

Running To Win!

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." 2 Tim.4:7

There is a plethora of winning recipes in society today. Everyone seems to have a secret set of keys that promise to unlock success, financial stability or reaching that perfect weight! The sports merchandising companies have taken it to an art form. A Nike poster reads, "If you're not running to win, why are you in the race?" No Fear ads tell us, "If you're not living on the edge, you're taking up too much space!"

There are some things that we as Christians can learn from these compelling ads, especially when it comes to playing it safe. Safe is a kissing cousin to comfortable. So playing it (life) safe, is more oriented to a living life by sight, rather than embarking on an adventure of faith. Faith seems a bit 'risky' if not even 'irresponsible' for those who like every detail of life mapped out! But risk we must, because without faith, it is impossible to please GOD. Life is called a 'race' in Hebrews 12 and Paul challenges us in **1 Corinthians 9:24...** "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." Did you hear that? Run to win! The beauty of this race, unlike any race on earth today, is that everyone can win, though not everyone will. So how can you run to win? Let's stay with the passage we started with...2Timothy 4:1-7, and let's examine a few truths that are essential in running to win!

- **Base your running (living) on the Word...** "Preach the Word..." v.2 – It is so easy to drift from your spiritual moorings. Don't embrace societies values. The more you are like our culture, the less you will impact it for Christ. To preach the Word implies that you must know it, be assured of it and applying it rightly. Remember, maturity is far more than knowing a truth...it is also living it.
- **Stay alert as you run...** "be prepared in season and out of season..." v.2 – This refers to a continual readiness to share Christ and the truth of the Word. See further 1 Peter 3:15. It won't always be convenient or even conducive, so stay aware of what God is doing around you in lives.
- **Speak up for Christ throughout the race...** "correct, rebuke and encourage..." v.2 – There is an old saying which goes, 'Blessed are they who have nothing to say and cannot be persuaded to say it.' However, we have been given much to say and so we must pray for the well timed word to be appropriately spoken. Correcting is urging a person to see themselves as they really are in convincing them of error. Rebuking is equivalent to a verbal kick in the pants coupled with the urgency of an impending shipwreck or disaster. Encouraging is coming alongside a person to console, build up, and cheer up. All three are to be done with, 'great patience and careful instruction.' v.2
- **All of this is vital in running to win...** "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths." v.3,4 – The time is here! It is today! People are running to and fro looking for the newest fad, the most promising trend and the pleasant of teachers. We have the Truth of Christ! How will they hear unless we tell them?
- **Commit yourself to run, to win!** "keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." v.5 – Notice you need to have balance, you need to embrace pain, you need to seek the salvation of precious souls, and you need to finish what you have been called to do.

In a fight you are upheld by the thought of victory, in a race you are upheld by the vision of a crown, and in the trust of faith you are upheld by the hope of a harvest. It will take blood, sweat, and tears...but the dividends, well, they are out of this world! So run my friends! **RUN to WIN!** Look forward to the outstretched hands of Christ, who will be the first to welcome you when you cross the finish line.
