



## **FINISHING WELL**

**TAKE THE HILL part 6**

**JULY 31, 2022**

**FACILITATOR GUIDE**

### **CROSSING THE FINISH LINE**

In 1904, St Louis hosted the first Olympics to be held on US soil. It was held there in conjunction with the Louisiana Purchase World's Fair Exposition. The World's Fair was a 1200-acre sight-seeing event, much like a forerunner to Disney World. At this event the very first Olympic marathon was held. While other parts of the competitions were well-organized, the marathon was a bit of a joke.

First, because the marathon was tied to the World's Fair, there was no great fanfare made just for the sporting events themselves. No flaming torches or grand music.

Though some runners had participated in the Boston marathon, most had never run long distance before in their lives. And while the Olympics were known to showcase the prowess of world-wide athletes, most had a hard time getting to St. Louis, Missouri. And even the roads the athletes ran on were nothing more than dirt roads.

One runner came from Cuba, borrowed money for the journey, but stopped in New Orleans and gambled his money away. He hitchhiked the rest of the way to St. Louis. He showed up to run the marathon in a long-sleeved, white shirt, long pants, and walking shoes. Another runner took pity on him and cut off his pants at the knees to make it easier for him to race. However, about halfway through the race, he got hungry, stopped at an apple tree for a snack, which in turn, gave him stomach cramps. So he took a nap before resuming the run. He still finished fourth.

Another runner, James E. Sullivan didn't believe in drinking water or taking nourishment of any kind while during stressful athletics, and since he was part of the board that designed the course, the 24.85 mile race only had one water station at the 12-mile marker.

The dirt trail caused problems for William Garcia who inhaled too much dirt into his lungs and had to drop out of the race and was taken straightway to the hospital.

Fred Lorz was a distance runner, considered a favorite to win. He did, indeed, cross the finished line first, but while getting his medal, someone in the crowd pointed out that he had hitched a ride for 11 miles and only ran the last mile to the finish. So he was disqualified.

The race was eventually won by the USA's Thomas Hicks in a time that was the slowest in Olympic history - 3 hours 28 minutes and 53 seconds. But even Hicks's race was far from conventional. Hicks' trainers had given him drinks and even a sponge bath along the way. At the end, two trainers actually carried him across the finish line, while his feet touched the ground, to look like he was running.

While Thomas Hicks was declared the winner, it was later discovered that his trainers had given him a combination of 1 egg white, and 1 milligram of strychnine sulfate. In high doses, this compound is used as rat poison. At lower doses, however, it is a stimulant and currently prohibited for in-competition use by the World Anti-Doping Agency. Making Thomas Hicks the first to take sports enhancement drugs.

**What are some of the things it takes to run an athletic race?** [Training, the right equipment, focus on the finish, dedication, desire to win, etc.]

**Is there anything that you started well doing but then you dropped out?** [Diet, exercise program, marriage, new job, school, etc.]

**If yes, what was it that caused you to not finish?**

The Apostle Paul often described the Christian way of life as running a race.

**1 Corinthians 9:24—**

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.

“Run that you may obtain it” is a phrase of **INTENTION**, meaning we must be purposeful in what we do.

**Compare your Christian life to a race. What are some of the things we do intentionally to be successful runners?** [Attend church, worship from the heart, sing praises, pray regularly, read His Word often, volunteer to serve, attend group, share your faith with others, etc.]

**What would you consider to be a successful “race?”** [Success shouldn't be measured in money, fame, or possessions. A successful Christian life would be one that is completely satisfied in Christ, and a healthy relationship with God. One whose hopes and treasures are in eternity.]

**What does a runner not finishing well look like?** [Defeated attitude. Hope in this world only. Focused only on self. Does not project the love of God to others.]

When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he told them how well they had been doing. Then he asked them a very important question...

**Galatians 5:7-8—**

7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

8 This persuasion is not from Him who calls you.

**Who is it that hinders you? What are some of the lies that keep you from running a good Christian race? [You aren't good enough. You aren't "saved" enough. (There is no such thing.) You don't deserve God and God doesn't want you.]**

**Would you say the Christian life is more like a marathon or a 100-yard dash? [Marathon. You have to be in it for the long-haul. Even if you fall down, the race is not over—you can still get up and continue the run.]**

## **HOW PAUL SAYS TO RUN YOUR RACE:**

### **1. UNDERSTAND YOUR LIFE'S MISSION**

**Acts 20:24 —**

But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

**According to Paul what is our life's true purpose?**

**MISSION  SELF [Mission is GREATER THAN self.]**

**So do we neglect ourselves completely? [No. Taking care of ourself is important so that it will give us strength to fulfill our mission. In fact, everything we do should be seen as a means to help us accomplish our task on earth.]**

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27—**

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

**According to Paul what is necessary to prepare ourself for the race? [self-control, discipline]**

**How is caring for your family a part of accomplishing life's true mission? [Your home should be your first mission field. Helping all your family to receive Christ should be a priority. Once your family understands their true mission to spread the Gospel, each person should find a way to focus on the mission for their life.]**

### **2. RUN THE MARATHON COURSE**

### **Hebrews 12:1—**

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

**How are we to run? [With endurance.]**

**What does Paul say we need to do to prepare ourselves for the long run? [Lay aside every weight.]**

### **Ecclesiastes 7:8—**

Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

**Why is a patient spirit better than a proud spirit when running a race? [Patience is willing to endure. Patience will help you get up even if you have fallen. But pride will cause a person to get off course. A prideful person will not care about others. And if a prideful person falls, they more easily quit out of embarrassment. A patient spirit tends to be a humble spirit.]**

## **3. KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE FINISH LINE**

### **Philippians 3:14 —**

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

### **Philippians 1:6 —**

And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

### **2 John 1:8 —**

Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

**Which of these three verses give you the most hope as you run your race?**

**How helpful is the advice given in 2 John 1:8?**

**Have you ever known someone who started a great Christian journey that didn't finish well? If so, what got them off track?**

## **4. PASS YOUR BATON BEFORE YOU GO**

When Paul was in prison for the last time, he wrote a letter to his protégé Timothy Paul knew that he would not survive his current run-in with Roman law. After all of the encouragement and coaching he offered in this letter, Paul wants to leave a clear impression on his friend to continue the work they have done so far.

**2 Timothy 2:2—** What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

### Titus 2:3-5—

- 3 In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking. They are to teach what is good,  
4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children,  
5 to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God's word will not be slandered.

### 2 Timothy 4:6-8—

- 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close.  
7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.  
8 There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing.

In verse 6, Paul acknowledges his time is near—"The time for my departure is close." It is interesting that the Greek word for "departure" is "**ANALYSIS**."

**We know the word analysis, but rarely do we consider that analyzing something involves separating its parts in order to better understand the fullness of its meaning.**

Paul used this word referring to his impending death. The word analysis (departure) was used to describe the following events. Analyze each in respect to death. What do they tell us it is like?

*The unyoking of an ox to its plow.*

**WORK IS OVER. IT IS TIME FOR REST.**

*Loosing the bonds of a prisoner.*

**FREE FROM THE THINGS THAT BIND.**

*Taking down a soldier's tent.*

**THE WAR IS OVER. WE ARE GOING HOME.**

*Loosing the mooring ropes of a ship.*

**WE DRIFT AWAY INTO THE CALM WATERS**

Paul could finish his race well because he knew...

He focused on the true mission.

He endured to the end.

He kept his eye on the prize.

He passed the mission on to another.

And his departure would mean peace, rest, freedom, and victory for him.

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## PRAYER TIME

- Express gratitude to God for His faithfulness to help you in your race of faith.
- Pray for strength to complete the tasks put before you—especially strength to endure and live a disciplined life.
- Ask God to show you who you need to teach and train that they might continue spreading the message of God's love when you are gone.