

Fruitful and Free: After 21 Days, What's Next?

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Most worthwhile accomplishments in life do not happen by accident. Rather, they take focus. They take effort. They take self-control. A similar thing is true in our spiritual lives. If we want a life of growing freedom and fruitfulness, it will not happen by accident. We will not stumble our way into it. To help us understand this, the apostle Paul looks to the realm of athletics in our passage today. He uses a couple of metaphors to help us consider what it takes to pursue spiritual growth. As we wrap up our 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, we hope this passage will help each of us intentionally think through what's next in our pursuit of God.

Opening Discussion: What is the most rigorous athletic/physical challenge you've undertaken in your life?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

1. Paul writes that we should approach our walk with God the way an athlete approaches competition. What are some of the specifics of this approach that Paul talks about?
2. Spiritually, what does it mean to run in such a way that you win (v. 24)?
3. What kind of self-control does an athlete need to exercise to be successful (v. 25)? How does this help us understand the kind of self-control we need as believers?
4. What is the ultimate motivation that Paul has for how he lives his life?
5. What is Paul talking about when he says he has a concern about being disqualified (v. 27)?

Steve said:

If someone like Paul approached his walk with God like an athlete approaches competition, surely **we** need the same attitude. I just want to ask you straight up, “Is it your settled conviction and commitment to approach your walk with God this way? Are you running to win or are you careless and aimless about the way you seek God?”

6. Do you have this settled conviction and commitment, or would you say you can tend to be careless and aimless in the way you seek God? Explain.

Steve said:

Spiritual disciplines are time-tested ways to approach our walks with God the way an athlete approaches competition. . . . if you are internally motivated to compete and do well, you move toward discipline and training. You don’t bellyache and ask, “Do I really have to have a plan and pay attention to nutrition and sleep and physiology?” In a similar way, if we really want to be disciples of Jesus who experience freedom and fruitfulness, we will move toward spiritual disciplines because they help us abide in Christ.

7. How would you describe your current motivation to pursue spiritual disciplines to help you abide in Christ?
8. What is your plan for the next season of time for how you will seek to abide in Jesus? Specifically, what do you plan to do in the following areas?
 - Reading and reflecting on the Scriptures
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
 - Other disciplines?