to Jesus? Today's story teaches us about belonging to Jesus and being faithful to him.



A New School

If you move to a new home or to a new school 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 Sunday school. They may even be nasty to you.

Listen to Jesus

Jesus says, 'Whenever that happens, remember that you belong to me. They do this to you because they don't love me either.'

Whenever this happens tell the Lord Jesus, 'Lord Jesus, this isn't my fault. It's because I belong to you.' Then he will say, 'I know it's because you belong to me. I know it's because you love me. And I know it's because you want to follow me that these things are happening. Trust me and I will take care of everything.'

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.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, 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 be strong and to trust you. Most of all, we pray that our friends will come to trust you too. We ask these things in your name. Amen.