

# RUNNING THE RACE



The practice of disciplining oneself for the sake of athletics is often used as a metaphor in the Bible for how to be disciplined in our Christian lives.

**Hebrews 12:1 (NLT)** *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. **And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.**”*

## What is the race God has set before us?

If we read this verse in context it will answer this question:

**Hebrews 12:2-4 (NLT)** *We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people, then you won’t become weary and give up. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.*

**Running becomes easier, both physically and mentally, the more consistently you do it. Disciplined runners are the most consistent in their training and, therefore, the most successful.**

It’s the same with relationships. They require hard work. The more focus and energy you give towards them and the more disciplined you are in maintaining them, the more rewarding the relationships become.

God desires a relationship with us, but our sinful natures made that relationship impossible. So, God made a plan: Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross mends the divide between us and God, allowing us to have a relationship with Him.

**Romans 8:1-4 (ESV)** *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

After accepting the free gift of Jesus’ payment for our sins on the cross, we are adopted into God’s family and nothing can separate us from God’s love ever again. **God’s love becomes unconditional for us because all of the conditions have already been met through Jesus.** (John 6:35-40; Hebrews 1:1-3)

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**Disciplined physical bodies are of some value but spiritual things last forever**

**1 Timothy 4:7-8 (ESV) ...train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.**

Our salvation and eternity with God in Heaven is secure no matter what we do after accepting Jesus' payment for our sins because it is based purely on grace through Faith in Jesus. We are saved through grace (Romans 11:5-6) and we live our Christian lives through grace (2 Peter 3:18; Romans 6:14).

But, once we have become part of God's family, we can have a relationship with God. **Spiritual Disciplines help us learn how to show love back to God through our relationship with Him.**



**In "The Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines" by David Mathis, he says:**

"The essence of the Christian life,' writes John Piper, 'is learning to fight for joy in a way that does not replace grace.' We cannot earn God's grace or make it flow apart from his free gift. But we can position ourselves to go on getting as he keeps on giving. We can 'fight to walk in the paths where he has promised his blessings.' We can ready ourselves to remain receivers along his regular routes, sometimes called 'the spiritual disciplines.'

Such practices need not be fancy or highfalutin. **They are the stuff of everyday, basic Christianity--unimpressively mundane, but spectacularly potent by the Spirit.** While there's no final and complete list of such practices, the long tally of helpful habits can be clustered underneath three main principles: hearing God's voice, having his ear, and belonging to his body. Or simply: word, prayer, and fellowship."



**Tips for the Disciplined Spiritual Life:**

**Hear His Voice (word):**

2 Timothy 2:15

**Have His Ear (prayer):**

Ephesians 6:18

**Belong to His Body (fellowship):**

Hebrews 10:24-25

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