

The Winning Formula

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Don't waste your life running meaningless races, chasing after meaningless things. Give your life to the only race that matters: sharing the gospel effectively with as many people as possible. Do all things for the sake of the Gospel.

Life isn't like T-Ball – you don't win just for showing up.

We are all in a race, not against one another, but against the apathy, selfishness, and worldliness within us.

Run to win by following Paul's WINNING FORMULA

3 characteristics that distinguish champions in sport and in life from everyone else

1. Know what it takes to win – v19-23

- Lots of people are running lots of different races in this world... but only 1 race counts: **the race to share the Gospel effectively with as many people as possible**
- **Gospel = the good news that God loves sinners like us so much that He sent His Son**
- Paul believed the Gospel on the Damascus road and it changed his life completely
 - o It gave Paul a race to win
 - o Once we accept the Gospel, life becomes very clear and very focused
- Paul challenges us to do "all things" for the sake of sharing the Gospel
 - o Sacrificed anything that got in the way – including his rights & privileges
 - o He became "all things to all people" to win as many as possible to the Gospel
- **Paul's challenge to us: step out of our comfort zones and enter the world of others**
 - o Will you sacrifice your right to leave work on time to listen and comfort a hurting coworker?
 - o Will you leave the comfort of your living room to get to know your neighbor?
 - o Will you leave the comfort of people like you and engage with international students or men and women of a different race?
- **Paul was willing to sacrifice his rights and privileges and step out of his comfort zone to enter the world of the other person to win them to the Gospel. Are you willing to do the same?**
- That is how you succeed in God's eyes: do anything and everything to share the Gospel effectively with as many people as possible

2. Train your body into submission – v25-27

- Victory begins in the gym, not on the track
- Great athletes live painful lives of constant sacrifice, and that is exactly what Paul is challenging us to do
 - o **Victory requires sweat, suffering, and self-denial**
- We must train our bodies into submission by practicing the spiritual disciplines
 - o **Fasting** - Saying “no” to morally permissible things
 - o **Scripture memory** - Trains your mind to meditate on the Word
 - o **Solitude** - Spending extended time in silence before God
 - o **Giving** - Time, money, and possessions to the church and those in need
 - o **Prayer**
 - **All great spiritual battles are won on our knees**
 - “Pray without ceasing and I will move mountains”
- The spiritual disciplines are how we train for the race God has called us to run
- The victory of life is won in the private, hidden practice of the disciplines

3. Keep your eye on the prize

- It’s not in our nature to do hard things for no reason. If we’re going to train hard and run hard, we must keep our eyes on the prize
- Paul tells us two things that God will award to the believer who runs this race
 - o 1) Eternal significance (v23)
 - **“Partaker” = partner**
 - Paul hopes to become a “partner” of the Gospel
 - The events in Ferguson and New York remind us that no social, economic, or legal change will ever stamp out the root of racism, selfishness, and fear in all of us, nor can they bring Michael Brown or Eric Garner back from the dead
 - **But the Gospel can end racism, can crush selfishness, can defeat fear, and can raise the dead**
 - So we dedicate ourselves to the Gospel because that’s what makes our lives eternally significant
 - o 2) Eternal glory (v24-25)
 - Honor and glory from Jesus (2 Cor 5:10)
 - When Paul says in v27, “but I discipline ... not be disqualified”
 - He’s not talking about going to hell
 - Disqualified = lose your reward / crown of honor
 - That takes us back to 1 Corinthians 3:14-15
 - The ambition for honor, glory, recognition you have deep inside you is NOT a bad desire so long as you’re seeking it from the RIGHT PERSON
 - If you’re faithful in this life we will be rewarded in the next life with honor and glory from Jesus that last forever
- If you keep your eye on the prize you will be able to bear the cost of running this race.