



ACTS

Of All the Apostles

You Will Be My Witnesses:

Running the Race

Lesson 39



Guilt Free

Acts 20:13-38

Supplemental Scripture

Hebrews 12:1-3
2 Timothy 4:7
1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Memory Verse

When you eat or drink or
do anything else,
always do it to honor God.
1 Corinthians 10:31 (CEV)

Lesson Goals

Understand that Paul's
life was an example to be
followed

Understand that Paul
encouraged the church
leaders to take care of the
believers

Understand that Paul was
willing to obey the Holy
Spirit even if it meant im-
prisonment and suffering

Understand that Paul de-
sired to finish the race of
faith well, to complete
the work God had sent
him to do

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Study the supplemental Scripture and make notes on, but do NOT read from, these pages. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

When you run a race or play a game, is your example one that others should follow? Do you compete for the fun of the game, giving it your all? Are you selfish and greedy? Let's see what Paul has to say about the race he's running.

When we last talked about Paul, he had traveled through Greece for the last time and had gone through Troas, where he encouraged the church. Luke and the others went ahead to the city of Assos by ship and Paul met up with them by land. They traveled from port to port, but decided to sail past the port of Ephesus. Paul was in a hurry to get to the city of Jerusalem. He wanted to arrive there by Pentecost, which would have given him fifty days from the time he left for Troas (right after the Passover).

Paul and his companions docked at the port of Miletus and even though they didn't dock at Ephesus, Paul sent for the elders (leaders) of the church at Ephesus. He wanted to talk to them. Remember, Paul had stayed in Ephesus for two years. Paul reminded the church leaders of how he had lived among them. Paul had been "free of pride." (Acts 20:19 NIV) And even though the Jews had planned many evil things for him, none of it stopped Paul from teaching the Ephesians the things of God. He "told both Jews and Greeks that they must turn away from their sins to God. They must have faith in our Lord Jesus." (Acts 20:21 NIV)

Paul explained to everyone why he was in such a hurry to go to Jerusalem. Paul felt directed by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem and he wanted to obey, but Paul had also been warned of the danger of returning there. "I'm completely in the dark about what will happen when I get there. I do know that it won't be any picnic, for the Holy Spirit has let me know repeatedly and clearly that there are hard times and imprisonment ahead." (Acts 20:23 MSG) Paul's response is an example to us all. He followed with, "**But my life means nothing to me. I only want to finish the race. I want to complete the work the Lord Jesus has given me.** He wants me to

Application

I began by asking you if, when you run a race or play a game, your example is one that others should follow? Do you compete for the fun of the game, giving it your all? Are you selfish and greedy?

Paul's life was an example of obedience to God, even in difficult circumstances. He even told the leaders of the church in Ephesus that his life didn't matter to him. What mattered was finishing the race, completing the work Jesus had given him.

How about you? What is important to you? How are you running the race? Will you finish, and finish well? Will you commit to run the race well and be an example to other believers, to be sure that everything you do honors God?

Maybe you have realized that you haven't even begun to run the race. Will you start now? Jesus is our ultimate example. He finished the work God gave Him to do. He died on the cross, paying the price for your sins and making a way for you to be right with God.

witness to others about the good news of God's grace." (Acts 20:24 NIV)

Then, Paul told the church leaders that he had spent a lot of time preaching about God's kingdom. He also told them that they would never see him again. Paul continued, "so I tell you today that I am not guilty if anyone has not believed. I haven't let anyone keep me from telling you everything God wants you to do." (Acts 20:26 NIV)

Then Paul encouraged these leaders. He said, "Now it's up to you. Be on your toes—both for yourselves and your congregation of sheep. The Holy Spirit has put you in charge of these people—God's people they are—to guard and protect them. God himself thought they were worth dying for." (Acts 20:28 MSG) Paul warned them that things would be difficult. Others would try "to get the believers to follow them. So be on your guard!" (Acts 20:30b-31a NIV)

"Now I'm turning you over to God, our marvelous God whose gracious Word can make you into what he wants you to be and give you everything you could possibly need in this community of holy friends." (Acts 20:32 MSG) Paul wanted to leave these leaders with something substantial that they could hold on to, something to hope in, to remind them of his example.

Then, Paul prayed with them. They hugged him with tears in their eyes. "What hurt them the most was that he had said they would never see his face again." (Acts 20:38 NIV) Then the leaders accompanied Paul to the docks where he boarded the ship to end this third missionary journey.

Next Week
Paul's Arrest
Acts 21:1-36

Preschool Lesson

Paul traveled from place to place as he ended his last journey. Paul was on his way to the city of Jerusalem, but Paul and his companions stopped at the city of Miletus. Paul wanted to talk to the believers from Ephesus so he sent for the leaders of the church there. Remember, Paul had stayed in Ephesus for two years.

When Paul talked to the church leaders, he reminded them that he had done the right things; he had been a good example. Paul had not been full of pride. He taught about Jesus no matter what people tried to do to him. He didn't let anything keep him from telling them what God wanted them to do. Paul told the leaders that they would never see him again.

Paul knew that he needed to go to Jerusalem. God wanted him to go. Paul wanted to obey God even though things were going to be hard there. God told Paul that he would suffer in Jerusalem and be put in prison. Wouldn't that make you want to run the other direction? Not Paul. Paul wasn't worried about his life. To Paul, it was more important than anything to obey God. Paul said, **"I only want to finish the race. I want to complete the work the Lord Jesus has given me."** (Acts 20:24 NlrV) Paul knew that, more than anything, God wanted him to tell others about Jesus.

Then Paul told these leaders to take care of the other believers. God put them in charge to be good examples. Paul said, "you take good care of them." Then he told them why, "God himself thought they were worth dying for." (Acts 20:28 MSG) Paul warned them that things would be difficult. Others would try to get the believers to follow them. So be careful!

Paul said, "God will take care of you. He will show you how to be good examples." Then, Paul prayed with them. They hugged him with tears in their eyes. "What hurt them the most was that he had said they would never see his face again." (Acts 20:38 NlrV) Then the leaders went with Paul to the docks where he got on the ship to sail to Jerusalem.

Activities

Memory Verse Activity - Write the memory verse around the rim of a paper plate. Encourage your students to decorate the plate with food. (The food can be drawn, cut out of magazines, or designed from construction paper.) Ask your students about the kinds of things they do every day. Talk about how they can honor God (and be a good example) in each one of those activities.

Sing “I Will (Run the Race),” “Let Others See Jesus in You,” “Wherever He Leads I’ll Go,” “Serve the Lord with Gladness,” “Living for Jesus,” and “Take My Life, and Let it Be.”

Be sure to mark the cities of Assos, Mitylene, Kios, Samos, and Miletus on your wall map.

Map Activity. Use the map key to approximate the number of miles Paul traveled on each of his three journeys.

Make origami boats out of old newspapers.

Look up I Peter 5:8. Talk about Paul’s warning to the church leaders from Ephesus. How can we be on guard?

As you continue memorizing Hebrews 12:1-3, read through the supplemental Scriptures and discuss the “race” we are in. Ask questions like, “How should we run?” “Who’s watching?” “Does it matter if we finish?” etc.



When you eat or drink
or do anything else,
always do it to honor God.
1 Corinthians 10:31

Racing Riddles

Beginning at the arrow, cross off two letters and write the third in the blanks below. Continue all the way around to find out what Paul wanted to do.

TOIBJOSDNWHLK YARW TYANHNEFTSYTOTOXGFFHIWBDNMHIFT SASHKTFEHSYERYR GUADWJCIOE →

Paul's response is an example to us all.

He said, "But my life means nothing to me.

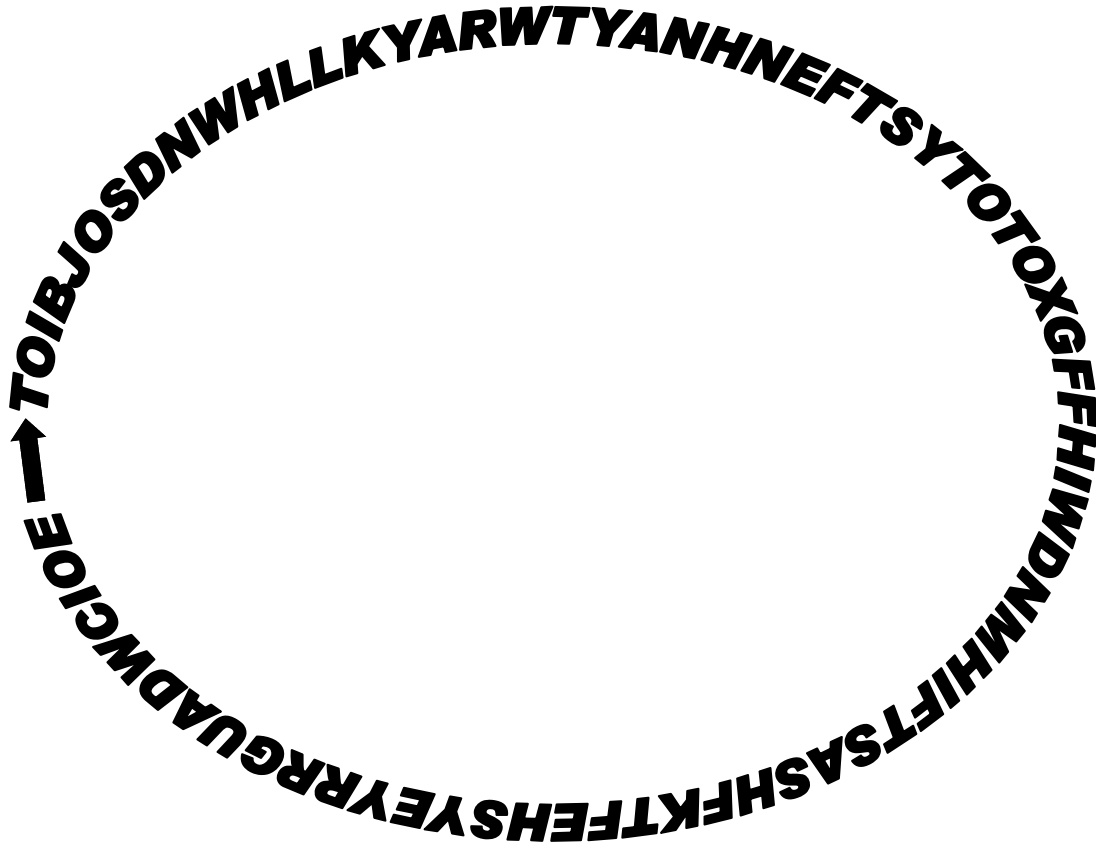
I want to complete the work the Lord Jesus has given me.

He wants me to witness to others about the good news of God's grace."

(Acts 20:24 NIV)

Racing Riddles

Beginning at the arrow, cross off two letters and write the third in the blanks below. Continue all the way around to find out what Paul wanted to do.



Paul's response is an example to us all.
He said, "But my life means nothing to me.
I only want to finish the race.

I want to complete the work the Lord Jesus has given me.
He wants me to witness to others about the good news of God's grace."

(Acts 20:24 NIV)

Word Search

c o r i n i r e v i l a s e h
e a s w t a i p p i l u r o h
p s s o i s h b w t e a o y e
h h n y a i j s l u a n o o a
i t e s l e g n i h t y n a g
s t a i w p a r o e o t f t e
u o t r a i h n o e r l e g r
s m o s y p o m r g d o e r y
s i r a s r a a i n r s r o p
s w o d g i w n n r i b h n e
e r c o s n a i h t n i r o c
t t d e r i l h u m k a l h l
b s r r m h w e h p e g l d s
e i o l l p a y i l a s e h p
r o c s s a g p h i l e f e r

When you _____ or do _____,

_____ do it to _____.

I _____ 10:31

Word Search

c o r i n i r e v i l a s e h
e a s w t a i p p i l u r o h
p s s o i s h b w t e a o y e
h h n y a i j s l u a n o o a
i t e s l e g n i h t y n a g
s t a i w p a r o e o t f t e
u o t r a i h n o e r l e g r
s m o s y p o m r g d o e r y
s i r a s r a a i n r s r o p
s w o d g i w n n r i b h n e
e r c o s n a i h t n i r o c
t t d e r i l h u m k a l h l
b s r r m h w e h p e g l d s
e i o l l p a y i l a s e h p
r o c s s a g p h i l e f e r

When you eat or drink or do anything else,
always do it to honor God.

I Corinthians 10:31