

Chariots of Fire

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. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 1 Corinthians 9:24-25

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. Hebrews 12:1-3

The movie, Chariots of Fire, is based on the true story of Eric Liddell and the 1924 Olympics. Although the film takes some liberties with history, the story is accurate in that Eric did not run his assigned race because he wouldn't run the heat on Sunday. Although all Christian churches agree that we should honor the Sabbath Day to keep it holy, there are many different interpretations on how this should be done.

What do you think God means when He says in the commandments to honor the Sabbath to keep it holy?

The story in the movie compares Eric and a fellow runner, Harold Abrahams. Eric made it plain from the beginning that he wanted to live and run for the glory of God. Harold struggled to win believing he had to prove himself worthy.

Do you struggle to prove yourself or do you feel comfortable being the person you are?

Eric worked at the mission with his sister. Just before the Olympics he accepted a call to China. Eric also ran with incredible speed and talent. He said to his sister, *"I believe that God made me for a purpose, China ... but He also made me fast, and when I run, I feel His pleasure."*

What gifts has God given you? When do you feel His pleasure? For what mission were you created?

Eric's sister was disappointed when he agreed to run in the Olympics. She felt that it took his attention away from God's work at the mission.

Do you think that something like running a race can be part of God's mission in our lives?

Eric loved to run but it wasn't the center of his life. The center of his life was God. The center of Harold's life was to prove his own worth. Eric wanted to win but loved God even more. Harold said that his running was an addiction, that he used it to protect himself. Sadly when he lost a race he felt that he lost the center of his life.

What is the center of your life? What things distract you from your goal?

Although Eric was highly competitive and wanted to be part of the Olympic team he was willing to give up his dream rather than dishonor his convictions and commitment to God. Eric stood by his convictions and also got to run. The Bible says, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:4. This verse doesn't mean that we will get everything we want when we choose God, but rather it means that when we delight in God and His ways, He will fill us with the joy that our heart desires.

Dear Lord, help us to delight ourselves in You. Fill us with your peace and joy and contentment. Take away our need to prove ourselves. Instead show us how to rest in Your love. Take away our fear of failure and set us free to run freely and confidently in You. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.