



LINKS PLAYERS DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Links Players

A Plan, A Purpose, A Choice

So, I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:26-28, ESV)

USGA Championships, both professional and amateur, are held at some of the most prestigious golf courses across the United States. Riviera Country Club, Shinnecock Country Club, Saucon Valley Country Club, The Honors Course, and Barton Hills Country Club are all part of the 2026 schedule.

In the first-century world, certain cities were known for their location along important trade routes or for specific cultural events. Corinth, for example, was closely associated with Greek athletic culture, especially the Isthmian Games.

Understanding this Greek background helps explain why Paul used athletic imagery in his letters to the Corinthians.

In a previous devotional, I shared how Paul compared the Christian life to running a race with purpose, self-discipline, and an eternal perspective.

Today's Scripture completes the picture Paul gives us for running the Christian race.

Athletes in the Isthmian Games competed in foot races, boxing, and wrestling. So, when Paul wrote, "I run... I box," his readers would have immediately recognized imagery rooted in their own culture.

Elite runners do not run aimlessly. They have a plan, and they work that plan so they can compete at their best. Likewise, a boxer does not swing at the air. Such effort would serve no purpose.

Strengthening our walk with Jesus also requires a plan and a purpose—not a stagnant plan, but a dynamic one. It includes time in God's Word, space to "be still" (Psalm 46:10), opportunities for personal growth, and intentional ways to share God's love with others.

When Paul says, "But I discipline my body and keep it under control," he is not simply talking about physical fitness. He is borrowing the athlete's self-control and intentionality as a picture of Christian discipleship.

An athlete cannot simply want to win. Desire must become disciplined action. In the same way, we cannot merely desire to know Jesus; we must put that desire into practice.

Paul's final image is the possibility of being disqualified. The Greek word carries the idea of being rejected as unapproved—the language of someone who fails the test.

In God's economy, however, our Christian journey is not about earning approval through flawless performance. It is about faithful service and perseverance. Paul had a goal: knowing Jesus, proclaiming the gospel, and faithfully finishing the race God had given him.

Whether we are preaching the gospel or simply living an ordinary day, we need a spiritual plan and purpose. We need to train with resistance rather than beat the air, and we need to welcome the discipline that forms Christlike character in us.

The Christian life is not about working harder for God's acceptance; it is about intentionally training our lives toward Him.

Thankfully, we do not have to earn God's love. We have the choice to orient our lives toward the purpose He has already given us: to love Him and love others.

Prayer: Lord, help me today to live with discipline, continually orienting my thoughts and actions toward the plan and purpose You have for me.

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