

STARTER'S ORDERS

THE AIM: To understand that the Christian life is an ongoing race.

The aim unpacked

The analogy of the Christian life as a race is very powerful. Our young people should know that being a Christian is more than simply saying 'yes', and that 'yes' involves saying sorry to God, acceptance of Christ as our Lord and an ongoing lifestyle that we should strive for. Using the image of a race brings these concepts clearly into focus for our young people.

WAY IN



theGRID MAGAZINE

WHAT: deciding what you need
WHY: to think about what we need to succeed in different tasks
WITH: magazine page 224

- 1 Hand out copies of page 224 and invite the young people to complete the 'Choose your equipment' exercise.
- 2 Discuss the role that equipment plays in these sporting tasks. Ask: 'Would it be possible to achieve these goals without any of this equipment?'
- 3 If you wish, invite a brief discussion:
 - What equipment do we need to follow Jesus? (For example, the Bible, help from other Christians.)
 - Can we do it without these things?



SCENE SETTER

WHAT: video clip
WHY: to introduce the idea of training
WITH: clip of David Beckham and Jonny Wilkinson (available online), playback equipment

- 1 Search on the internet for 'David Beckham + Jonny Wilkinson rugby kicking' to find the video clip. Save a copy or make sure your meeting space has internet access so you can show it to the group. Alternatively, find some other clips of skilled athletes doing their thing.
- 2 As a group, watch the video clips together.
- 3 Invite the young people to discuss, in pairs:
 - Do you think it really is easy to do what Beckham and Wilkinson do? Why? (They have trained for years to build on their natural skills.)
 - What natural skills and talents do you have? How can you build and develop them?
- 4 Bring the group together and share feedback on their thoughts.



THEMED GAME

WHAT: balloon race
WHY: to introduce the idea of a race
WITH: two inflated balloons

- 1 Divide the group into two teams and ask them to line up opposite each other. Give the first person in each group a balloon.
- 2 At your signal, the teams must pass their balloon from the first person in their line to the last, following the rules below:
 - Every person has to touch the balloon at least once, and no one may touch it with their hands or forearms!
 - If the balloon touches the floor, it must go back to the beginning of the line and start again.
 - The first team to get their balloon to the last person in the line is the winner.

BIBLE EXPERIENCE



LEVEL 1: CONNECT

WHAT: training programme

WHY: to understand that the Christian life is an ongoing race

WITH: resource page 225, Bibles

1 Hand out copies of resource page 225. Say: 'You have just found out that in 16 weeks' time you are going to run a marathon. Using this page, design a training programme to prepare for the event.' Ask:

- What exercise will you do to get fit? How often?
- What changes will you need to make to your diet?
- What equipment will you need to buy?

2 Look at the training plans together. Each one will be different because we all have different levels of ability and different goals. Some people might be happy to make it their goal to walk around the course, while others may want to aim to complete it as fast as possible. Whatever our goals, we stand more chance of meeting them if we prepare well.

3 Invite the young people to read 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 and then Hebrews 11:39–12:3. Explain that the letter writers say that if we decide to follow God, our lives are like a race and, just like runners in a marathon, we need to train and prepare ourselves to keep going.

4 Divide the young people into pairs. Invite them to think about what kinds of things would help to 'train' us for a life following God. (Reading the Bible, prayer, talking with other Christians, learning to be more like Jesus, and so on.)

5 Ask everyone to fill out another training programme – this time to become spiritually 'fitter'. Ask:

- What would you like to change?
- What would you like to make more time for?
- What do you think God might be telling you to do with your skills and abilities?



LEVEL 2: INTERFACE

WHAT: wacky race

WHY: to understand that the Christian life is an ongoing race

WITH: blindfold, large heavy boots, long scarf, plastic jug of water

1 Mark out a short race course with start and finish lines. Choose four volunteers to compete in the 'wacky race'. Say that the first to get to the finish line is the winner. Encourage everyone else to cheer them on.

2 Line up the contestants at the start. Blindfold the first contestant, make the second contestant wear the large boots, tie the scarf around the knees of the third contestant and get the fourth to balance the jug of water on the back of their hand.

3 As you give out the 'handicaps', say to each person, 'You may not remove this until the end of the race.' Start the race and cheer on the competitors.

4 Repeat the race with four new volunteers. Whisper to them that although they must not remove their own 'handicaps', there is no rule against removing each other's.

5 Discuss with the young people the difference that the help of others made to the runners. Read Hebrews 11:39–12:3 to the group.

6 Explain that being a Christian is like being in a race. And, just like the wacky race, the race is easier with help. Discuss as a group:

- What similarities are there between life and a race?
- What difference do you think it makes to the 'race' if you are a Christian?
- What kind of things can you do to help other people in this 'race'?

7 Invite the young people to think about this: Jesus taught that we should love one another as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39). Helping each other is one way to show this. What could you do to help others in your life?



LEVEL 3: SWITCH ON

WHAT: cross-country activity

WHY: to understand that the Christian life is an ongoing race

WITH: chalk (if doing the activity outside) or large roll of paper (eg wallpaper)

1 Talk about running a cross-country race. Say that most courses have some hard uphill bits and some easy parts.

2 Either take the group outside or work inside. As one group and using chalk on the pavement or pens on the roll of paper, challenge the young people to design their own cross-country course. Remind them to include some hard parts and some easy parts.

3 Invite everyone to look at what they have drawn and to imagine that this course represents their life. The hills and obstacles are the difficult times; the flat, pretty bits are when life is easier. Invite everyone to stand in the place that best sums up where they feel they are in life now.

4 Invite one or two to say briefly why they chose the place where they are standing. Either in small groups or all together, discuss:

- What does the road ahead look like? Is it getting easier or harder?
- What help will you need to get through the next part of the course? Who might be able to give this help?
- What motivates you to keep going in your life?

5 Ask volunteers to read aloud Hebrews 11:39–12:3 and 1 Corinthians 9:24–27.

6 If the Christian life is a race, we could think of God as our coach, helping to prepare us for the different situations we encounter and to encourage us to keep going. Ask someone else to read Matthew 6:8, which shows that God knows our needs and will help.

7 Ask the young people to think about the following: If you had a coaching session with God, what help would you ask him for?



MUSICAL

WHAT: playlist prayers

WHY: to encourage personal prayer and reflection

WITH: music and lyrics of 'I Shall Believe' by Sheryl Crow (from the album *Tuesday Night Music Club*), playback equipment

- 1 Create a relaxing space for quiet reflection with comfortable seating and low lighting.
- 2 Play the track and encourage everyone to relax and listen, reflect on the lyrics and pray quietly.
- 3 Once the track has finished, maintain the relaxed atmosphere and encourage the group to pray openly about their own 'race', which is their life. Encourage them to pray specifically about things which are holding them back in their 'race' and to ask for help to stay focused on Jesus.



PRACTICAL

WHAT: making time for God

WHY: to make time for personal prayer and reflection in our daily lives

- 1 Ask someone to read Hebrews 12:1 again.
- 2 Say that running can be a great way to relax. That might sound strange, but it's true! When we run, we physically leave behind the stresses and strains associated with home. We forget about having to look fashionable and instead wear clothes which are suited to our purpose. We have some time alone and freedom to take whatever route we want to. When we want to spend time with God, we also need to think about removing distractions and finding some space in our busy routine. Going for a run (or a walk) can help us to achieve this time and space.
- 3 Encourage the young people to think about the coming week. Ask:
 - What will you be doing?
 - Where will you be going?
 - Is there any space for being alone with God?
- 4 Challenge them to plan a time, however short, to go for a run or a walk and spend time alone with God. Get them to think about when they will go and what route they will take, and suggest that they write down their plans to remind them.
- 5 Close in prayer, asking God to help each one of us make time for him this coming week.
- 6 If possible, agree with each young person how you will follow this up. They could text you when they have done what they have planned. Alternatively, share together next time you meet.



CREATIVE

WHAT: thanksgiving prayer

WHY: to say 'Thank you' to God for our 'supporters'

WITH: long strips of paper, sticky tack, simple cross shape (could be cut out of paper or card) fixed to a wall or notice board

- 1 Explain that we are going to spend some time thinking about the people who help and support us in our lives, and thanking God for them.
- 2 Invite everyone to make a chain of paper people. Hand out paper and show everyone how to fold it concertina-style. Then ask them to draw an outline of a person on the front with its arms and legs reaching to the edges of the paper. Ask everyone to cut around the outline, leaving the ends of the arms and legs joined together. Instruct everyone to unfold the paper. They should have a line of people holding hands!
- 3 Ask the young people to think about the people they want to say 'Thank you' to God for and why. Suggest they write some names on their people. They can draw in features if they wish!
- 4 Invite everyone to fix their people to the wall around the cross. Encourage them to thank God for those people as they do so.
- 5 Allow some time for the young people to look at what others have done, then close with a brief prayer.

MORE ON THIS THEME:

If you want to do a short series with your group, other sessions that work well with this one are:

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 37 | <i>Tooled up</i> | <i>Ephesians 6:10–18</i> |
| 38 | <i>Barnabas sorts it out</i> | <i>Acts 9:19b–31; 11:19–30</i> |
| 39 | <i>Everyone says yes</i> | <i>Acts 15:1–35</i> |

CHOOSE YOUR EQUIPMENT

GOAL:

WINNING THE WORLD CUP



GOAL:

BECOMING A RALLY DRIVER



However much natural talent a sportsperson has, there are still some vital items of equipment they need to help them succeed in their sport. Which items would you pick to help you reach these goals? Draw a line to connect the items of equipment to the goals they can help you to achieve. You should need more than one item!



GOAL:

SWIMMING THE CHANNEL



GOAL:

RUNNING A MARATHON



Bible bit

Hebrews 11:39 – 12:3;
1 Corinthians 9:24–27

Wouldn't life be nice and simple if we could eat what we want, sit and watch TV or be on the internet all day and generally just do what we want? If we were to live like that, our bodies wouldn't be very happy after a while. We need to stay active, eat healthily and do some things that we'd rather not do. Being a Christian is like that too. In these passages, being a Christian is likened to being an athlete running a race... so perhaps it's time to get those running shoes on!

Training programme

	Breakfast	Morning	Lunch	Afternoon	Dinner	Evening
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						

My goal is:

I will need these things to help me:

I will need to change/give up these things to prepare:

Other notes: