

## **The Next Level**

### **Ready:**

“You’ve all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win. All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You’re after one that’s gold eternally. I don’t know about you, but I’m running hard for the finish line. I’m giving it everything I’ve got. No sloppy living for me! I’m staying alert and in top condition. I’m not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it, and then missing out myself.”

-1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (The Message)

### **Set**

Ok, so you’re an athlete. You’ve probably read or heard this verse before. But when was the last time you stopped and thought about it? What was Paul trying to say? Is the athlete the metaphor, or how the athlete trains? My take on this passage is that every Christian is an athlete; so, that leaves the training in this verse to be the focus.

How does your athletic training parallel your faith? We have to train hard. All good athletes train hard. In God’s eyes, we are all loved equally. But from our perspective, it’s hard to think that someone like Rev. Billy Graham isn’t in the upper-echelon of spiritual “goodness.” He didn’t reach his status through lack of effort. I would venture to say that all of his study came out of a passion and desire to know Christ more. That passion led to more knowledge and the confidence to speak. In return, he led tens of thousands of people to know the Lord.

Athletes reach the next level through commitment. You don’t play high school baseball if you didn’t play little league. You don’t play college baseball if you didn’t play high school ball. You don’t play minor league ball without playing in college. You get the idea (and, yes, I know there are exceptions).

The thought to ponder is this: How do you get to the next level? A lot of practice. A lot of working out. A lot of studying. A lot of training. Peyton Manning still studies over 20 hours of film each week outside of meetings and practices and other required participation.

So, today, ask yourself one question: What are you doing to prepare for the next level with Christ?

### **Go**

1. Answer the question above.
2. Are you giving it everything you’ve got to finish this pursuit of Christ?
3. If not, what do you need to change?

### **Workout**

Philippians 1:21  
Colossians 3:23-24

**Bible Reference:**  
Colossians 3



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