

Summit Woods Baptist Church
First Corinthians Sermon Study Equipping Class

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Remember to begin your study early in the week so that you have time to really think (and keep thinking) about the passage without being rushed.

❖ Day 1

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

For these lessons, the sermon text is provided in a format that visually helps display the structure of the paragraph or section of text. The main verbs are underlined. The main clauses remain to the left, and the supporting clauses are either directly underneath when they have equal priority to what comes before, or are tabbed to the right when the clause supports, develops, or draws a conclusion from a neighboring clause.

²⁴Do you not know
that in a race all the runners run,
but only one receives the prize?
So run that you may obtain it.
²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things.
They do it to receive a perishable wreath,
but we an imperishable.
²⁶So I do not run aimlessly;
I do not box as one beating the air.
²⁷But I discipline my body
and keep it under control,
lest after preaching to others
I myself should be disqualified.

1. What word pictures does Paul use as analogies in this week's paragraph?
2. Circle each occurrence of "but" in the paragraph flow above. How many comparisons does Paul make using "but" in this week's paragraph?
3. What is the first comparison? (We will elaborate on the details of the comparisons in later questions. At this time, simply note the two things being compared.)
4. What is the second comparison?
5. What is the third comparison?

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6. What is the command in the paragraph?

Historical note: The phrase translated “in a race all the runners run...” literally says “all those who run in the stadium run...”. The city of Corinth was host to the Isthmian Games (so called since Corinth is on an isthmus) that were held every other year, before and after the ancient Olympic Games, so Paul’s mention of the stadium would bring these races to his hearer’s minds.

7. What was the prize for the winner of the footrace, and what happened to that prize in a short amount of time?

8. What “prize” does Paul want the Corinthians to obtain?

9. How does Paul describe this spiritual prize in verse 25?

❖ Day 2

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 again.

10. In verse 24, Paul points out that in a footrace, only one person wins the prize. Does only one person win the spiritual prize Paul wants the Corinthians to obtain?
11. Based on what Paul has already said in chapters 8 and 9, how do we know that his goal is *not* to motivate them to try to be the *only* one to get the prize (i.e., to beat others out so that they do not get the prize)?
12. Do you think Paul is telling them to run faster than everyone else or to run according to the rules of the race? (see also 2 Timothy 2:5)

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13. In verse 25a, what kind of commitment does Paul say that it takes for a runner to be able to compete well? (Can he just eat right and hit the gym on occasion?)
14. What does he want them to learn from the competitors in the footrace?
15. In verses 26-27, Paul again gives himself as an example of the kind of life that he wants his hearers to live. How does Paul describe his own “running” and “boxing”?
16. In verse 26b, Paul’s description of “beating the air” could refer to shadow boxing, but many scholars take him to mean that his punches do not miss their mark and thus whiff in the air. According to verse 27, who is Paul’s opponent in this boxing match? (Note that the word translated “discipline” in verse 27 also implies the idea of punching.)
17. What reason does Paul give in verse 27 for why he exercises such comprehensive self-control in his own life?

❖ Day 3

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 again.

18. Throughout Paul’s writings, he speaks boldly both of his confidence in the Lord’s work to grow and sustain believers and of the real warnings against unfaithfulness that could prove to be eternally destructive in the end. Reread this week’s paragraph, then read Philippians 2:12-13 & 3:12-14 and 2 Timothy 4:7-8, and describe how these passages fit together.
19. What is the opposite of running aimlessly?

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20. Describe some of the things that would be included in running the Christian life with full commitment and purpose.

21. Describe the difference between training to be an Olympic runner versus jogging as a hobby.

22. How does this comparison help you assess the way that you are running the Christian life? If a spectator were to describe your “Christian race training,” where would he place you on a scale between Olympian and hobbyist?

23. What is the next step for you towards Olympian-level dedication?

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24. What has been the general content of Paul's preaching in this section (chapters 8-10) so far? And how has Paul demonstrated his fully committed self-control, discipline, and self-denial?
25. How do you think Paul wants his hearers to apply this paragraph to the topic of food sacrificed to idols?

In preparation for Sunday, pray that we would be fully committed to running the Christian life faithfully and purposefully, with ours eyes firmly fixed on Jesus.