



SHELBY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

WE OVER ME: SUPERBOWL SUNDAY * 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-25, 1 TIMOTHY 4:7-8,
ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12, HEBREWS 12:1-2 * 2/8/2026

MAIN POINT

Athletes pursue temporary glory; followers of Jesus live for eternal impact.

INTRODUCTION

What's your favorite Super Bowl moment or team memory?

If faith were a sport, what position do you think you'd play—and why?

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-25

What does it mean to “run in such a way as to get the prize” in the Christian life?

How would you describe the “self-control” Paul is talking about?

In what ways does your faith currently resemble a focused race—or not?

What areas of your life require more spiritual discipline or self-control?

In this passage, Paul draws on the imagery of athletic competition, likely familiar to the Corinthians because of the Isthmian Games held near Corinth. His point is not about earning salvation, but about the seriousness, discipline, and purpose with which believers should live out their faith.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 4:7-8

What kind of discipline does it take to prepare for the Super Bowl?

What kinds of training or habits currently shape your daily life? What does spiritual training look like in everyday life?

Which is harder: physical discipline or spiritual discipline? Why?

In what ways have you seen godliness benefit your life right now?

Where do you find it hardest to stay consistent in spiritual training?

In this passage, Paul emphasizes the importance of spiritual discipline over merely physical exercise. While physical training has some value—it strengthens the body and promotes health—it is temporary and limited to this life. In contrast, training for godliness is of supreme value because it impacts both the present life and eternity.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 12:1–2

What images or phrases in these verses stand out to you the most?

How do you distinguish between a weight and a sin in your own life?

What does it mean to “fix our eyes on Jesus” in practical, everyday terms?

Jesus is described as the “pioneer and perfecter of faith.” How does that shape your understanding of His role in your spiritual journey?

These verses encourage believers to run their spiritual race with perseverance, inspired by the faithful examples who came before (“the great cloud of witnesses”). The passage urges laying aside anything that weighs us down — including sin — so we can run freely. The key to endurance is fixing our eyes on Jesus, who leads the way in faith and brings it to completion. Jesus endured the cross because of the joy set before Him, and now He is exalted at God’s right hand. His example gives believers strength to keep going, even when the path is difficult.

APPLICATION

How can spiritual disciplines (prayer, Scripture, community, rest) function like training?

What is one practical change you could make this week to “run with intention”?

What spiritual disciplines could help you grow in godliness?

How can you build a regular rhythm of training without becoming legalistic?

What is one practical step you can take this week to train for godliness?

Ecclesiastes 4:12 mentions a “cord of three strands.” What might that third strand represent in your life or faith community?

PRAYER

COMMENTARY

1 Corinthians 9:24–25

Verse 24: Paul reminds his readers that while many run a race, only one receives the prize. He urges believers to “run in such a way as to get the prize,” emphasizing intentionality and wholehearted effort. The Christian life is not passive or aimless; it requires focus, perseverance, and commitment toward God’s calling.

Verse 25: Paul highlights the self-control required of athletes, who willingly deny themselves comfort and pleasure for the sake of winning a perishable crown—likely a wreath of leaves. In contrast, believers pursue an imperishable crown, symbolizing eternal reward, faithfulness, and life with God. This contrast elevates the value of spiritual discipline, showing that eternal outcomes far outweigh temporary sacrifices.

1 Timothy 4:7–8

Verse 7: Paul urges Timothy to “train yourself for godliness”. The Greek word for “train” (γυμνάζω, *gymnazō*) is the same root used for athletic training, implying regular, disciplined practice. Just as an athlete exercises repeatedly to gain strength and skill, believers must cultivate spiritual habits—prayer, Scripture reading, worship, and moral discipline—to grow in godliness. Paul contrasts this with physical training, which, while beneficial, is limited in scope and duration.

Verse 8: Godliness is described as “of value in every way”, emphasizing its all-encompassing benefits. It brings blessings both for the present life—such as peace, purpose, and moral integrity—and the life to come, promising eternal reward. This underscores a key biblical principle: investing in spiritual growth yields the highest and most lasting returns.

Hebrews 12:1–2

The “cloud of witnesses” refers back to the faithful men and women in Hebrews 11. They are not spectators watching us from heaven; the Greek term *martys* means “testifiers.” Their lives testify to God’s faithfulness and the possibility of persevering through hardship. The author uses their stories as motivation: if they endured by faith, so can you.

“Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles...” - The imagery shifts to athletics — a runner shedding anything that slows them down. “Weights” may not be sinful but can still hinder spiritual progress: distractions, unhealthy attachments, misplaced priorities. “Sin that entangles” evokes the idea of vines wrapping around a runner’s legs. Sin doesn’t just slow; it traps. The command is active: believers must intentionally remove what interferes with their race.

“Let us run with endurance the race set before us...” - The Christian life is not a sprint but a long-distance race. Endurance (*hypomonē*) is a major theme in Hebrews — steadfastness under pressure. The race is “set before us,” meaning God has marked out the course. The emphasis is not on speed but on perseverance, faithfulness, and finishing well.

“Fixing our eyes on Jesus...” - This is the heart of the passage. The verb means to look away from everything else and focus exclusively on Him. The author is saying: don’t run by looking at your feet, your failures, or your circumstances — look at Christ.

“The pioneer and perfecter of faith” - Two powerful titles: Pioneer (*archēgos*): the trailblazer, the one who goes first and opens the path. Jesus ran the race before us. Perfecter (*teleiōtēs*): the one who brings faith to completion. He not only starts our faith; He matures and completes it. Together, these titles show that Jesus is both the model and the source of our endurance.

“For the joy set before him he endured the cross...” - This line reveals Jesus’ motivation. The “joy” was not the suffering itself but what the suffering would accomplish: redemption, reconciliation, resurrection, and the glory of completing the Father’s will. He endured shame — the cross was the most humiliating form of execution — yet He did not let shame define Him.

“And sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” - This signals completion and authority. Priests in the Old Testament never sat because their work was never finished. Jesus sits because His work is complete. His exaltation assures believers that their endurance is not in vain.