

WINNING THE GREATEST RACE

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.”
1 Corinthians 9:24

At the beginning of each new year there are countless articles written on setting goals, developing a game plan to reach the goals, listing activities, setting priorities, scheduling periodic reviews to check one's progress and making necessary changes or adjustments in order to achieve the goals to finish well.

Jeremiah 29:11 is a popular and often quoted verse for young people graduating from college or starting out in a career. “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” It’s a great verse, however before we give ourselves to the plan that He has for us, we must first give ourselves to Him (2 Corinthians 8:5). Our greatest desire and #1 priority must be to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind (Matthew 22:37-39).

Luke 9:23 gives us a perfect picture of a life focused on the Kingdom of heaven: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” His is a spiritual kingdom within us where our King desires to control our heart, soul and mind. Our King came, died, rose again, and sent the Holy Spirit to live in us so we might, through His power, live out the difficult and frankly, if left to ourselves, impossible tasks He desires. His assignments are found in Matthew 5:1-12. These tasks focus on demonstrating a lifestyle that is foreign to 21st Century followers found in North America today. However, it is this lifestyle that will glorify the Lord and convict, draw, and attract the world to Him.

As we each begin 2014, our first task should be to make certain we are one of His, and then allow Him to live His life through us from the inside out. Living in accordance to what He wants to do in us must precede what He wants to do through us. As our Head Coach, He has given us His Game Plan for winning The Greatest Race.

His Game Plan begins by making sure we have met the entrance requirements for The Race. Once He has qualified us and shown us His purpose for our lives, He provides instructions on how to prepare for The Race, perform in The Race, persevere to the end of The Race and finish well. He even has a prize prepared for those who finish well.

As a Christian, are you a Fan or a Follower? Are you Comfortable or Committed? Are you prepared to run in The Great Race?

Preparing to make our life count for the Kingdom is a tough assignment. A very successful basketball coach once said, “Everyone wants to win, but few there are who want to prepare to win.” Needless to say, he was all about preparation and rightly so. It led to three NCAA Division One Championships. Our Head Coach’s Game Book lays down some tough and difficult tasks to master in the preparation process. They go against the grain; against everything the world would instruct us to do in preparation for winning The Great Race. These tasks are found in Matthew 5:1-12 when our Head Coach sits down, gathers His followers around Him, and shares His heart on how they must conduct their lives if they expect to impact their culture for His Glory and the propagation of the Gospel. His remarks are often referred to as The Beatitudes. We will look into each one in the months ahead.

Your Assignment:

Read Matthew 5:1-3: “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Define the word “blessed.” How does the world’s description of the blessed person compare to one that Jesus considered blessed? What does Jesus mean when He says “poor in spirit”? Are you “poor in spirit”?

Father, as we consider Your Game Plan for us in the coming weeks, will you do in us all You need to do, so that You may do through us all You desire to do.