

Spiritual Growth

Preparing for the Race (other passages of Scripture that relate to "running a race"):

A. Qualifying to Run ("The Race" – Hebrews 12:1–3)

"Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us! So we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won't let go. And we must be determined to run the race that is ahead of us. We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete. He endured the shame of being nailed to a cross, because he knew later on he would be glad he did. Now he is seated at the right side of God's throne!"

B. Knowing the Course ("The Rules" – 2 Timothy 2:5)

"No one wins an athletic contest without obeying the rules."

C. Taking Your Mark/Getting Set to Go ("Your Readiness" – 1 Corinthians 9:25–26)

"Athletes work hard to win a crown that cannot last, but we do it for a crown that will last forever. I don't run without a goal. And I don't box by beating my fists in the air."

Can you think of some other comparisons between running a race and living life as a Christian?

Operation Starting Line looks at Christian growth in five stages and links it with five stages of running a race:

Growth Stage:	Stage in the Race:	Principle:
Spiritual Deadness	Not in the Christian Race	Born to Run the Race
Spiritual Infancy	The Race Begins	Get Off to a Good Start
Spiritual Childhood	First Laps	Be Alert in Running the Race
Spiritual Adolescence	Running with Purpose	Catch a "Second Wind"
Spiritual Adulthood	Keep the Focus	Keep Moving Toward the Goal
Spiritual Elderhood	Passing the Torch	Become a Coach for Others

Next, you will see that relevant Bible passages are linked with each principle, as well as a simple, motion to help you remember key ideas for each stage. This training manual focuses only on Spiritual Infancy – "The Race Begins."

My friends, you are acting like the people of this world. That's why I could not speak to you as spiritual people. You are like babies as far as your faith in Christ is concerned. So I had to treat you like babies and feed you milk. You could not take solid food, and you still cannot, because you are not yet spiritual. You are jealous and argue with each other. This proves that you are not spiritual and that you are acting like the people of this world.

Some of you say that you follow me, and others claim to follow Apollos. Isn't that how ordinary people behave? Apollos and I are merely servants who helped you to have faith. It was the Lord who made it all happen. I planted the seeds, Apollos watered them, but God made them sprout and grow. What matters isn't those who planted or watered, but God who made the plants grow. The one who plants is just as important as the one who waters. And each one will be paid for what they do. Apollos and I work together for God, and you are God's garden and God's building.