

## **Session 1: The Big Win**

### **What Is Salvation All About?**

#### **READY**

Athletes have a strong desire to compete—whether we’re trying to make the team, set a personal best, win a championship, or simply outplay our buddies in a friendly game.

1. What are some things that motivate you to compete? What does it mean to you when you’re successful in winning a competition?
2. How do you feel when you lose or fail to reach your competitive goals?

For the serious athlete, the competitive spirit seems wired into our DNA—and that’s because it is. God uses that very fact to draw us closer to Him. As we work for excellence in sports and other areas of life, we eventually realize that true satisfaction doesn’t come from winning trophies, medals, applause, or high-dollar contracts. No achievement or award can equal the rush or deep satisfaction of discovering new life—real life in Jesus.

#### **SET**

The Bible often refers to our new life as Christ-followers in athletic and military terms.

#### **Read Colossians 1:12-14.**

3. According to Colossians 1:12-14, what incredible things are part of the big win God has provided for us?

#### **Read Ephesians 2:1-9.**

Ephesians 2:1-9 highlights three major differences between prizes earned on earth and the ultimate prize our salvation gives us: a personal relationship with our God and Creator.

#### **Difference 1:**

This ultimate prize of salvation is based solely on GOD’S EXTREME LOVE for us (verses 1-4).

4. After reading verses 1-3, how do you think people can be “dead” while they’re still alive? What defined your dead life before you turned to Jesus?

Unlike our athletic accomplishments—which we achieve thanks to God-given talent—we have not earned the privilege of salvation. God knows that no matter how much we push, we'll always fall short of His standard: perfection. But God made a way to rescue us from the dominion of darkness because He longs for us to be with Him forever.

**Difference 2:**

We are saved by GRACE (verses 5-7).

5. God's grace is His favor toward us who don't deserve it. How has choosing to accept God's incredible free gift of salvation in Jesus changed your life? How do you feel about your life now and looking to the future?

Even though we don't deserve God's grace because of our failures, He still offers it to anyone willing to accept Jesus as Rescuer and Redeemer.

**Difference 3:**

We are saved through FAITH (verses 8-9).

6. How does someone receive God's free gift of salvation (verse 8)? According to verse 9, what has no bearing at all on your salvation?

**GO**

God doesn't stop with saving us from judgment. He also elevates us to a level of greatness on His team, lavishing us with "immeasurable riches" in His kingdom.

**Read John 3:16 and Romans 8:14-17.**

7. According to John 3:16 and Romans 8:14-17, what privileges do you gain from your relationship with God? How do these gifts make you feel?

The word "suffer" seems out of place in the Romans 8:17 discussion about being glorified as God's heirs. While our salvation is assured when we accept Jesus by faith, the game is not over. We're still in the race and our enemy is hot on our heels.

**Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.**

8. What life lessons from athletics are highlighted in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27?
9. How might understanding the ultimate prize God offers you and grasping the unique role He designed you to fill affect the way you live at home?
  - at practice or during competition?
  - while hanging out with friends or teammates?
  -

in your school and community?

10. God has marked out a unique race and unique role for each of us. How ready are you to give everything you've got to the race He's laid out before you?

Ask God to give you a vision of the big win—the “imperishable crown” He has for you—so you'll stay motivated to discipline yourself and run your race well.



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