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## Bible Basis:

1 Corinthians 9:23–26

## Bible Truth:

Winners choose to give their best in the race of life.



# Running the Race of Life

## You Will Need:

- winner's jersey mounted on a wall
- ribbon #1
- 1 poster board
- simple games (pick-up sticks, jacks and ball, etc.)
- feathers or ping-pong balls
- 8 ½" x 11" cardboard pieces
- Bibles
- masking tape
- ZipLine #1* home-connection page
- Lookout Card #1*
- (optional) treasure box
- (optional) snack: granola bars or trail mix, fruit punch or sports drink, cups
- (optional) Activity #1: paper, paper fasteners, markers or crayons, scissors, sample self-portrait figure
- (optional) Activity #2: balloons, beanbags, ping-pong balls



When you see this icon, it means preparation will take more than five minutes.

**Memory Verse:** I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ (**Philippians 3:8**).

*Note:* Early elementary verse in **bold** type.



## GET SET!

### (Lesson Preparation)

- Print today's Bible memory verse on a poster board: **I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ (Philippians 3:8)**. Hang the poster at the front of the classroom.
- Make a copy of *ZipLine #1* for each child.
- Make a copy of *Lookout Card #1* for each helper.
- Make masking-tape starting and finish lines in the main classroom area.
- Set out winner's ribbon #1 and (optional) treasure box.
- Create a sample jointed self-portrait figure using the instructions in Activity #1 if using that option.
- Set up snack and outside play activities if you include these items in your children's ministry.



## PASSWORD, PLEASE!

### (Welcome and Bible Connection)

- **Objective:** To excite children's interest and connect their life experiences with the Bible Truth, children will play simple games to experience winning and losing.



## Welcome Time Activity: Games to Win

- **Materials:** jacks and ball, pick-up sticks, and/or other simple games

Set the games you have on the tables and invite children to find one or more partners and play. They can also play “Rock, Paper, Scissors” and simple guessing games such as “I Spy” and “Twenty Questions.”

## Sharing Time and Bible Connection

- **Materials:** feathers or ping-pong balls, 8 ½" x 11" cardboard pieces

When everyone has arrived, call children to the lesson area and welcome them. As you move into the activity and discussion to prepare for the Bible story, give every child the opportunity to say something.

**Did you all have fun playing those games?** Ask the children whether they won or lost their games and how that made them feel. **We would all rather win than lose, wouldn't we?**

**Now we're going to play a game that requires some teamwork.**

Ask children to pair up and stand in a line shoulder to shoulder. Give each pair a feather or ball, and each player a cardboard piece. Tell them that, as partners, they need to move their feather/ball across the room to a designated spot without touching it with their hands. Allow partners 30 seconds to make a plan. Then say, “go” and let them play until everyone finishes.

When all are seated again, discuss the game.

- **What did it take for you to be able to finish that race?** (working together, effort, keeping your mind on the race, listening to your partner, keeping your eyes on the goal, not giving up)
- **If you've been in other kinds of races, what was important to be able to finish the race?** (endurance, training, discipline, practice, listening to the coach, knowing the rules, doing your best)
- **How is everyday life as a follower of Jesus like being a runner in a race?** (you need many of the same qualities, you can't give up, you do your best, you follow Jesus)
- **Is winning all that counts in a race?** (no, how you run is more important than winning)

After discussion time, help your students connect their discussion to the Bible story they're about to hear from 1 Corinthians 9:

**Many people think the only thing that counts in a race is winning. God doesn't think that way. He wants most of all for you to run your best. He wants you to be a winner in your attitude and your spirit. Today and for the next twelve weeks, we are going to figure out how to be winners in God's kingdom.**

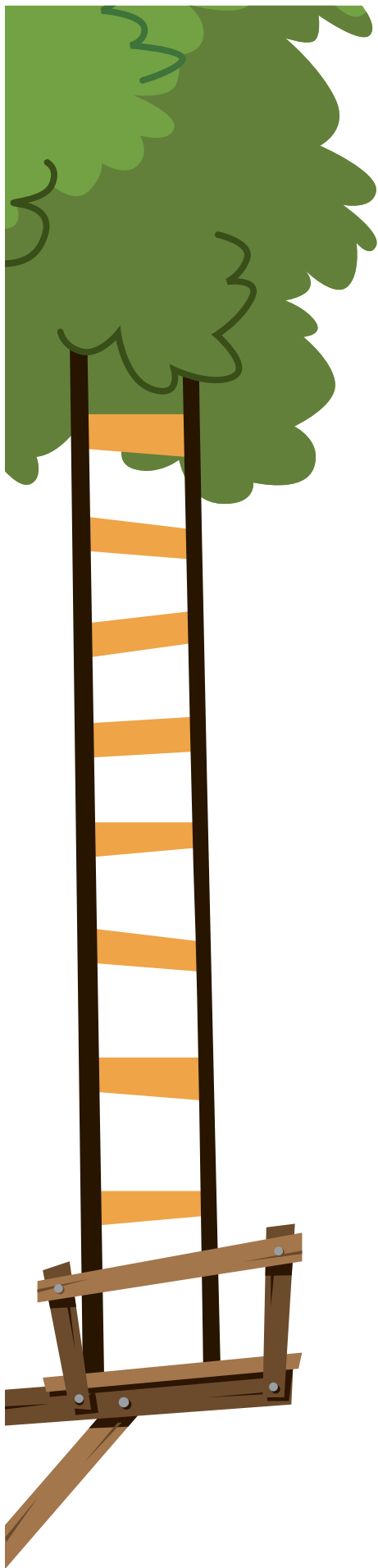
Today we're going to discover what Paul, a great leader of Christians in Bible times, said about running in the race of life.



## CLIMB IN! (Bible Discover and Learn Time)

### 1 Corinthians 9:23-26

- **Objective:** Children will study 1 Corinthians 9:23–26 to learn how Paul compared life to a race and what it takes to be a winner in God's kingdom.
- **Materials:** Bibles, masking-tape starting and finish lines



**How do we know what's great in God's kingdom?** Accept children's responses. Point to the starting line on one side of the classroom. **To be a winner, first you have to get into the race.** Point to the finish line on the other side of the classroom. **And then you have to know how to reach the finish line. We're going to read what the apostle Paul said about life and racing.** Divide the class into small groups of four to six children, with confident readers or helpers in each group. Pass out Bibles to those who need them, and have each child find 1 Corinthians 9:23–26. Have confident readers in each group read the verses aloud.

**What did Paul write about being in a race?** Accept children's responses. **He said that life is like a race.** Have children all line up at the starting line. **Paul said all the runners in a race try to be the first one across the finish line.** Let children run to the finish line. Those who are unable to run can walk or use other means. Adapt this activity so everyone in your class can move from the start to the end point.

**Did Paul tell us everyone would win the race? No, he said even though all the runners train and run their best, only one will win.** Paul said that people should live life as if they're in a race and want to win.

Paul gives us some great hints for how to be a winner in life. What's one of them? Pause for responses. **He says we need to have self-control. What do you think of when you hear the word self-control?** Accept student responses. **Being self-controlled means we discipline ourselves to do the right things every day—even when it's hard. We get up on time in the morning, do our best work at school and home, try not to make sinful choices, and obey our parents even when we don't feel like it.**

**What would happen if all the runners in a race wanted to run in different directions?** (it wouldn't be fair, runners might crash into each other, no one would reach the finish line, etc.) **Runners who want to win all run in the same direction, to the same finish line. A winner in God's kingdom runs the way God says, not any old way that's easy or feels good.**

**Good runners work hard so they have a chance of being the winner. What are some ways you can think of to be a winner in the race of life?** (praying, encouraging others, being patient, kind, generous, obeying God, etc.)

**Paul lived his life so he could learn to know God better. He used self-control so everything he did would be pleasing to God.**

**If we learn to run the race of life well, like Paul, we'll be winners. Winning the race of life isn't about being the fastest or strongest. It's about how we live and how we follow Jesus. Giving our best to Jesus means we'll be great in God's kingdom. Over the next twelve weeks, we'll find out from a lot of different Bible-time people how to be winners.**



## USE THE CLUES!

(Bible Review)

- **Materials:** masking-tape starting and finish lines

**Okay, let's see what you remember.**

Show the children the winner's jersey and explain that each week the class will add a new winner's ribbon to the jersey. The symbol on the award will help them remember what they learned from the Bible that week.

Divide the class into two teams and have the teams each select one representative "runner." Direct the runners to stand behind the masking-tape starting line. As you ask each review question, watch for the team member who raises his hand first. If that child answers the question correctly, then his runner can take a giant step toward the finish line. If the child doesn't answer correctly, give the other team a chance to answer. Feel free to keep the race relatively even by asking the other team for alternative answers.

- **How did Paul say we should run the race of life?** (run to win)
- **What are some qualities Paul said we need to win the race of life?** (self-control, discipline)
- **What are some ways we can be self-controlled?** (do the right things, obey even when we don't feel like it, get out of bed on time, do our best)
- **What race should we all aim to win?** (the race of life to be a winner in God's kingdom)

- **Do we all have to have strong bodies and be fast on our feet to be winners in God's kingdom?** (no, we win by the way we live and the way we follow Jesus)

Choose a child from the winning team to pin ribbon #1 on the winner's jersey. Remind children on the losing team that, although they didn't win this particular race, they can be winners in God's kingdom every day by following Jesus and loving others. Ask the child with the ribbon to identify the symbol (pair of running shoes) and explain how it's a reminder of this week's Bible story (life is a race we run to be winners in God's kingdom).



## HIDE 'N' SEEK (Scripture Memory)

**Philippians 3:8**

- **Objective:** Children will hide God's Word in their hearts for guidance, protection, and encouragement.

To help children memorize today's verse, read it aloud from the poster, and then read it with the children as you point to the words: **I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ (Philippians 3:8).**

Use this game to further practice the verse. Have children line up on one side of the room. **We're going to have a slow-motion race. You can take a step when we all say a word from the memory verse.** Say the memory verse with your students. The first time through, you should say a word and have your students repeat it. When they repeat it, they can take a step forward. The goal is to reach the other side of the room as quickly as possible. Continue repeating the memory verse until students are able to walk quickly to the other side of the room.



## PRAYER HIDEAWAY

- **Objective:** Children will explore and practice prayer for themselves in small groups.
- **Materials:** copies of Lookout Card #1 for each adult or teen helper

Break into small groups of three to five children. Assign a teen or adult helper to each small group and give each helper a copy of *Lookout Card #1* (page 22) with ideas for group discussion and prayer.



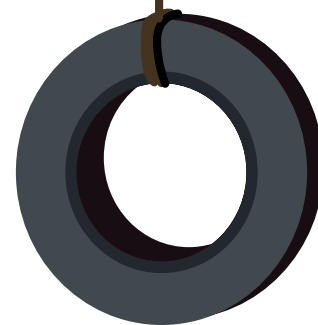
## TREETOP TREATS: Edible Energy (Optional Snack)

- **Materials:** granola bars or trail mix, fruit punch or sports drink, cups

Have you ever seen a real running race? When it's a long race, people on the sidelines will hand runners a drink as they run past to keep them from getting too hot and tired. This snack is a good one for keeping your energy up. What other kinds of food give you lots of energy?

Discuss with the children that reading and learning about the Bible is spiritual food to keep us running in the race of life for God. Let children tell you some verses they've memorized as they finish their snack.

**Note:** Always be aware of children with food allergies and have another option on hand if necessary.





## APPLICATION

- **Objective:** Children will have opportunities to show how the lesson works in their lives through activities and home-connection pages.

Some children's ministries may allow children to play outside at this point. If yours does not, choose one of the following activities.



### Runner Figures

- **Materials:** paper, paper fasteners, markers or crayons, scissors, sample self-portrait figure

Show children your sample jointed self-portrait figure. They should draw themselves on the paper, taking up as much of the sheet as possible (a small drawing is harder to cut out and successfully join with paper fasteners). Once they've drawn themselves, show them how to cut it out so that the legs and arms are separate pieces, then join those pieces to the trunk with paper fasteners. After they've made the figures, have them play "Winner Says" with the figures (adapt the same rules as "Simon Says" for this game).



### Relay Races

- **Materials:** balloons, beanbags, ping-pong balls

Depending on the physical abilities of your children, plan some relay races such as passing a balloon down the line, balloon volleyball, a beanbag toss where team members toss the bag back and forth to each other a certain number of times, or blowing a ping-pong ball across a table top. Choose games that allow everyone in the class to play, even if they have a physical limitation.



## ZIPLINE

### (Home-Connection Page)

Allow children who brought a signed pass to choose a prize from the treasure box. **Today I'm going to give each of you a ZipLine page to take home. When you've done the activities and memorized the Bible verse, ask a parent or guardian to sign the Club Pass** (show pass). **When you bring this back next week, you'll get to have a turn at the treasure box.**

Distribute the home-connection pages and jointed figures (if made) just before children leave.

# ZIPLINE – HOME CONNECTION #1

## Running the Race of Life



### Prayer Challenge

This week we learned about how Paul saw life as a race. He knew that it takes hard work and good self-control to run well. Think about an area of your life where you need better self-control or more discipline. Ask God to help you so you can be a winner for his kingdom!



### Memory Verse

I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of **knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ (**Philippians 3:8**).

*Note: Early elementary verse in **bold** type.*

### Word Search

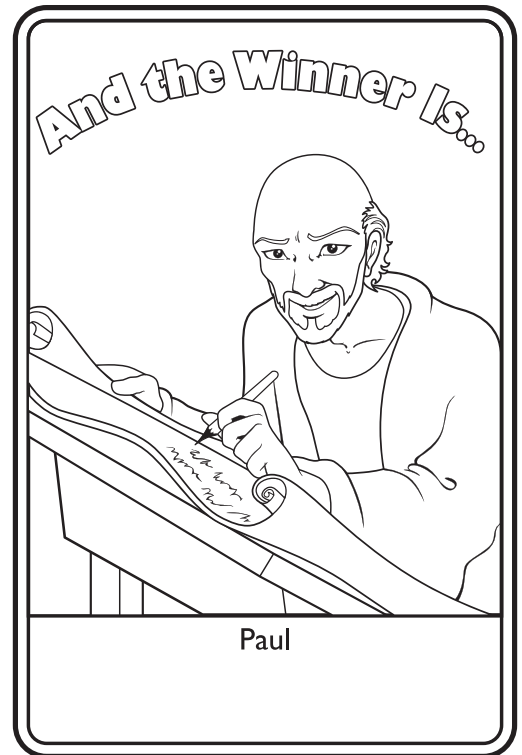
Find these hidden words in the word search below.

J	D	R	O	R	G	K	Q	V	L	C	P
A	A	U	T	U	B	E	S	T	R	L	
O	D	N	L	P	H	B	M	A	I	L	U
K	I	N	G	D	O	M	B	Z	N	W	A
H	Q	E	C	Z	K	Y	E	I	M	H	P
N	A	R	M	T	W	Y	E	T	S	D	M
B	B	O	E	K	Z	H	Z	C	Y	H	B
H	K	F	O	T	A	E	R	G	A	V	H
W	I	L	X	E	Y	Z	B	P	O	R	W
L	M	Q	W	Y	L	H	K	X	C	Z	Q
S	O	E	N	P	E	O	S	E	G	G	M
V	Q	E	J	I	C	D	S	U	K	O	V

BEST  
GREAT  
KINGDOM  
LIFE  
PAUL  
PRIZE  
RACE  
RUBBISH  
RUNNER

### Trading Card

Add some color to the trading card of Paul, and write at the bottom: Winners give their best. Cut out the card, and put it in an envelope or other safe place. You're going to be making a whole collection over the next 13 weeks!



Dear Parents and Guardians,  
Please check off the items your child completed this week.

- Prayer Challenge
- Bible verse memorized and recited to an adult
- Paul Trading Card
- Word Search

Adult Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**CLUB PASS**

# LOOKOUT CARD #1

This week your group learned from 1 Corinthians 9 that winners choose to give their best in the race of life. They learned how Paul compared life to a race. Lead your group in prayer using the imPACT model:

- **Praise.** God has given us the bodies and minds he knew we'd need for the race he wants us to run in our lives. Have students praise God for specific features of their bodies and minds, like a good memory or perfect eyesight.
- **Ask.** Paul gave his best to running the race of life and winning. Have students ask God to help them give their best, to be disciplined and focused on him.
- **Confess.** It's not easy to keep running when we get mad or stubborn or sad. This is a chance

to tell God you're sorry for a time you have had an attitude of quitting or been frustrated about doing things God's way. Allow time for silent confession.

- **Thank.** Paul was excited to run his race of life and reach the finish line. Let's each thank God for giving us energy today to keep going and for giving us friends to encourage us along the way. Model a sentence prayer of specific thanks, and then let students pray.

Remember that no child should be forced to pray, but do encourage and invite each one. After "Amen," talk quietly to the children in your group until the next activity.

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