

Lesson 1 Training for the Race - Leader Notes

OPEN: The open questions never have a right or wrong answer. Just get to know one another!

All questions are open for discussion. The answers here are just ideas. Feel free to come up with original ideas.

1. Running a race requires never giving up no matter how hard the going gets. It's easier to run with a running partner. Having someone cheering for you helps. You can't run a marathon until you've done some shorter runs.
2. A foot race is generally socially acceptable while Christianity can sometimes be labeled politically incorrect.
3. Athletes in training tend to eat better, give up foods, do some kind of physical training everyday, get plenty of rest, drink good fluids, avoid alcohol & tobacco.
4. Each believer has their own set of disciplines according to how God has called them. But all believers should gradually create some disciplines into their lives that include daily Bible Reading, real prayer, striving to become more like Jesus Christ everyday, living life according to the Holy Spirit.
5. The athlete that trains consistently and hard will be more likely to win more races. They'll feel better about themselves and be respected by their peers.
6. Training is easier when you have someone to push you on. It's more fun and helps you be motivated.
7. This can be tied into question 5 & 6. The stricter a believer disciplines him or herself the closer they will get to Christ and the better their life will be. The Christian life is not meant to be lived alone. It's meant to be shared with others so we can grow and be encouraged and challenged. (See also Hebrews 10:25)
8. No wrong answers. The leaders should be prepared with their answer.
9. No wrong answers. The leaders should be prepared with their answer.
10. No wrong answers. The leaders should be prepared with their answer.

Lesson 2 It's an Endurance Race - Leader Notes

1. A soldier has a commander; Christ is our commander. A soldier is sometimes sent places he doesn't want to go, but goes because he's sent.
2. No wrong answers.
3. Family, jobs, TV, hobbies, anything that causes us to take our eyes from Christ
4. Every game has rules. Football, racing, basketball, etc. Rules range from how to play the game to weight limits in wrestling, drug testing, etc.
5. They might get ahead, but chances are someone will find out and they'll end up losing and being discredited.
6. You might need to remind the group that the Christian life isn't really about rules, it's about giving your life to Jesus Christ. We are using the term "rules" loosely. Jesus said that Christians would be known by their fruit. So the rules that we mention should be evidence of our fruit, not rules that create legalism in our life. Our primary "rules" should fall along the lines of Luke 10:27
7. There are no shortcuts to a relationship with Jesus Christ. He said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." A relationship with Christ is the only way to be a Christian. If we try to take shortcuts in our daily disciplines we'll miss out on the "abundant life" that Jesus promises in John 10:10. Plus if we don't live a Luke 10:27 life we run the risk of discrediting Christ.
8. Soldiers face death daily. Athletes have a greater potential of breaking bones or having physical problems. Farmers risk their livelihood by depending on the weather, growth patterns or the price of grain and livestock.
9. Christians face the chance of being persecuted; however, here in the United States that persecution is very limited. Christians who are convicted to stop cheating or stealing could face financial hardship. Those who give up drugs, alcohol or cigarettes face physical hardships.
10. Paul gave us these examples so we might realize that the Christian life might not always be easy. There might be struggles, what is important is that we keep focused for the long haul and never give up.
11. No wrong answers. But you might ask them why they say "yes or now"
12. Trials develop perseverance in us and eventually through that we will lack nothing.
13. Be ready to share (if you have one) a story of how a trial was turned into a life lesson for you.
14. No wrong answers.

Lesson 3 Don't Let Someone Cut in on You - Leader Notes

1. Try to keep everyone on the subject of the “race of Christianity” Everyone will be tempted to share “yokes” that have afflicted them, but not all yokes have kept us from following Christ.
2. Circumcision had become a very legalistic thing. Jewish Christians had made circumcision a requirement for becoming a Christian. Something that Jesus never intended.
3. All kinds of legalism has been creeping into Christianity from the very beginning. As we mentioned last week, it's most important to remember that a relationship with Christ, beginning with believing that his death on the cross is the only thing necessary for salvation. Some folks try to put rules on becoming a Christian for instance: you have to be in church every Sunday, you have to take communion every Sunday, baptism is a requirement for salvation, speaking in tongues is a requirement, Christians can't play cards or dance or wear make-up or jewelry. The list is never ending. While some of these things are great attributes to being a Christian, none are requirements. Good works and Christian disciplines in our lives should be an outpouring of our love of Jesus Christ.
4. If they have trouble answering ask them what kind of “rules” or things they learned as a child have prevented them from a full relationship with Christ.
5. Paul not only addresses those who allow sin or rules to keep them captive, but those who use their freedom to cause others to sin. We are free, but our freedom should be taken very seriously and every consideration to how our freedom effects the Kingdom should be given.

Lesson 4 Keep Your Eye on the Prize - Leader's Notes

1. Hebrews 11 is called the "Faith Hall of Fame" because it lists so many from the Old Testament who had lived the life of faith.
2. Be prepared to share.
3. We can throw off our sin and the things that hinder by using many of the things we've talked about in the last few weeks. Focusing on Christ, Reading Scripture more, being in deeper prayer, having many Christian friends who will hold us accountable, etc.
4. Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to look at the trouble around him.
5. No wrong answers.
6. If we are focused on Jesus and concentrating on becoming more like him, we'll be less likely to allow the sin and things of life to "entangle us"
7. Be prepared with you answer
8. Be prepared with your answer.
9. Meditate on this verse for a moment or two

Lesson 5 Carrying the Last Baton - Leader's Notes

1. Can you say "I have not hesitated to preach the gospel"?
2. Talk about what it would mean to know that the hardships and trials we've talked about in the last few weeks definitely faced you, yet you still followed Christ.
3. Paul just wanted to do the things that God had called him to.
4. Be prepared with your answer.
5. Be prepared with your answer

This week's discussion may be a bit shorter. You can spend the extra time today in prayer that each member of the group can reach the goals they've set for themselves this week and in the past few weeks.