

## **TRAINING vs TRYING: The need for self-discipline**

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 [NASB]

*<sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. <sup>27</sup> No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

We all know that training is necessary if we want to succeed in physical competition. It is also true that training is necessary if we are serious about growing in our relationship with God. Learning to think, feel, and act like Jesus is at least as demanding as learning to run a marathon or play the piano. We can't succeed simply by trying hard. We can't succeed on willpower alone. We need to prepare ourselves to receive God's transforming work within us. We need to train wisely.

### Discussion Questions:

1. When the apostle Paul wrote about training to run a race (1 Corinthians 9:24–27), what is the spiritual “prize” for which Paul ran, and why did he take spiritual training so seriously? (See 1 Corinthians 9:25–27.)
2. What did Paul encourage his young protégé, Timothy, to do? Why? (See 1 Timothy 4:7–8.)
3. We may think that following Jesus and growing spiritually come about automatically and easily rather than through dedicated training, but that is not what Jesus taught. Read Mark 8:34–35 and Luke 14:27–30, 33. Notice what Jesus told the crowds that followed him about the path of spiritual growth.