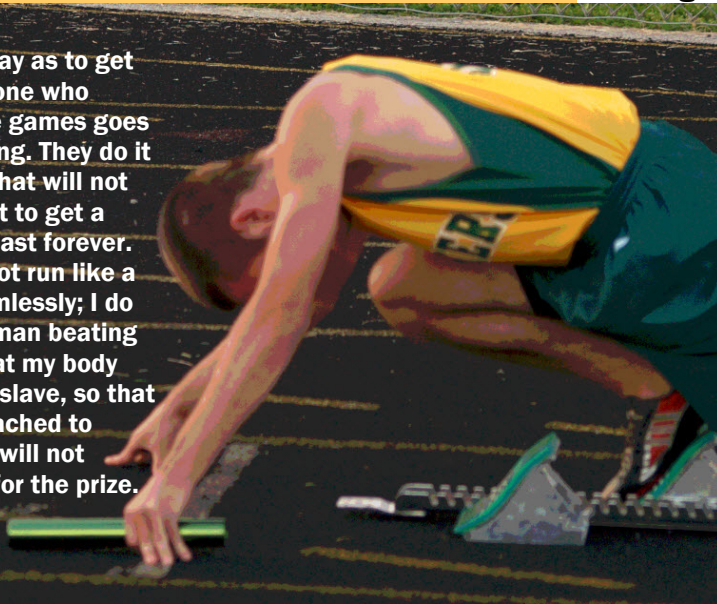


a Lenten challenge

Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.
1 Cor.9:24-27



How easy it is to admire discipline in athletes, but how hard it is to practice it ourselves.

Lent is traditionally the time when we commemorate our Lord's 40 days in the desert as He began His earthly ministry. Throughout the ages, Christians have used this time for self-denial to train their bodies and spirits in godliness. Here are a few suggestions on how we might do that.

We can give up our time. We can give up our free time and spend more time with Jesus, in His word, or serving others. We can spend additional time in prayer for others.

We can give up control of our words. This is hard when we love to give our opinion and advice. For Lent we can discipline ourselves to listen carefully, to ask questions before we speak.

We can give up feelings of resentment. It may be true that no one appreciates us in the way they should, but no matter how difficult our day, our burdens are nothing compared to what Jesus bore for us.

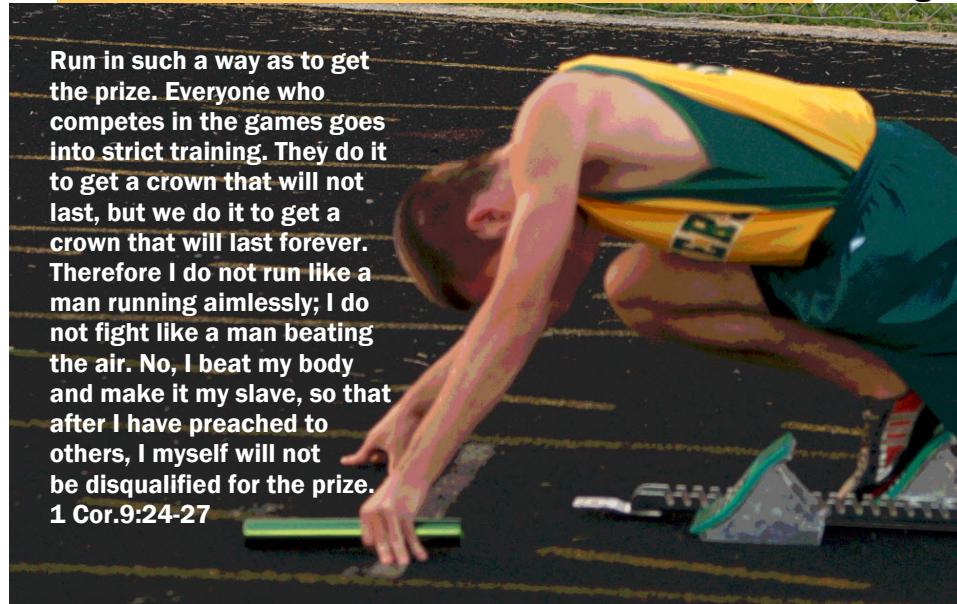
We can give up a habit. Sometimes anger, bad attitudes, gossip or a judgemental spirit keep us from being as effective as we could be in ministry.

For Lent, ask the Lord to be your personal trainer, to show you what is keeping you from being the spiritual athlete he wants you to be. Age, abilities, don't matter—obedience does. Listen to his voice; practice the spiritual training habits in the Bible, and use Lent as a time to become more effective in serving Jesus.

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