

Small Group Study

Holiness and Culture

From the sermon series, "Living a Christ-Centered Life"



Greek vase with runners at the Panathenaic Games

Icebreakers

Use the questions below to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. What's your favorite sport? Why is that your favorite? What do you like about it?

2. How do you like to exercise? What are some of your favorite ways to 'work-out'?

3. If you could be the best athlete in any sport, what would that be?



SCRIPTURE

Have a volunteer read the following scripture:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

QUESTIONS

Please feel free to adjust this study to fit your group's needs and to listen to the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is not necessary to use all of the questions.

1. In the first century A.D., when Paul wrote this letter, there was, in Corinth, what was called the "Isthmian Games". The Isthmian Games were named after the isthmus of Corinth, where they were held. They were a bit like the olympic games we have today. It happened every two years and was held ten miles outside Corinth. Many of the athletes would come into Corinth to train for the games several months before the games would start. This was a fierce competition; each athlete was striving for the coveted Isthmian crown (a laurel wreath) that they would wear on their heads. The winners not only received a crown, but they also received lifetime exemptions from paying taxes, from serving in the military, tuition fees for education were paid for them, and there were statues of themselves that would be erected along the road that led to the site of the games. Have you ever

trained or practiced or prepared for a big event in your life? How did your life change as you prepared for the event? Did you have to make sacrifices? Was it worth it?

2. Now this is Paul's point: in order to win that prize, these Ithsmian athletes submitted themselves to a grueling training program that called for long hours, a strict diet, abstinence from alcohol and almost a masochistic exercise session day after day - because there was only one thing on their mind: the prize! Paul says, "They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." Most of us have goals in life: financial goals, educational goals, family goals, career goals, even recreational goals. What are some of your goals in these or other areas?

3. When it comes to our Christian walk though, many of us find it difficult to articulate what our spiritual goals are. When asked, we might say something like, "I want to have more Christian friends" or "I want to improve my prayer life" or "learn more about the Bible" or "start giving more to the church." It can be hard to accomplish a goal if those goals aren't "S.M.A.R.T." (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely.) Instead of saying you want to "have more Christian friends," you might say, "I want to commit to attend a small group once a week for at least a year" and maybe "I also want to hang out with some of those people at least once a week outside of group." Instead of saying you want to improve your prayer life, you might say "I want to start by spending at least 10 minutes in prayer 3 times a week." It's also important to break long-term goals into shorter goals. Instead of saying "I want to learn more about the Bible," you might say "I want to start by reading the One-Year-Bible the first year. Then in the second year, I want to take the Disciple class at church (34-week class on the whole Bible; goes from Sept to May), and then I want to start memorizing 2-3 verses a week." What is something that might be on your heart to achieve this year as you "go into strict training" to "get a crown that lasts forever?" If you can't think of anything right away, ask your fellow group members for ideas.

4. Is there someone who could hold you accountable to this goal? Can this group help?

5. What are some goals we want to achieve as a group? (some suggestions: goals centered on service, reaching out more to non-Christian friends, connecting with one another more and building deeper relationships, etc.)

God bless,

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