



Date: _____

Series: Pass the Promise
Fall Year 1, Lesson 26

Run the Race Marked Out for You

Primary Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-3

Key Verse: Hebrews 12:1b, "We must run the race that lies ahead of us and never give up."

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

Kids need to understand the purpose and meaning of their life. The Bible gives many metaphors to help them picture it. Today's lesson pictures the Christian life as a race. God has prepared the course for us. Many have run before us and serve to inspire us. God gives us the strength to run the race. And the finish line is faithfulness in following Jesus. We keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Therefore, we should run the Christian race with focused purpose.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus has already guaranteed victory for us in the race by leading a perfect life in our place. He then took our imperfections on himself when he died on the cross.

Jesus in us: Jesus dwells in us through the power of the Holy Spirit to give us strength and direction so we can lead a life fashioned in the image of Christ.

Jesus through us: God uses the Christian race run with our eyes fixed on Jesus to demonstrate Christ to the world.

Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Supplies:

- *four numbered signs to pin on volunteers to look like racers (optional)*
- *length of crepe paper*

Before Kids Church, pick four volunteers to come forward and help with a short visual presentation. Explain to them that they are to pretend they are running a race in slow motion. (Option: Pin a number to the volunteers' shirts to illustrate runners in a race.) Pick one of the racers to pretend to fall down but to get back up and finish the race. You may want to practice briefly beforehand.

To begin, have your volunteers come forward and line up at a starting line. You could also pick two extra kids to hold a length of crepe paper for the finish line. Say:

On your mark, get set, go!

The kids take off in slow motion and finish in slow motion triumph with one runner falling down, getting back up, and finishing the race. Then say:

Today we will see how the Christian life is like a race. The racecourse that we run is living a life focused on loving and obeying God. A very important part of this racecourse is our worship. It's important because in worship we spend time telling God how wonderful he is. In worship we can meet Jesus and see what he has done for us.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Supplies:

- *length of string or yarn*
- *scissors*

Select one of the runners from the previous activity or an adult to come forward. Pin a number on his shirt, if not already done. Wrap string loosely around his legs. Have him line up to run another race. As he is lining up on the starting line, explain that the string is like sin that entangles us. Again say,

“On your mark, get set, go!”

While the runner is slowly advancing, say:

**See how hard it is for the runner to run a race when he is entangled?
The Bible says that sin entangles us when we try to run the race. It says “get rid of the sin that slows us down.”**

Using a scissors, cut the string around the runners legs. Say:

How do we get rid of sin? We give it to Jesus. We tell Jesus we are sorry and ask him to take away our sin. Remember Jesus who “endured death on the cross.” Jesus died so we could be free from having sin entangle us. Then we can keep running the race, following him, and living a life of love.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Supplies:

- *track and field object such as a discus, track shoes, or a contestant number*

Use a track and field object for an offering plate. Place it by the altar for kids to put their offerings in/on.

Part of running the Christian race is thankfully giving a portion of what we have back to the Lord.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

Supplies:

- yarn, fabric strips, or masking tape to tie legs together

Have kids experience different races.

Option 1: Three Legged Race

Children could run a race with their legs tied together loosely with long scraps of fabric or yarn. Another quick way of tying legs is to use masking tape. Have the kids choose a partner and stand shoulder to shoulder. Tie the inside leg of each partner together to run a race.

Point out that this race is not so hard when working together with a partner. This is much like the Christian life. When we connect with Jesus and work together with him, the Christian life becomes easier than when we are tied up with sin.

Option 2: Crazy Feet Relay

Divide kids into teams of six. Each team lines up behind a line facing another line 10 or 15 yards away. Number the runners on each team one through six. The first runner on each team will run to the far line and return. They then tag the next runner on the team. The team that has all six participants finish first will win. If the teams are uneven, have some players run twice.

What makes it a crazy foot relay? Each player has a different way to run.

- Runner #1: Hop on the right foot to the opposite line and the left foot on the way back. If ever both feet touch the ground, back up three spaces and continue.
- Runner #2: Run backwards.
- Runner #3: Partner with Runner #4 as a wheelbarrow. Runner #3 holds the legs of Runner #4 who walks on his hands. Reverse roles on the way back.
- Runner #5: Crab walk.
- Runner #6: Fast walk.

The teaching point of this game is:

Just like some legs of this race were easier and some more difficult, some parts of the Christian race are easier and some more difficult than others. At times in our life there are more difficulties than at other times. But the important thing to remember is, just like in a race, don't give up! Keep your eyes on the finish line. Just getting to the finish line is a spectacular victory.

In the Christian life we look at the finish line and see Jesus. He has already run the good race and given his life for us when he died on the cross. If we trust him and keep our eyes on him, we will get to the finish line and see him face to face in heaven.

Bible Presentation:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

Read aloud Hebrews 12:1-3.

Application 1:

A Picture of the Christian Race:

We can think of running the good race of the Christian life this way. When we “get on the mark,” we walk up to the starting line and get ready. This is like knowing that we are running a race for what God wants. We look around us and see that there are many other Christians who have run before us. This is what the Bible says is a great cloud of witnesses.

Then we “get set.” This means we get our legs positioned. To do that we must get rid of the sin that so easily entangles us. To get rid of sin means we don't try to hide it from God. We are ready to confess it, receive forgiveness, and change.

Finally we are ready to hear the starting gun and the word “go.” We take off down the track focusing on the finish line—Jesus, the source and goal of our faith. While we live the Christian life, we remember that Jesus endured death on the cross and ignored the disgrace it brought him. Then he received the highest position in heaven, the one next to the throne of God. We “go” when we don't give up, even if we stumble and fall. We think about Jesus who endured so much opposition. With Jesus, we can run the race of life and keep on going, even when we stumble or life hurts.

Application 2: Optional

Supplies:

- *video, Chariots of Fire (Warner Studios, 1981). See script for cuing directions.*

Briefly introduce Eric Liddell before showing the video clip.

I would like to tell you the story of a man named Eric Liddell. He is known for winning a famous race 80 years ago that no one thought he had a chance to win.

Eric grew up loving God. His mom and dad were missionaries in China. It was difficult for him to go to school in China, so for many of the years, he lived at a boarding school with other children of missionaries. From his parents and his school, he learned about God and came to trust and serve him with all his heart.

Eric loved to run. He was very fast and very determined. In one race, he fell down during the race but got up and won the race. Eric said he believed God gave him the gift of running fast and wanted to give glory to God through his running.

Eric soon became Scotland's most famous runner. People from all around would come to watch the races and see Eric Liddell. After races, Eric would talk to people about his faith in Christ. He gladly told people what God meant to him and what God did for all of us by sending his Son, Jesus, into the world.

Eric did unusual things at track meets. Before every race, he would shake hands with every competitor. He even offered other runners his small hand shovel so they could dig little places in the track for their feet at the start of the race. This way they could get a faster start. Eric was willing to help anyone. He became known not only as a great runner but also as a committed Christian.

In the summer of 1924, Eric was to represent his country in the Olympic games in Paris, France. The Olympics brought together the best runners in the world every four years for many different types of races.

Eric's best event was a short race, 100 meters, just a little longer than a football field. Many people who saw him run knew he might be the best in the world at this race. But when Eric arrived at the Olympics, he found out that the race was on Sunday. It was his practice to never compete in races on Sunday. Instead, he spent Sundays devoted to honoring God and resting. Eric decided he would not compete in the 100-meter race. People were shocked!

When the race started, Eric was at a Paris church giving a talk about how wonderful God is!

It might have seemed that Eric came to the Olympics for no purpose at all. But God had a special plan for victory. A few days later, Eric entered a race that people thought he could never win. It was a longer race, 400 meters. That's four times as far as what he was used to racing. No one expected he would be able to win. Now let's watch this video clip and see what happens.

Watch this short section of the video that shows Eric running the 400-meter race at the Olympics. After the video, continue.

Now, many people think this is the end of the story of Eric Liddell. He was called the "The Flying Scotsman," and he broke the world record. He beat the next fastest runner by four meters. He was famous and people all over his country wanted to come and see him or maybe even listen to him talk about how wonderful God is.

But Eric had his eyes on another race. The next year Eric returned to China as a missionary. He was a missionary for 20 years. He wasn't famous there. He simply rode a bicycle as he went to remote areas to talk about Jesus. In China, he was running a different kind of race, but a very important one nonetheless. Eric kept his eyes on Jesus, remembering how Jesus gave his all for us so that we might be saved.

Eric gave his all as well. One time he heard of a man dying in a village while no one there dared to help. The people of that village were at war and powerful enemy soldiers had hurt this man. The villagers were scared to help because they knew if they were caught, the enemy soldiers would punish them.

Eric knew God wanted him to help. He rescued the man and while bringing him back, found another man left for dead by the enemy soldiers. It was very risky to help him, but Eric did. He loaded him in his cart and walked 18 miles to a hospital mission. Eric not only saved that man's life, but the man became a follower of Jesus as well.

After the country became too dangerous for his family, he sent his wife and daughters back to Canada. He stayed in China and was arrested when World War II broke out. He was put in a prison camp and for two years shared courage and hope with other prisoners. Eric Liddell died of a brain tumor only days before the camp was liberated at the end of the war.

Some remember Eric as one of the greatest runners who ever lived because of the race he ran at the track. But all of heaven knows him as one of the greatest runners to complete the Christian race. Eric knew the love of Jesus, who had given his life for him. He kept his eyes on Jesus as he ran a much more important race, doing what God wanted him to do.

So just as Eric Liddell did, *"We must run the race that lies ahead of us and never give up. We must focus on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith."* (Hebrews 12:1b-2.)

Application 3: Optional

Read and discuss the poem, "The Race" (page 11).

How is this race like the race we run through our life? What does our Heavenly Father tell us?



Witness

Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Tell about a time you were doing something that God wanted you to do but it seemed hard to do. Did it help to think about Jesus when you were doing it?

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Supplies:

Attention Grabber:

- four numbered signs to pin on volunteers to look like racers (optional)
- length of crepe paper

The Power of the Cross:

- length of string or yarn
- scissors

Offering:

- track and field object such as a discus, track shoes, or a contestant number

Learning Game:

- yarn, fabric strips, or masking tape to tie legs together

Application 2: Optional

- video, *Chariots of Fire* (Warner Studios, 1981). Rent from your local video store or order from <http://www.deepdiscountdvd.com/dvd.cfm?itemID=WBD031908> or www.amazon.com. See lesson for cuing directions.

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“The Race”

D.H. Groberg

I

"Quit! Give up! You're beaten!"
They shout at me and plead.
There's just too much against you now.
This time you can't succeed!"

So as I start to hang my head
In front of failure's face,
My downward fall is broken by
The memory of a race.

My hope refills my weakened will
As I recall that scene;
And just the thought of that short race
Rejuvenates my being.

II

A Children's race—young boys, young men-
How I remember well.
Excitement, sure! But also fear;
It wasn't hard to tell.

They all lined up so full of hope;
Each thought to win that race.
Strive for first, or if not that,
At least take second place.

The fathers watched from off the side,
Each cheering for his son.
And each boy hoped to show his dad
That he would be the one.

A whistle blew and off they went!
Young hearts and hopes afire.
Win and be the hero there
Was each young boy's desire.

And one boy in particular
Whose dad was in the crowd,
Was running near the lead and thought:
"My dad will be so proud!"

But as they speeded down the field
Across a shallow dip,
The little boy who thought to win
Lost his step and slipped.

Trying hard to catch himself
his hands flew out to brace,
And mid the laughter of the crowd
He fell flat on his face.

So down he fell and with him hope
He couldn't win it now,
Embarrassed, sad, he only wished
To disappear somehow.

But as he fell his dad stood up
And showed his anxious face,
Which to the boy so clearly said:
"Get up and win the race."

He quickly rose, no damage done.
Behind a bit, that's all-
And ran with all his mind and might
To make up for his fall.

So anxious to restore himself
To catch up and to win-
His mind went faster than his legs:
He slipped and fell again!

He wished then he had quit before
with only one disgrace.
"I'm hopeless as a runner now;
I shouldn't try to race."

But in the laughing crowd he searched
And found his father's face;
That steady look which said again:
"Get up and win the race!"

So up he jumped to try again
Ten yards behind the last-
"If I'm to gain those yards," he thought
"I've got to move real fast."

Exerting everything he had
He regained eight or ten
But trying so hard to catch the lead
He slipped and fell again!

Defeat! He lay there silently
A tear dropped from his eye-
"There's no sense running any more;
Three strikes: I'm out! Why try?"

The will to rise had disappeared
All hope had fled away
So far behind, so error prone;
A loser all the way.

"I've lost, so what's the use," he thought.
"I'll live with my disgrace."
But then he thought about his dad
Who soon he'd have to face.

"Get up," an echo sounded low.
"Get up and take your place;
You were not meant for failure here.
Get up and win the race."

"With borrowed will get up," it said
"You haven't lost at all.
For winning is no more than this:
To rise each time you fall."

So up he rose to run once more,
And with a new commit
He resolved that win or lose
At least he wouldn't quit.

So far behind the others now,
The most he'd ever been-
Still he gave it all he had
And ran as though to win.

Three times he'd fallen, stumbling;
Three times he rose again;
Too far behind to hope to win,
He still ran to the end.

They cheered the winning runner
As he crossed the line first place
Head high, and proud, and happy;
No falling, no disgrace.

But when the fallen youngster
crossed the line last place,
The crowd gave him the greater cheer
For finishing the race.

And even though he came in last
With head bowed low, unproud,
You would have thought he'd won the race
To listen to the crowd.

And to his dad he sadly said,
"I didn't do so well."
"To me, you won," his father said.
"You rose each time you fell."

III

And now when things seemed dark and
hard
And difficult to face,
The memory of that little boy
Helps me in my race.

For all of life is like that race,
With ups and downs and all.
And all you have to do to win,
Is rise each time you fall.

"Quit! Give up! You're beaten!"
They still shout in my face.
But another voice within me says:
"GET UP AND WIN THE RACE!"

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