

WHAT'S YOUR PURPOSE?

WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU HERE FOR?

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **START & FINISH ON TIME.** Doing this will show your small group you value their time.

You Are Called To Become Like Christ

ICEBREAKER

What's the coolest thing you've ever built with your own two hands?

INTRODUCTION

God created you. He made you. He designed you. He called you for a purpose. We've been looking at the purposes of your life, and they are actually building blocks. The first is that you are called to receive God's love and love Him back! The second is you are called to belong to God's family, the church. We cannot become the person God wants us to be until we first accept that He loves us and that we belong to Him. This week we will look at how you are called to become like Christ.

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In the first week, we looked at a passage of scripture that is very familiar to all of us. But we usually stop at the first part. Instead, we kept reading to discover that we are all called by God. Now, let's keep reading some more.

*We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them. For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to **become like His Son.***

Romans 8:28-29 (NLT)

The idea of becoming like Jesus is not that we will be gods or that we will be divine. It's that we will develop the same character and values as Christ.

The Bible describes becoming like Christ as a race. We all run, but it takes patience and endurance. That means we never give up because God never gives up on us.

What are some ways that your life in Christ is different than your life before Christ? How are you becoming more like Christ? (Ex. I've become more loving, kind, patient, forgiving, faithful. I have more peace, love and joy. My values, thoughts and actions have changed.)

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When we talk about running a race to become like Christ, there are eight statements that go along with that. Let's review those now:

1. Simplify My Life

I have to remove all the things that are holding me back from fulfilling God's purposes and calling for me to become more like Christ. Hebrews 12:1 (NIV) says that we must throw off everything that hinders us before we can make some real progress.

2. Don't Get Impatient or in a Hurry

We all want to see that change NOW! But God has a plan for your life that will take time. In fact, it will take your entire life. Paul, at the end of his life, said that he wasn't done growing yet because he was not yet perfect (Philippians 3:12).

3. Spend Time Focusing on Jesus Every Day

The same passage that tells us to throw off what holds us back also tells us how – by focusing on Jesus:

Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus.
Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)

What is an obstacle that keeps you from consistently spending time with Jesus?

(Example, we don't want to, we don't prioritize or plan to, we're easily distracted, we're discouraged by past failures, we don't know how,)

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Running is hard work. You may be a marathon runner. The only running you may do is running errands. Either way, we all know that it can get tough. The next three statements about running the race to become like Jesus will help you stay focused.

4. When It Gets Hard, Remember the Reward

Jesus is our example, remember? So how did Jesus keep running the race when it got hard?

Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how He did it. Because He never lost sight of where He was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—He could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now He's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God.

Hebrews 12:2 (MSG)

5. Gather a Team to Run with You

It's your race and nobody can run your race. But people can support you in your race. In your life at different stages of the race you're going to need different believers to run along with you.

In Hebrews 10:24, scripture reminds us to encourage one another toward love and to do the right thing. It goes on to say in verse 25, "*Let us not give up meeting together.*" God encourages us to keep meeting in a small group. Gathering together is a way we encourage one another to keep running the race of faith. In fact, let's pray about continuing to meet as a small group beyond this series.

How has being in a small group helped you run your race in life?

6. Remember God is Cheering You at Every Stage

Some of us have the mistaken idea that God only smiles at us when we do things right. Or that God will only smile at us once we've reached the finish line. But the truth is God smiles at us with love and favor no matter what stage of our development we are in. Let the following verse encourage you.

*"The Lord bless you and keep you; **the Lord make His face shine on you** and be gracious to you; the Lord look on you with His favor and give you peace..."*

Numbers 6:24-26

The phrase, "*The Lord make His face shine on you,*" simply means that God looks at you with favor. When He looks at you, He smiles. There is no shame or guilt. Just pure love.

Think of a time when you felt like you let God down. Share about it (if you'd like, no pressure). How does it make you feel knowing that God is cheering you on at every stage of your journey with Him?

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Let's look at the last two statements.

7. Take Every Step with Purpose

If you're going to become the person God wants you to be, there are some things you're going to have to deny yourself. You're not going to get to do everything that everybody else does. But the future you have when you "*run straight to the goal with purpose*" (1 Corinthians 9:26 - TLB) is so much better than the fleeting pleasure of sin today.

8. Realize that What I Don't Finish, God Will

I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished.

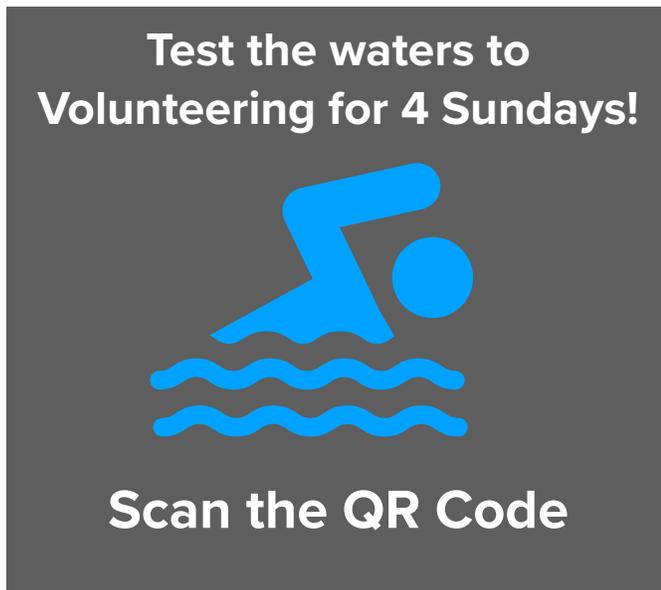
Philippians 1:6 (NLT)

How could your life be different if you fully embraced the idea that it's not all up to you, that God wants you to finish the race and He will help you every step of the way?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

We are called to become like Jesus. And God is the One who will help us each step of the way. This week:

- Identify the stumbling blocks to running the race
- Gain confidence that God is behind you
- Listen for the cheers of God and His people around you
- Sign up to volunteer:



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Father God, help us run the race You have put out in front of us. You are the One forming us into the image of Your Son. We could never do this on our own. But with You, all things are possible. Help us to see the things that hold us back and have courage to give them up. And keep us on track as we run this race. In Jesus' name, amen.



Find Time to READ God's WORD

Reading God's Word daily re-patterns the way you think & transforms your mind. Doing your daily devotions is an excellent way to record, process, & share what God is teaching you on a personal level. We do this using S.O.A.P.

- S - Scripture**
- O - Observation**
- A - Application**
- P - Prayer**

Here's an example:

S: *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*

--Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

O: Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

A: Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

P: Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win!

--1 Corinthians 9:24 (NLT)

Day 2:

Run away from youthful lusts—pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those [believers] who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

--2 Timothy 2:22 (AMP)

Day 3:

Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near.

--Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)

Day 4:

So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

--1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (NLT)

Day 5:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

--2 Timothy 4:7 (NIV)