

Going Deeper

Your weekly guide to understanding God with others

Fixing Our Eyes - Part 5

BROOKE RUTHERFORD

Introduction

In many of his letters, Paul uses the analogy of running a race to depict the active Christian life. The comparison is apt because of the endurance required, especially in long distance races. Well-trained distance runners may experience a type of euphoria during their run, giving the sensation that they could run faster, using precious energy that their body can ill afford. At other times, runners experience the proverbial brick wall, which they need to push through regardless of the pain. In any case, it is certain that one cannot complete the race unless they are in it to begin with.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24, Galatians 2:2, Philippians 2:16, Hebrews 12:1-3.

“You take over. I’m about to die, my life an offering on God’s altar. This is the only race worth running. I’ve run hard right to the finish, believed all the way. All that’s left now is the shouting—God’s applause! Depend on it, he’s an honest judge. He’ll do right not only by me, but by everyone eager for his coming.”

— 2 Timothy 4:6-8 (MSG)

Discuss

1. Discuss the use of Paul’s race analogy in the scriptures above. We should note that Paul is assuming all believers are running — there is no mention of running as a spectator sport. What does Paul’s analogy teach us about the way Christians should live life? Share experiences where you can relate to this analogy in your own Christian life.
2. Read John 13:15-16 and James 22:26. Brooke talked about two traps that we can fall into, the ‘passive trap’ and the ‘burnout trap’. Discuss what dead faith is and what it looks like. How can we avoid falling into that trap?

(continued on next page)

3. Consider Matthew 7:21-22 in the light of John 13:15-16 and James 22:26. Clearly, merely going through the motions of church life is different from running the race that Paul was talking about. Why is it important to put action to our faith, and what does that look like?
4. We know Olympians need highly disciplined regime to develop the right muscles for their sport. If we consider our faith in action to be like a spiritual muscle that strengthens our running, what practical steps can we take to develop that faith muscle?
5. Consider Hebrews 12:11-12 and James 1:2-4. Anyone who thinks the Christian life is all blessing and comfort is misguided. These types of experiences are opportunities for our faith to grow. Share with the group about challenges that have caused your faith to grow.

Respond

Throughout this discussion we've talked about running races, challenges, discipline, and putting faith into action. However, we need to remember that Jesus came and lived among us as a human, and provided an example of how to do this well. Scripture never presents Jesus being in a hurry. He was always actively engaged in doing the will of the Father. What is one thing you can change that will help you run the race well and avoid the passive trap or the burnout trap?