REACHING THE GOAL

LESSON 103 → 2 Timothy 4:1-8; Revelation 3:11

There is one race in which everyone can be a winner!

Searing pain wracked through every muscle. Evan ignored it. He could see the tape stretched across the finish line just a few hundred yards ahead.

Every fiber of his body strained forward. Sweat drenched him. Dimly he sensed someone closing in on him. But how could anyone? He'd been well ahead through the whole race.

WE WANT TO FINISH GOD'S RACE.

He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. — Mark 13:13

Numbly each foot pounded ahead of the other. He willed his body to more speed. If he could just tap that final reserve of energy. But it didn't seem to be there today.

The other runner was closing in fast. Determination welled up inside Evan. He just wasn't going to give in now. He would not let another person get ahead of him.

He willed himself to push harder. A flush of adrenaline surged through him just as the other runner drew closer. Side by side they ran now. Only thirty yards to go.

Defeat just couldn't be his! Evan had worked toward this moment of victory all year long. He had trained in the sweltering heat and in the icy slush. He'd put in miles and miles every day. This marathon had been his goal since last summer.

As he gave his last ounce of strength, the other runner broke the tape just ahead of him. The last moment made the difference. The taste of defeat was bitter in Evan's mouth as hands lifted the winner and carried him over the heads of the cheering crowd. Evan collapsed on the grass to the side. His breath, coming in tearing gasps, wrenched from him. But even as he wiped his face and raked the hair from his forehead, a question was forming in his mind. Who was that runner—the winner of the marathon? He spotted the guy in a big group over by the time clock.

Evan wedged his way into the group, and touched the other runner's shoulder. In spite of the disappointment that was still heavy on him, he stuck out his hand. "Hi, I'm Evan Jacobs, and I just want to tell you that was a great race."

His hand was grasped readily. "Say, you're the guy that came in just about a second behind me, aren't you? I'm Jake Nelson. Let me tell you, I had to give it everything to get a step ahead of you! You were out in front nearly the whole race."

As the crowd milled around them, Evan and Jake stood for a few minutes discussing their training and some other races they had run. "It is really disappointing to put everything you have into a race and then not win," Jake said. "I've had that happen often enough too."

Evan grimaced in agreement, "It's just too bad there isn't some kind of race in which everyone who really did his best could win, isn't it?
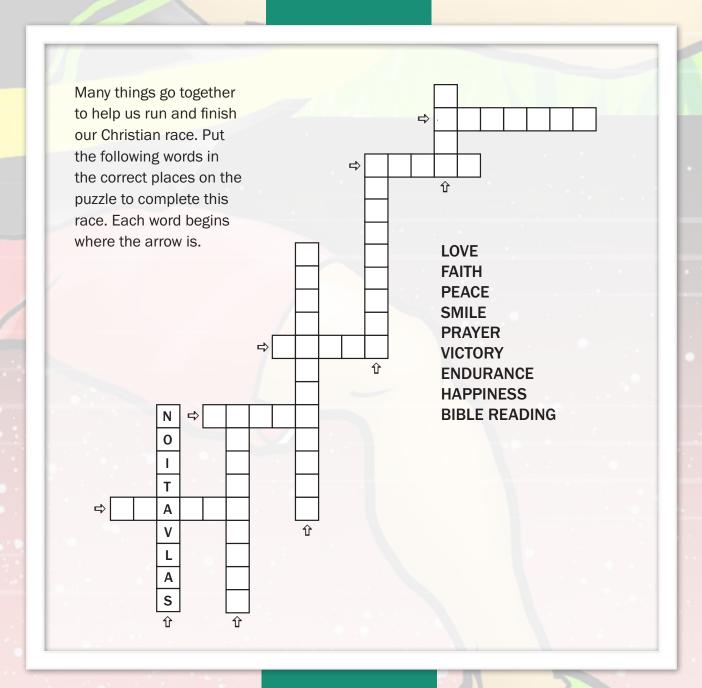
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The Bible tells us that every real Christian is in a spiritual race. But it is different from races we run here on this earth. In this race, everybody that finishes is a winner!

Evan had trained hard to be a winner in the marathon he ran. And it is going to take some effort to "win" in the spiritual race too. You won't be running long miles to get in shape for this, but you will have to spend time reading your Bible, praying, staying close to God, and trying every day to live in a way that is pleasing to Him.

We read in God's word that we must "lay aside every weight" in order to run the race that is set before us. That means we must be willing to give up things that would slow us down spiritually. Are you ready to do that so you can win the race?

The key to winning is endurance. Whatever might come our way, be it bad or good, we do not let that deter us from pressing on. The end is what counts in any race, but everyone who crosses the finish line into Heaven is a winner.

RUN THE RACE

Many things go together to help us run and finish our Christian race. Put the following words in the correct places on the puzzle to complete this race. Each word begins where the arrow is.

LOVE
FAITH
PEACE
SMILE
PRAYER
VICTORY
ENDURANCE
HAPPINESS
BIBLE READING

PARDONED, PREPARED, AND POWERFUL