

Theme: Run the Race

Create a Plan to be Spiritually Focused

Key Scripture: Hebrews 12:1–2

1. Introduction to the Study

“Today, we’re talking about how to pursue spiritual wellness in your everyday life. Every athlete knows that time, energy, and even daily activities make a difference when training and competing. The Bible uses that same idea and compares following Jesus to an athlete running a race.

This analogy isn’t about competing against others or earning the approval of God. The spiritual ‘race’ is about being consistent and steadfast in our relationship with Jesus, just as an athlete chooses to do what’s best to have endurance in a footrace.

Using God’s Word—the Bible—we’re going to look at what it means to run the spiritual race, and why we run it in the first place.”

2. Context for the Passage

“Together we’re reading from the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is a letter in the New Testament written to churches after Jesus lived, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven.

We’ll focus on Hebrews 12:1–2—but to understand these verses, it helps to understand the chapter right before Hebrews 11. That chapter is basically a highlight reel of people who trusted God—leaders, parents, students—ordinary people living real lives.

Some of them experienced huge victories. Others went through incredibly hard seasons. But all of them kept trusting God. When Hebrews 12 begins with the word ‘therefore,’ it’s saying: because God was faithful to them—and because He’s faithful to us—we can keep going too.

As you listen to Hebrews 12:1–2, remember this: it’s not about being perfect. We can’t earn God’s love. Instead, the focus is on responding to His love by following and trusting Jesus every moment of our lives.”

3. Read the Scripture

Directions: Have multiple people read the two verses aloud. Hearing the words multiple times helps understanding.

“1Therefore, 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, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:1–2

Questions to Ask the Group:

- What is the passage about?
- What words or phrases stand out to you, and why?

4. Discuss the Passage

Teaching Point 1: Focused Runners Know What They're Running For

(“Fixing our eyes on Jesus”)

Explanation: “Good athletes don’t train without a goal. They know what they’re running toward, and that focus helps them push through hard practices and discouraging days. Hebrews tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus—not on other people, not on our mistakes, and not on the crowd.

Jesus already ran the race perfectly. He endured suffering because He trusted God’s plan and the joy ahead. When our focus is clear, we can keep going even when faith feels hard.”

Discussion Questions:

- What helps an athlete stay focused during a long or difficult season?
- What are some things that tend to pull our focus away from Jesus during the school year?

Teaching Point 2: Runners Intentionally Remove What Slows Them Down

(“Laying aside every weight and sin”)

Explanation: “Hebrews tells us to lay aside every weight and the sin that entangles us. In sports, athletes remove anything unnecessary when they compete because it slows them down. A runner wouldn’t compete wearing a heavy backpack, ankle weights, or extra gear—not because those things are evil, but because they make the race harder than it needs to be.

Spiritually, our response to God’s grace is to purposefully let go of sin, selfishness, and even good things that become distractions or weigh us down. Not to earn God’s love—but because He has been patient and faithful to us.”

Discussion Questions:

- What’s the difference between something being sinful and something simply being a “weight”?
- What are some common “weights” students carry that can slow down their faith?

Teaching Point 3: The Goal of the Race Is Faithful Perseverance

(“Running with endurance”)

Explanation: “The goal of the spiritual race isn’t to beat anyone, or to be better than anyone—after all, it is a race for *us*. Instead, it’s about remaining faithful.

We don’t lose the race when we struggle or mess up. We stay in the race by continuing to trust Jesus, even when it’s hard. Because God has plans for us, perseverance is how we keep moving toward what He’s calling us to do.”

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think perseverance matters more than talent in both sports and faith?
 - What usually makes people want to quit or coast spiritually?
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5. The Challenge: Train for the Race

“Athletes don’t just talk about training—they make a plan. As a response to God’s love and faithfulness, we want to be intentional about how we run this race.”

Step 1: Choose One Habit (examples)

- Short daily prayer
- Read the verse of the day on the YouVersion app
- Add more worship music to your day
- Thank God after games or practices
- Sit quietly for 60 seconds and say, “God, I’m here”
- Journal what you learn from Bible reading
- Other: _____

Step 2: Make a Plan (mentally or on paper)

- When will I do this? (time of day)
- Where will I do this?
- How long will I do it? (keep it realistic)

Grace Reminder: “If you miss a day, you didn’t fail. You don’t start over—you just keep running.”

6. Closing Prayer

“Jesus, thank You for running the race before us. As we start this school year, help us run with perseverance—not perfectly, but faithfully. Help us let go of what slows us down and keep our eyes fixed on You. Amen.”