

Unit One:

Preparing For The Race



Every four years the world takes particular note of a very special event—the Olympic games. The Olympics are held in different countries around the world, and athletes from all the countries of the world compete against each other for gold, silver, and bronze medals. To be an Olympic athlete is a great achievement. To win a medal is one of the world's great honors.

Those who compete in the Olympic games must train and prepare for many years. Preparation for this competition is unlike any other because these athletes practice many hours a day for years in order to be ready for the competition.

One reason the Olympics are not held more often than every four years is because the athletes must be well prepared and trained. Training and participation in smaller competitions to win a place on the Olympic teams requires extra effort for the athlete.

The decathlon is the most difficult competition of all, and the participants in this event are the greatest of all athletes. "Decathlon" means ten events. Athletes who take part must train for all ten events and therefore cannot focus on just one competition. The variety of the events requires competitors to be well-rounded in their physical strength and speed, not merely specialists in one particular skill.

To become a strong Christian requires the same inner determination and strength of character as is required of such athletes as these. The preparation for the Christian is found in the Word of God as God lays the foundation for the victory. As the Christian studies, absorbs, and spends time in God's Word, he will be prepared to be victorious in life. Just as the athlete competes, so must we compete against forces outside of ourselves that want to overcome and defeat us.

As we study the Bible this year, we will see how the Christian life is similar to a great race. The Bible makes many references to the race we run as Christians and to the victory that Jesus Christ can give us. But it all starts with preparation from the Word of God.



LESSON 1

The Greatest Book Ever Written

Key Verse: Ephesians 6:17

VOCABULARY

Prophet: a spokesman for God who uttered the exact words the Lord gave him

Prophecy: something said by a prophet that reveals the divine will of God; a warning of something to come; a vivid, pointed, solemn prediction

Doctrine: a principle held as divine truth

Inspiration: the special influence of the Holy Spirit guiding certain persons to speak and write what God wanted communicated to others

Rebuking: blame or censure for a misdeed; a mild reproof or scolding

Righteousness: actions judged as proper by the standards of God's holy law, which is derived from His holy character

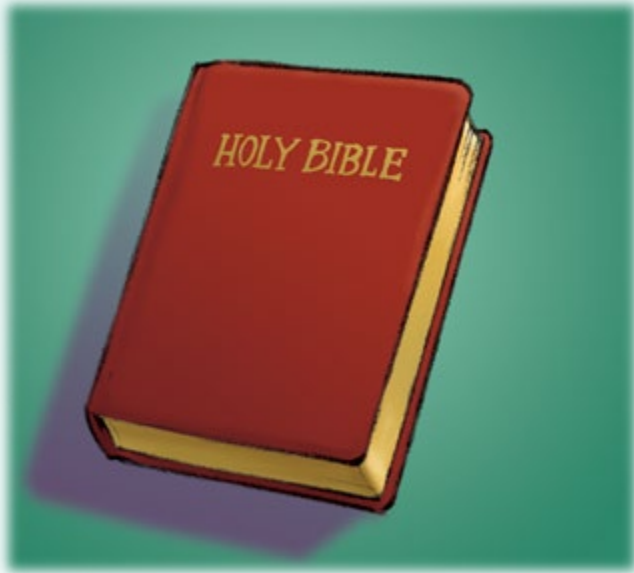
The Bible is the greatest book that has ever been written. In it God Himself speaks to men. It is a book of divine instruction. The Bible is not simply one book. It is an entire library of books that contain a wide variety of information, but it is tied together by one central purpose. The Bible was written by dozens of authors over a period of 1,600 years. It was written in three languages on three continents. The authors were poets, educators, singers, princes, kings, fishermen, and statesmen. Some of these authors were great scholars, while others were unlearned and ignorant men.

The Written Word And The Living Word

It would seem that with this many authors, the individual pieces of the Bible would not fit together well. Yet there is great unity throughout the book because really there was only one Author. To understand how so many authors could be unified in their writing of one book, we need to understand that there really was only one main Author.



Read 2 Peter 1:21 and explain in your own words how a book written by so many different people could be unified into the Word of God.



The Word of God was authored by God Himself. The great subject of God's Word is the Lord Jesus Christ. The person and work of Jesus Christ are promised, prophesied, and pictured in the Old Testament. The life of the Lord Jesus is revealed in the four Gospels, and the meaning and purpose of His life, death, and resurrection are explained in the Epistles. His expected return is foretold in the book of Revelation.

Therefore, the great purpose of the written Word of God, the Bible, is to reveal the living Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. God explains this in John 1:1–18. Read and study this passage and then answer the following questions:



What three statements are made about the Word in John 1:1?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



What does verse 14 mean when it says that the Word became flesh?



Why do we capitalize the name "Word"?



List the various ways John describes Jesus in verses 3, 4, and 9.

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-
-



What does John say about who Jesus was and how the world accepted Him?

- Verse 10:

- Verse 11:



What is the central message of the Bible (vs. 12)?



According to verse 18, how then can we “see” God?

Life Principle: Jesus Christ (the living Word) is the true God. The Bible (the written Word), though written by dozens of different people, actually has only one Author—God Himself.



We therefore know some very important facts about the Word of God and its Author. Some of these facts are listed below. See how many of the following blanks you can complete with the correct word:

- Jesus is G .
- Jesus was the C of the universe.
- The W has always existed with God.
- God used d of different men to put His Word into w form.
- The H S worked through men to write down God’s Word for us.
- The Bible is the w W of God.
- Jesus Christ is the l W of God.

Purposes For Studying God’s Word



Second Timothy 3:16 gives four reasons for us to study God’s Word. List the four purposes below as given in this verse. Beside each purpose, look up the word in the dictionary and write the definition. We need to make sure we understand the purposes for studying God’s Word.

1.
2.
3.
4.

The Bible is, therefore, our only way of knowing God personally. Through studying God’s Word this year, we will learn more about God, more about God’s purpose for our lives, and how to live our lives in such a way as to have God’s blessing.

Winning Your Race

Variations of the phrase, “This is what the Lord says,” occur hundreds of times in the Old Testament alone. The Bible is truly the Word of God. Never underestimate its importance, uniqueness, or worth!



Give an example of how the Lord could use each of these purposes in your own life (from 2 Tim. 3:16).



Name a Bible doctrine (teaching) you learned this week.



Name an area in your life that the Lord may need to rebuke through His Word.



Name an area in your life that God may need to correct or change.



Give an example of some training in righteousness God might give you.