



RUNNING THE RACE

Disciples & Early Church • U4#3 1st-3rd Gr. • Oct.6, 2024

Concept

God desires to win all people to Christ, and has given you a role to play.

Goal

Students will learn that the most important goal in this life is to live so other people will know Jesus' love.

Passage

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Key Verse: "... I have become all things to all men so that... I might save some."

1 Corinthians 9:22

Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p>Learning Activity #3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3' <i>Velcro strips, 4/room</i> • Straws, 1/student • 3 <i>paper plates</i> • ½" square of paper, 1/student • Large marshmallows, 5/CT class • 3 <i>"tunics" (4' by 2' lengths of fabric w/10" "T" slit for head)</i> 	<p>Activity Stations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Die-cut yellow circles, 1/child • Die-cut cardstock circles, 1/child • ½" ribbon, 18"/child • 12" chenille stem, ½/student • Scissors • Glue sticks

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information (for the teacher)

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"Paul's great object was not merely to instruct and to improve, but to save. Anything short of this would have disappointed him; he would have men renewed in heart, forgiven, sanctified, in fact, saved. Have our Christian labours been aimed at anything below this great point? Then let us amend our ways, for of what avail will it be at the last great day to have taught and moralised men if they appear before God unsaved? Blood-red will our skirts be if through life we have sought inferior objects, and forgotten that men needed to be saved. Paul knew the ruin of man's natural state, and did not try to educate him, but to save him; he saw men sinking to hell, and did not talk of refining them, but of saving from the wrath to come. To compass their salvation, he gave himself up with untiring zeal to telling abroad the gospel, to warning and beseeching men to be reconciled to God. His prayers were importunate and his labours incessant. To save souls was his consuming passion, his ambition, his calling. He became a servant to all men, toiling for his race, feeling a woe within him if he preached not the gospel. He laid aside his preferences to prevent prejudice; he submitted his will in things indifferent, and if men would but receive the gospel, he raised no questions about forms or ceremonies: the gospel was the one all-important business with him. If he might save some he would be content. This was the crown for which he strove, the sole and sufficient reward of all his labours and self-denials. Dear reader, have you and I lived to win souls at this noble rate? Are we possessed with the same all-absorbing desire? If not, why not? Jesus died for sinners, cannot we live for them? Where is our tenderness? Where our love to Christ, if we seek not His honour in the salvation of men? O that the Lord would saturate us through and through with an undying zeal for the souls of men." [1]

Additional reading: Colossians 3:23-24; Philippians 2:16; 2 Timothy 2:1-11, 4:6-8; Hebrews 12:1-3; 1 Peter 1:3-9, 5:4

[1] Charles Spurgeon, Morning and Evening, MacDonald Publishing Co., December 7, p. 685.

Activity Stations

- **Craft – “Olympic Medals”**
 - **Instructions:** Give each child a 24" piece of ribbon, a cardstock circle, and a yellow circle. Use a glue stick to glue the two ends of the ribbon onto the cardstock circle. Then, glue the yellow circle onto the cardstock circle, so that the ribbon ends are covered and sandwiched between the two pieces of paper. Have the children use a pencil to write their initials or a design on the yellow paper! Optional: They can use the pipe cleaners to form letters for their initials if they would like.
 - **Discussion as the students work:** Today we are going to talk about setting a goal to win a prize as the athletes who compete in the Olympics. How many of you have seen the Olympics on TV? The Olympics began in Athens, Greece many years ago, even before Jesus was born. A crown was the prize that the winners of these games received when they won their event. Do the winners of the Olympic games today get a crown of leaves for their prize? (No, they get bronze, silver, gold medals.) The countries that host the Olympics get to design the medals given to the event winners. You can design your own medal to wear or hang in your room.

Introduction Lg. Group

The last couple of weeks we have talked about the letter Paul wrote to the people in the city of Corinth. This letter is the book of Corinthians in the Bible. Paul was worried because these people in Corinth had problems getting along with each other. He knew their problems would get worse if their goal was not the same as God's. So the purpose of his letter was to teach them how to live God's way. Paul compared the Christian life to the life of an Olympic athlete to give a picture of what it looks like to live God's way.

Lesson Lg. Group

Paul's example of an athlete is one we can all relate to. How many of you play sports or enjoy watching sports? What does it take for an Olympic athlete to win a medal or a team to win a game? (Team works together, has lots of practice and good coaching, follows coach's instructions, willingness to keep practicing and working hard even when you're tired or don't feel like it, looks forward to winning the race/game/medal, etc.)

As Christians we have the opportunity to live our lives for a reward much greater than a medal. The first step toward that reward is to become God's child. Some people say that we are all God's children. Is that true? Can anyone become God's child? Who can tell me how you become a child of God? The Bible tells us in John 1:12 that to all who receive Him, He gives the right to become God's children. When anyone believes that Jesus died for their sins and asks Jesus to forgive them, they become His child and are ready to run the race.

Let's read 1 Corinthians 9 in the Bible. After Paul became God's child he wanted to run God's way. That is, he wanted to live according to God's goal and plan.

Lesson Continued

Paul told the Corinthian people "... I have become all things to all men so that... I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). This is our key verse. In Corinth there were Jews and Greeks, people with different customs or ways of doing things. Paul was willing to give up his rights to do things the way he wanted for the purpose of showing Jesus' love to others. Paul made himself a slave by serving others so that they would see the love of Jesus through him.

To get a better idea of how he did that, follow along as I read verses 19-23. Did you notice how verse 19 says almost the same thing as verse 22? Paul's goal in life was to become all things to all men. Not only did he enter the race, he entered it with the goal of winning people. He was willing to be a servant, to do whatever was needed to show others the love of Christ.

Listen as I read verses 24-27 in 1 Corinthians 9. When an athlete enters an event, his goal is to win. Paul gave us the picture of a runner and a boxer. He says the runner doesn't run aimlessly, and the boxer doesn't beat the air. The runner has a goal and a strategy to get to the finish line so he can win. The boxer plans each and every punch to hit the other boxer. He swings purposefully and efficiently so he can knock out the other boxer as quickly as possible. It takes a lot of training and hard work to win a gold medal. He is focused on the goal and willing to give up the things that might distract him. He will often sacrifice what he wants to do to train many hours a day for years in order to have a chance to win.

As Christians our goal has much more important eternal consequences – the destiny of people. People will go to one of two places when they die. We have the opportunity to tell others about Christ so they can spend eternity with God in heaven.

Transition

Let's join the other classes to see a puppet skit about some Olympic hopefuls who don't have God's perspective.

Learning Activity#1 Lg. Group

"The Greek Olympics" presented by the Puppet Team

Goal: To illustrate the selfishness of "worldly" goals.

Transition

Let's go back to our classes for small groups.

Learning Activity#2 Sm. Groups

The athletes in the puppet skit all had different rewards, but the same goal, in mind to win. Donald Discus wanted that gold medal. Jennifer Javelin wanted to get rich so she could have a lot of things. And Shirley Shotput wanted to be famous. She wanted people to think she was great. Our skit showed how very different our goals often are from God's goals.

Learning Activity# 2 Continued

God's goals are for the sake of others. Our goals are often selfish because they focus on what we want for ourselves.

Let's talk about goals. Our goals are often selfish because they focus on what we want for ourselves. The prize we want is often that others will treat us the way we want or that we will win the game so we can think we're somehow better than others.

- Paul's goal was to be all things to all people. What does that mean?
- What does it not mean? It's important to distinguish between the two. Can you think of any examples? (Suggestions: (1) You're with your friends in a store. They are not Christians and you would really like them to be your friends. They all take a very small candy bar and put it in their pockets. No one is watching them, but they are watching you to see what you'll do. If you take the candy bar is that what Paul means by being all things to all people? (2) You're with a group of friends who all like to play jacks. They really want you to play with them, but you've never played jacks and you're not sure you even want to. If you play jacks with them is this an example of being all things to all people?) Paul was never willing to do anything that he knew was wrong, but he was always willing to sacrifice his rights and comfort for others to know he loved them and cared for them.
- God's goal is to give everyone an opportunity to have a relationship with Him. Tell me some ways He has worked and is still working to make sure that all people can have that opportunity? (He sent Jesus, shows us His love through other people, gave us the Bible, gave us the Holy Spirit to show us our need for forgiveness and draw us to Him, etc.)
- Have you ever thought about your goals and why you have them? Have you ever thought about what you want people to remember about you at the end of your life?
- Everyone makes goals whether they are stated or just in your head. Does anyone want to share a goal? Let's read our key verse, "... I have become all things to all men so that... I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). This was Paul's goal.
- Why do you think the goal of winning as many as possible was so important to Paul that he was willing to give up his rights and become a servant to others?
- If the goal is so important, why do so many Christians quit running the race? Why do they get out of the race? (They lose sight of the goal because things in front of them seem more appealing; get distracted with the things they can see and will bring comfort for a time rather than keeping focused on the goal that is off in the future; forget about that goal.) So how can we stay in the race?
- How do we as Christians live our lives so we can purposefully win more and more people to Christ? (Allow students some time to think about and discuss this.)

Learning Activity# 2 Continued

- As we read and study the Bible and talk to God in prayer we will know God and what He says, the goal of the Christian life will be clearer to us, and we won't forget it or be as easily distracted. Then, as we choose to depend on God to be servants of others, we're motivated to continue as we see others choose to join the race. As we spend time with Christians who have served others for a long time we help each other keep sight of the goal. "... I have become all things to all men so that... I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Paul decided that he would live his life as a servant of others so that he could win as many as possible. And he was in the race and asked God each day to help him so that he would be the best servant he could be.

Missions Prayer: Talk about and pray for the Oasis Giving Campaign.

Let's pray together now that God will remind us of the most important goal in this life, to live so other people will know Jesus' love. Let's ask Him to help us determine to live like Paul and to keep focused on the finish line—eternal life and fellowship with God.

Let's have some fun now having our own Olympics.

Transition

Learning Activity# 3 Lg. Group

Game— "Olympic Games"

Instructions: There may be more games than time so choose the ones most appropriate for your class. See game descriptions below. Divide class into 3 teams. All of the games are done in a line. Demonstrate each game for the students to illustrate how to play.

- **Straw/Paper Relay** – Place a chair 6-8 feet across from each team and put a paper plate on each chair. Give each player a straw and a square of paper. When the teacher says, "go," the first player in line puts his paper to his straw and sucks on the straw to hold the paper. He runs to the paper plate across from him and drops the paper on the plate. He runs back to the line, tags the next person, goes to the back of the line and sits down. When the second person is tagged he repeats the process. If the paper is dropped, the player must use the straw to suck it back up. No hands are allowed. The first team to complete the relay wins.
- **Marshmallow Dash** – Place the Velcro "finish line" about 3 feet from the "starting line." The first player is given a marshmallow. When the teacher says, "go," the first player in line gets down on hands and knees and pushes the marshmallow with his chin to the finish line. Then he puts it on top of his head and carries it back to the next player in line. If the marshmallow falls off his head, he will pick it up, place it back on his head and proceed. When the player tags the next person in line, goes to the end of the line and sits down, the 2nd player proceeds as the first and so on. The first team with all players seated wins.

Learning Activity#3 Continued

- **Greek Tunic Relay** – Place a Velcro "finish line" across the room from the "starting line" and put a tunic for each team on it. When the teacher says, "go," the first player in line runs to the finish line, puts the tunic on and runs back to the front of the line. He takes the tunic off and hands it to the next person in line, then goes to the end of the line and sits down. The second player runs to the finish line and puts the tunic on before returning to the front of the line. And he proceeds as the first player. The first team with all players seated wins.