

## Finishing The Race

**Purpose:** To create a desire to persevere while running the Race, with endurance and passion.

**Objectives:** By the end of the lesson you will:

1. Begin to take a life-inventory of how you are persevering with God.
2. Be motivated to "finish the race."

**Key Verses:** II Timothy 4:1-8

### I. Introduction

*Note to instructor: Here is an **option** to consider in teaching this session, but it will have to be planned **before the semester starts**, not just the week before this class is taught. At the beginning of the semester, the students would not receive notes for this session ahead of time, nor would the class schedule announce the title of this session (perhaps list it as "To be announced"). See Appendix A (which is only in the Teacher's Notes). Hand out copies of Appendix A to the students either the week before this session is to be taught, or the very day it is to be taught. The purpose of this is to help them discover the concept of "endurance" or "finishing the race." Each word or phrase is followed by a "yes" or a "no." The "yesses" all have the concept; the "no's" do not contain the concept. See if they can guess the concept from just the first list of words. After two or three minutes, ask them for their idea of the concept. If they get it, move on into the lesson (hand out the rest of the student notes to them). If they didn't get it, have them look at the second list of words/phrases for a couple of minutes and see if they can guess it. When the concept is revealed, hand out the notes. Students will need to be given time to work in section III and the Discussion Questions.*

The Tour de France. It may be one of the most grueling races a man can start. It is a test of both his strength and endurance. The bicycle race covers a period of 22 grueling days and over 2200 miles, through city streets, countryside, and even mountains. There is no name more synonymous with the Tour de France than Lance Armstrong.

He was ranked number one in cycling in 1996 at the age of 24, considered to be the brightest star in his sport. That year, expected to win the Tour, he had to pull out after just a few days. What he thought to be a cold turned out to be much worse – testicular cancer. This was no ordinary cancer. It had spread to his lungs and also to his brain. Doctors gave him at best a 50/50 chance at survival. A promising career was over.

But that was not Armstrong's perspective. He survived the surgeries and the chemotherapy. He had lost all muscle strength during his fight. But he didn't give up. He saw that he had a second chance at life. And so, he began to train just five months after being diagnosed with cancer. Within a year, he was back competing! By 1999, he had regained form and won the Tour de France, cycling's top prize. Lance Armstrong didn't quit. He finished the race!

Life is full of people who start races. Few end them. The book of Second Timothy was

Paul's last recorded writing. He wrote this book of encouragement and exhortation from a cold prison cell. As Paul was about to "finish his race" at the hands of wicked Emperor Nero, he wrote to Timothy to take the baton and run his leg of the race well. Look at what Paul had to say about "Finishing the Race" in 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

## II. Finishers and Quitters

Paul's last letter to Timothy is a study in what it takes to be a finisher - one who completes what he starts. It is a study of two kinds of people. Those who start well, but don't finish - the quitters. And, conversely, those who finish what they begin are finishers. Phygelus, Hermongenes, Hymenaeus, Philetus and Demas all quit (2 Timothy 1:15; 2:16-18; 4:10). Just think of it, their names are recorded for eternity as quitters. Hopefully, they came to their senses and repented, but even if they did, their names are recorded as those who did not finish the race. Onesiphorus, though, was a finisher (2 Timothy 1:16-18). So were Luke, Mark and Tychicus (2 Timothy 4:11,12).



Please note that Mark had a time of quitting in his Christian life (Acts 13:13) which caused Paul to give up on him (Acts 15:36-38). Mark must have repented and Barnabas worked with him just as he had worked with Paul (Acts 15:39). At the end of Paul's life, Mark was useful to him (2 Timothy 4:11). This shows that there is hope for one who quits, and it shows that we need encouraging mentors like Barnabas who will give repentant quitters a second chance.

## III. Finishers Persevere

You are going to see eleven characteristics that identify disciples as finishers and not quitters. As you read each verse from Second Timothy corresponding to each of the eleven characteristics, take a moment to pray and make a commitment to the Lord related to each area. Finishers:

- A. Lean wholly on God (1:5, 1:9-12; 2:1; 4:17)
- B. Keep the gift of God kindled afresh in their lives (1:6,7)
- C. Don't shrink back from suffering (1:8, 1:12; 2:3-6; 2:9,10; 3:10-12; 4:5)
- D. Guard what has been entrusted to them (1:14)
- E. Develop and consider others before themselves (2:2, 2:10)
- F. Guard their associations and their thinking (2:16-17a; 2:20-23; 3:5)
- G. Don't compromise or stray from God's Word (2:14-18; 4:2-4)
- H. Confront sin in the body of Christ (2:14; 2:24-26; 3:16-17; 4:2)
- I. Hold on to the sure things (the Scriptures) and don't quickly go after the new (1:13;

3:14-15)

- J. Are ready at all times to serve (2:4; 4:2)
- K. Fulfill their ministries (4:5)

#### **IV. Conclusion**

If we do these things, then we will "Fight the good fight, finish the course, keep the faith." Our names won't go down as those who shrunk away. Instead, there will be laid up for us the crown of righteousness, the one which awaits all who put their hope in His coming, the one for those who trust that His word is sure.

Review again the biblical hall of fame and the hall of shame. Which do you want to be in – the Hall of Fame with Timothy, Onesiphoros, Luke, Mark and Tychicus, or the Hall of Shame, joining the likes of Phygelus, Hermongenes, Hymenaeus, Philetus and Demas? If people are walking these halls, whose pictures do you want surrounding yours?

Reread again II Timothy 4:1-5 and focus on your decision.

*Note to instructor: Be prepared to share your answers to the Discussion Questions. Then, ask the students to share their responses with the class. Close with a time of prayer, committing to finish the race that is set before us (perhaps read Hebrews 12:1-3).*

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. You are soon to "finish a race" as you complete this training. What other races (spiritual or non-spiritual) have you finished in your life? Which one stands out among all the rest, and why?
  
2. Look at the eleven characteristics listed in III.A-K. In which ones do you need to trust God to develop in your life to see that you finish the race well?

## Appendix A

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Running a Marathon	Yes	
Walking with God during a week-long conference		No
Completing a High School diploma	Yes	
Completing a Doctoral Degree	Yes	
Leading a Bible Study		No
Playing on a basketball team for an entire season	Yes	
Running a mile race	Yes	
A single session exercising with friends		No
Being obedient to God for a lifetime	Yes	
Randomly sharing the gospel with someone on campus		No
Working out/exercising now and then		No
Moving on when something nicer comes along		No

What do you think the concept is? \_\_\_\_\_

**List #2**

Reading through an assigned 800 page book for a class	Yes	
A week-long diet		No
Living with your spouse "till death do you part."	Yes	
Babysitting your friend's children		No
Being with your friend and listening to the entire CD of his favorite: Blue Grass and Hog-Hollerin'	Yes	
Raising your children to adulthood	Yes	
Reading a chapter of the book of Luke		No
Going on a date		No
Noting how God is at work in the life of your disciples		No
A lifestyle of healthy eating	Yes	
Completing an unexciting responsibility	Yes	
Giving up because you don't like sweating		No

What do you think the concept is? \_\_\_\_\_