



Faith Adventures for Children Together



Free to use – please acknowledge when using beyond local church children's and youth work so others can find and use the resource themselves.

*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church and beyond.*

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link: www.bit.ly/FACT-how-to-sheet

Title: 1 Corinthians 9: 24–27

Theme: My personal best

Contents:

Introduction	1
Together	2
Experience	3
Explore	4
Express	6
Handouts	10

Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul compares the Christian life to running a race. Athletes train with focus, discipline and self-control so they can perform at their very best. Paul reminds believers that faith also requires intentional living – not drifting aimlessly but choosing habits and attitudes that help us grow closer to God.

Self-control is about far more than simply “behaving well”. It is about self-disciplining our own faith journey, each of us reaching our personal best, in our race. This resource will help explore what healthy, biblical self-control looks like. Like the lesson from the classic tale of the hare and the tortoise, faithful growth is not always fast or flashy; it is steady, intentional, and consistent. We must also remember that this is part of a wider theme of Fruits of the spirit.

Paul's image of athletic discipline reminds us that spiritual growth takes practice. Just as athletes train their bodies, Christians are called to train their hearts, minds, and habits. Whether through prayer, worship, rest, encouragement, or wise choices, every small step matters. Sometimes self-control is seen in what we say; at other times, in what we choose not to say.

We each need to run our own personal best race, the goal is not perfection, but progress – becoming a little better, a little wiser, and a little more like Christ each day. Even small changes

matter. A commitment to become “one per cent better” in our attitudes, reactions and faithfulness can have a lasting impact on our journey.

This resource is designed to encourage and equip all to grow in self-control through biblical reflection, practical application and honest personal discipleship, so that together we may “run in such a way as to get the prize”.

Together – prayer and games

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend,

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better

(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family.

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three ‘steps’ as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN

(two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.

Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.

**Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,
adventuring together with you wherever we may go.**

Amen

Active game: Personal best

Create a small circuit of fitness activities e.g. do five-star jumps, run the length of the room and back, followed by five lunges and five push-ups. Time how long it takes for each person

to do the circuit – then ask them to go again to beat their PB. It's about each child improving on their own time, and isn't a competition with others.

Or you could ask the children to balance a bean bag or book on their heads and walk around. Time how long they can keep the item on their heads. Then take time to work out strategies to improve their time and ask them to do the activity again to see if they have improved their best.

Quieter game – Self-control

Self-control is tricky; these suggestions will help everyone to try out how much self-control they have.

Eat a doughnut:

Give everyone a sugar-coated doughnut. Ask them to sit in a circle so they can see each other. They then have to try to eat the doughnut without licking their lips. Please be aware of allergies.

Other ideas might include eating a Starburst or chocolate éclair without chewing.

Stand on one leg:

On the count of three, ask everyone to stand on one leg. How long can they control their body to enable them to keep that going?

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

For this story we recommend using *The Message*

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209%3A24-27&version=MSG>

Where can I find the story online?

Under-fives: Paul's letter about self control (Slapstick Theater), by Saddleback Kids

https://youtu.be/5TUFWB_U3kc?si=-tbDU8sm_7iCmdYj

Five-to-elevens: Fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control, by Crossroads Kids' Club

https://youtu.be/qKC41BavZ_Y?si=i--KHG-On094AyLo

Songs to support the story

Under-fives: Be happy, by Duggie Dug Dug

https://youtu.be/l7uleEr-UKw?si=ln6SwHkygwtXvkK_

Five-to-elevens: Running the Race, by Harbour Church UK

<https://youtu.be/WY-KmapUyts?si=ipiktP0hteikvXGE>

Explore – ways into the theme

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new way to explore the theme

Invite everyone to join in with a simple challenge such as balancing, hopping or completing a quick circuit. Let everyone try it once and then encourage them to improve their personal best. Ask them, "Have you ever trained or practised for something? What helped you improve?" Provide two sheets of paper: one titled "Athlete" and the other "Christian". Consider these different aspects of being an athlete and a Christian.

Think about an athlete – they run... stop... breathe... then run again. No crowd. No medal. No one watching. They turn up again and again; they choose healthy food; they listen to the coach; they do not give up when it hurts.

An athlete chooses what helps them grow strong – food, water, rest, practice.

A Christian chooses what helps their faith grow – God's word, prayer, encouragement, time with God.

An athlete prepares carefully – they practise, they stay focused, they keep going when it's hard.

A Christian prepares too – learning from Jesus, practising self-control, trying again when they get things wrong.

Gather the group around a large piece of paper and ask what an athlete does to be able to give their best or even win a race.

Encourage the group to capture their ideas on the sheet of paper. For example: good nutrition exercise, sleep and rest, learning about the body and how it works, practising running, having a coach to guide you, never giving up, and so on.

Explain that, in this passage, we see the Christian life described as a race; each of us is encouraged to run our best race. What can we do to be able to give our best in our faith journey? For example, reading the Bible, prayer, meeting with other Christians, living a good life.

Create these ideas on a separate list, comparing the athlete and a Christian. What small steps do they both take to do their best?

- What is one small step you could take to be your **personal best** in your journey with God?

Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too. If you are to use the modern parable, consider buying a copy or

borrowing it from the library so children see the actual book and can explore the illustrations more (and support the author).

The Bible passage we are exploring this week's talks about "winning a race" – but it's really about being the best you can be, and doing the best you can.

We have all been given different gifts, and self-discipline (a Fruit of the Spirit) is about ensuring those gifts are used as well as possible. After all, a sprinter won't do very well in a marathon, but nor would a marathon runner do well in a sprint.



The Aesop Fable "The Tortoise and the Hare" (July 2016 : Miles Kelly Publishing) ISBN-10 1786170035

- I wonder what your gift is

You can find an animated version which explains this idea really well

here:

Aesop's Fables "The Tortoise and the Hare", by Animaza Studies

<https://youtu.be/GfsGU4L7iTw?si=KftDdnptRA0ybgvO>

Talking together: How might we talk about the Bible story together?

- I wonder what you think a lack of self-control leads to in life
- I wonder what the opposite of self-control is
- What does doing your personal best mean to you?
- Is it better to have a world record or a personal best?

Wondering: ways to reflect on the theme

- I wonder who is guilty of lazing living
- I wonder if doing your best is always enough
- I wonder what makes you want to give up

What's in the box? (for under-fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing, "What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- Medals – talk to the children about what we get a medal for. Chat over all the different ways we may get a medal
- Star of the week certificate – I wonder if any of you have had a star of the week, for doing your best. Maybe you could bring them in for us to see
- Training shoes – people who do sports wear special shoes to help them practice.
- A Bible – the Bible helps us practise and learn to follow Jesus
- A tactile cross of wood or fabric (a cross shape reminds us of Jesus. Jesus/God loves us and it's always in the box because Jesus/God always loves us!)
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (eg stones, felt, twigs etc)

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Prayerful activity – Beep beep

You will need:

- timer
- party poppers



What you do:

A well-known activity in schools is the beep test: can you run from place to place at the beeps? This prayer activity works on the same premise. The prayers will be timed and a beep will sound each time a new period of time has started. Between each beep is a time to pray. Think carefully about your group and set the timer accordingly – 20 seconds can seem longer than you think to a young person! You may wish to suggest themes for each prayer section: people, world, war, ourselves, etc.

So, start with a theme, set the timer, and when the beep goes off, change to a different theme. When all themes are completed then everyone gets to pull their party popper, to signify the prayers have ended and as an Amen.

Spoken prayer

God, we choose to run your race.

Help us to run the race well.

Give us the strength to never give up.

Help us to run the race well.

Help us to encourage each other every step.

Help us to run the race well.

Keep us close to you as we run each day.

Help us to run the race well.

Amen

Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond.

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage the children to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

Medal Biscuits

You will need:

- Digestive or Rich Tea biscuits
- icings
- edible decorations
- strawberry laces
- writing icing to decorate



What you do:

Decorate a biscuit to look like a medal using the icing and other decorations.

Add a strawberry lace as a ribbon for the medal.

Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

- Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you what they think it means to run the race for Jesus
- Could you make some small medals, and each time you see someone at church or home doing something which is to highlight Jesus give them a medal? You could award them to yourself too!

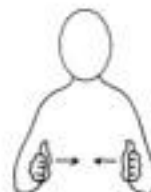
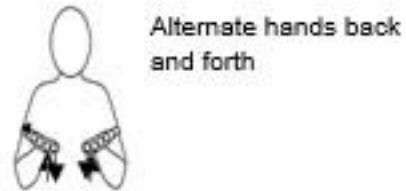
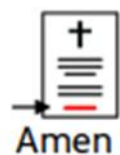
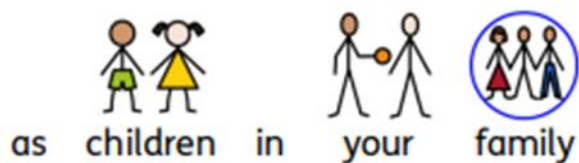
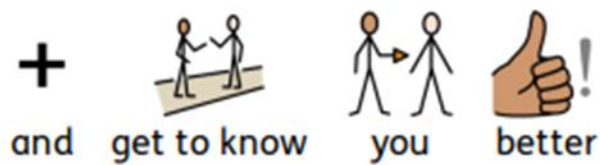
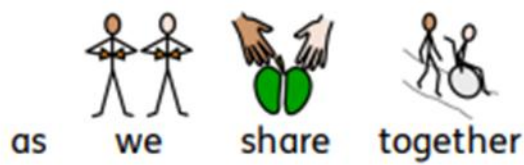
We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **1 Corinthians 9** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing

sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk

Please join the Faith Adventures Facebook Group **bit.ly/FACT_FB**

Why not have a look at next week's resource on **the ten lepers**




 The Lord's Prayer

 Our  Father,  who art  in  heaven,  hallowed be  thy  name.

 Thy  kingdom  come,  thy  will  be done





 on  earth  as it is  in  heaven.

 Give  us  this day  our  daily  bread

 and  forgive  us  our  sins  As  we  forgive  those  who  sin  against  us

 Lead  us  not  into  temptation  but  deliver  us  from  evil

 For  thine  is the  kingdom,  the  power  and  the  glory

 For ever  and  ever  . Amen



Illustrated by Richard Gunther www.lambsongs.co.nz



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