



“KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE”

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 (EHV)

²⁵Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable victor’s wreath, but we do it for an imperishable one. ²⁶That is why there is nothing aimless about the way I run. There is no pummeling of the air in the way I box. ²⁷Instead I hit my body hard and make it my slave so that, after preaching to others, I myself will not be rejected.

Background:

1 Corinthians was written by Paul to the congregation in Corinth, which was at the time the leading city in Greece, more so than even Athens. With big-city opportunities came big-city problems. *“Too much wealth and the presence of many different nationalities and of many different sailors on shore leave resulted in the lowering of moral standards. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian Christians had to contend with the influence of boomtown immorality on their congregation.”* (Toppe, *“The People’s Bible – 1 Corinthians, pp. 1-2)*

Why does he use this example of a runner running a race for the church in Corinth?

“The Corinthians were familiar with the foot races in their own Isthmian games, which occurred every other year and were second only to the Olympic games in importance.” (Concordia Self-Study Bible, NIV).

Text Exploration:

1. Paul compares what two things in these verses?
2. In this picture of an athletic event, what are the attributes of the elite athletes?
3. What is the perishable prize for winning the race? What is the imperishable prize?
4. “Running aimlessly” / “pummeling of the air” – Why are these a waste of time?
5. How does Paul correlate training for an athletic event to ministry?
6. In Paul’s example, what is the opposite of “running aimlessly”?

Application:

1. What are we training for?

2. Why do we **need** to train?

- (James 1:14,15) (Matthew 26:41)

- (1 John 2:16)

- (1 Peter 5:8)

4. How do we train?

Paul says, "I do not fight like a man beating the air. I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified from the prize."

There is an adage of "train as you fight" (practice as you play). This can be seen in the military as they prepare to accomplish what is required of them in defense of the nation. Before a military deployment, troops spend countless hours repeatedly doing the things that may be required of them.

In addition, world-class athletes intensely prepare for their events. "*Elite athletes spent 10,000 hours training for London 2012, average elite British athletes trained 6 hours a day / 6 days a week / 12 months a year. The average athlete consumes more than 1,000,000 calories per year, equivalent to eating 3 Christmas dinners a day, and has been working toward their Olympic/Paralympic goal for 11 years.*" (*Insidethegames.biz*)

So, how do we train?

Ideally, to be effective leaders, we would strive to be healthy spiritually, physically and emotionally in addition to growing professionally in knowledge. List some ways to train in these areas.

Spiritual training:

Physical training:

Emotional/Mental training:

Professional growth:

5. What are the benefits of having years of teaching experience? What are the dangers?



“KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE”

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 (EHV)

²⁵Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable victor’s wreath, but we do it for an imperishable one. ²⁶That is why there is nothing aimless about the way I run. There is no pummeling of the air in the way I box. ²⁷Instead I hit my body hard and make it my slave so that, after preaching to others, I myself will not be rejected.

Background:

1 Corinthians was written by Paul to the congregation in Corinth, which was at the time the leading city in Greece, more so than even Athens. With big-city opportunities came big-city problems. *“Too much wealth and the presence of many different nationalities and of many different sailors on shore leave resulted in the lowering of moral standards. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian Christians had to contend with the influence of boomtown immorality on their congregation.”* (Toppe, *“The People’s Bible – 1 Corinthians, pp. 1-2)*

Why does he use this example of a runner running a race for the church in Corinth?

“The Corinthians were familiar with the foot races in their own Isthmian games, which occurred every other year and were second only to the Olympic games in importance.” (Concordia Self-Study Bible, NIV).

Text Exploration:

1. Paul compares what two things in these verses?

Athletes preparing to compete in the games - his preparation for preaching to others

2. In this picture of an athletic event, what are the attributes of the elite athletes?

Self-controlled, disciplined, determined, purposeful in training,

3. What is the perishable prize for winning the race? What is the imperishable prize?

*A crown that will perish, a wreath (for the Isthmian Games it was traditionally a pine wreath)
Eternal life in heaven*

4. “Running aimlessly” / “Pummeling of the air” – Why are these a waste of time?

To use your time and gifts efficiently you need to have a plan. Athletes of every level need to have a training plan of schedule to make the best use of their time and efforts. Accomplishing a goal through purpose, direction and motivation cuts out the time waste and helps focus on the goal.

5. How does Paul correlate training for an athletic event to ministry?

If people place such emphasis on, and train so intensely for, an event that is so fleeting and transitory as a footrace with a perishable prize, how much more should we as Christians apply discipline to gain our heavenly victory.

6. In Paul’s example, what is the opposite of “running aimlessly”?

Taking a disciplined approach to training

Application:

1. What are we training for?

Keep ourselves in faith (own good) and growing to teach Gospel to others (good of others). Our roles as Christian educators boil down to Christ's command to "Preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15). This consists of both our formal roles as educators and our informal roles of living our lives of sanctification and modeling our Christian faith as an example to those around us.

2. Why do we **need** to train? *All the things that would cause us to lose or turn from our faith:*

- (James 1:14,15) (Matthew 26:41) *Sinful Nature – laziness, complacency in our teaching, lack of discipline*

- (1 John 2:16) *The World – Constant struggle against evils of society and false doctrine, weight of the world ills, trauma, hardship*

- (1 Peter 5:8) *The Devil. Our struggle not against flesh and blood, but against evil forces great than we are.*

4. How do we train?

Paul says, "I do not fight like a man beating the air. I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified from the prize."

There is an adage of "train as you fight" (practice as you play). This can be seen in the military as they prepare to accomplish what is required of them in defense of the nation. Before a military deployment, troops spend countless hours repeatedly doing the things that may be required of them.

In addition, world-class athletes intensely prepare for their events. *"Elite athletes spent 10,000 hours training for London 2012, average elite British athletes trained 6 hours a day / 6 days a week / 12 months a year. The average athlete consumes more than 1,000,000 calories per year, equivalent to eating 3 Christmas dinners a day, and has been working toward their Olympic/Paralympic goal for 11 years."* (Insidethegames.biz)

So, how do we train?

Ideally, to be effective leaders, we would strive to be healthy spiritually, physically and emotionally in addition to growing professionally in knowledge. List some ways to train in these areas.

Spiritual training: *Staying in the Word through worship and bible study, prayer*

Physical training: *Taking care of our health, eating well, getting enough sleep, exercise*

Emotional/Mental training: *finding a work/home balance, nurturing relationships with family and friends, taking care of mental health*

Professional growth: *Lifelong learning, attending conferences and classes, staying up to date in your field*

5. What are the benefits of having years of teaching experience? What are the dangers?

Benefits: Know the material well, less prep time needed,

Dangers: Get complacent or lazy, do enough to get by, same old materials, get bored