

So this year we'll be challenged to; read, not listen, through the entire bible, and to pray for the whole world. To make time to train; to set time aside so that this will happen, and not leave it to chance.

I always knew reading the bible was important. I always wanted to, and I often started, but because I didn't have a set plan, and more importantly because I didn't do it as part of a team, it didn't happen. But thankfully God provided the SOAP reading plan and two other people, and it has happened.

Now he's challenging me to grow in the area of prayer. I know it is important, but when I get busy it seems to be left till I've got time. Which means, it doesn't happen. But for any relationship good

communication is essential. For this to grow I'll need to set time aside, make a plan, and have your encouragement. So this year to help we'll be challenged to pray for the world using a planner which will highlight a different country each week.

We'll also be challenged to see where together we can sacrifice our money so that others hear the Gospel. And then to follow our monetary gift with our personal presence. That is definitely part of Jesus' game plan; he works person to person.

And we'll also be challenged to be part of a group where we meet regularly to care for each other, to pray for each other, to share what the Spirit has been saying with each other.

That's also part of Jesus' plan, we're part of a team who love each other, not a loose group of individuals.

Let's run in such a way as to get the prize. The life of those you love is far too important to be left to chance.

Let us pray.
Jesus we thank and praise you for coming and giving your all for us. We thank you that you didn't leave us to chance, or simply give us your left-over time and energy, but that your plan from eternity was to win us in Jesus. That you gave you best that we might have the joy of life lived with you. Inspire us to follow your example and to live committed to your game plan, to win the world and make an eternal difference with you. Amen.



Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am
Pastor: Tim 0427326553

Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ

12 February 2012

RUN TO WIN

1 Corinthians 9:24-27



Have you ever been to an elite sports contest; football, tennis, cricket, netball, golf, motorsports? I have, and I've never been asked to join in; why do you think that was? I turned up to Philip Island with my bike but nobody offered me a place on the starting grid; I wonder why?

We all know you don't just turn up, but to reach the top there is years and years of dedicated training. And to stay at the top, it's no different; it takes hours and hours of dedicated training. If I simply turned up and expected to compete, what would you say to me?

Paul uses the example of sport, which isn't life or death, to contrast how we are to be living, seeing we're involved in a life or death

mission. People certainly get passionate about their sport; but in the end its only sport, it's not life or death. My team has lost more times than it has won the grand-final, and I've lived on after a few moments of disappointment.

When people reject Jesus and die, they face judgment, and we know that the outcome is eternal rejection. Actually we're involved in more than a life and death battle. There is something worse than death; it's being left with an angry God, with no excuses. It's losing your very reason for being with no hope of every reclaiming it, knowing what you've lost. Lost your heart and soul. Paul says; "Run in such a way as to get the

prize." (1 Cor. 9:24b) The prize is eternal life. Eternal life for me and for those I love. Eternal life is life lived in right relationship with God, through Jesus. Eternal life is life lived under God's blessing in Jesus, enjoying each other's company in a celebration of love.

The stakes are high; it's more than life or death, it's eternal life or eternal punishment. It's eternal love or eternal rejection. It's a celebration of life with God as his child in Jesus, or eternal regret without any hope. The stakes are high.

So Paul makes a contrast with something where the stakes aren't anywhere near as important. Paul uses the image of sport to show how we are to invest ourselves in the mission

that Jesus has called us to.

One of my favourite and most challenging readings from Jesus is; "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21) What a privilege we have, to join Jesus on his mission. What a privilege to join with Jesus in his mission of saving the world, of making a change that will have eternal consequences. We're not tinkering at the edges. We're not shifting deck chairs on the Titanic. We're going out in Jesus power and authority, with him, saving people's lives, making an eternal difference. What a privilege.

Now people who are committed to their sport invest time and effort. They don't just turn up and expect to play. We all know you have to practice, and practice,

and practice. In fact in all sports you practice way more than you actually play the game. That's if you want to be good and win.

I could be a natural player who simply comes along and plays well, but I'll never be a great player, I'll never discover my full

How are you training?

potential if I don't train, and push myself. I'm sure we've all hear the old adage; 'No pain, no gain'. All good sports people push themselves, because they strive to be the best they can.

So that means it doesn't happen by chance. I don't go for a walk one day and find myself training hard. How does it happen? You have a goal, and then you have a plan to reach that goal. You put time

aside to train. You watch what you eat. You listen to your coach, and train with others for encouragement and support. It's not left to chance.

Paul knows that the people of the church community at Corinth are serious about their faith, are committed about their life with Jesus. Paul loves these people. So he's not trying to give them some guilt trip, but

he is seeking to inspire and encourage them into a lifestyle that will be in harmony with their passion for Jesus. And Jesus through Paul is also seeking to inspire and encourage us into a lifestyle that doesn't just happen, but is in harmony with our passion for Jesus.

I know when something is important to me I don't leave it to chance. I make time for it and I put in the effort needed. I don't leave watching

the grand final to chance, but I make sure I'm near a TV and that I won't be disturbed. I'm focused, and other things can wait.

So Paul is encouraging me to set time aside to keep fit in my relationship with Jesus. It just won't happen if left to chance. Which reminds me the same is true of all my important relationships; with my wife, my kids, my extended family, my friends.

They don't just happen if left to chance and I take them for granted.

What happens to any relationship which only gets your left over time and emotional energy? What happens when you only give your left-overs?

So Paul is reminding me to have a plan, but not just any plan, Jesus' plan. Jesus is the one I need to look to, he's my coach. He's the one who has called me and

empowered me to be on his team, and to play according to his game plan. And Jesus does have a game plan, to win. To win the life of those we love, to win the life of those we'll meet in the future. Jesus does have a game plan to change the world for eternal life with the Father.

What's Jesus' game plan?

I don't make up my own plan. So step one is to listen. Listen to Jesus and understand his plan so that I can them begin to train and put it into practice.

It's not good me training to be the best high-jumper in the world when I'm part of a football team or a netball team. I might become the best high-jumper in the world, but when the ball is bounced that will count

for nothing. I need to listen to Jesus so that I'm part of his team, so that I play according to his team plan. Jesus knows how to win, how to win the hearts and souls of people so that they receive eternal life. That's the mission he's invited, no called us to join him on.

So listening is vital which is why the first church community; "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42)

Notice they devoted themselves to listening; that's the bible and to prayer. They're listening to Jesus, so that they can live in harmony with him. It wasn't just something they squeezed in when they had time. No they devoted themselves to listening.