

A spiritual reflection on discipline, holiness, and the heavenly reward

God often speaks to us through the ordinary moments of our everyday lives. We frequently miss His voice because we expect Him to speak only through spectacular means—visions, dreams, prophecies, or angelic visitations—things He does use, but not always.

Most often, God speaks to us **through life itself**, which is why it is vital for us to study the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and the lives of the saints who went before us. When we read books like Genesis, Kings, Esther, Ruth, Nehemiah, Ezra, or even the journey of Israel, we are reading stories of *people's lives*—and through those lives, the purposes of God are revealed to us.

God usually reveals Himself in small and quiet things. Without stillness and attention, we may conclude that God has never spoken to us, while in truth He has spoken many times—but our hearts lacked understanding.

A Lesson From Two Athletes

There was a time we found ourselves living temporarily with two players from a well-known football team in Tanzania. At first, it did not feel like anything remarkable (we are not sports fans—and for a Christian, deep obsession with worldly sports is not fitting). But over time, their lifestyle surprised us deeply.

We expected them, as worldly athletes, to be undisciplined like many celebrities. But what we observed was the complete opposite.

Their daily schedule shocked us:

- * They woke up at **6:00 a.m.** (saa 12) and trained until **9:00 a.m.**
- * After resting until midday, they trained again from **1:00-2:00 p.m.**—in the hot sun, pushing harder than the morning session.
- * They rested again until evening and returned for team training around **11:00 a.m.** (evening practice).

This was their life every day—morning and evening.

But what shocked us even more was their moral discipline:

- * They kept away from women
- * No drinking or smoking
- * No wandering or partying
- * Very few friends
- * Their life was simply *train and rest*

So one day we asked them, “Why do you live so differently from others?”

Their answer was profound.

They said the things that destroy athletes and make them lose their form quickly are:

1. Sexual immorality
2. Alcohol and smoking
3. Wandering and worldly thrills
4. Lack of training, especially during difficult times

“Anyone who avoids these things,” they said, “will find sports

easy and will maintain their level."

Immediately, we recognized that **God was speaking to us through them**, and the verse that came to mind was:

*"Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. They do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable one."***

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

If these athletes—who do **not** have the grace we have in Christ—can deny worldly pleasures just to win a trophy that perishes, how much more should we, who claim to be Christians, discipline ourselves for the eternal prize?

They know that where they are going, they will face other highly skilled players, so they suffer **now** to be victorious **then.**

The Christian Race

Paul wrote:

“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life.”

2 Timothy 2:4

“And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”

*2 Timothy 2:5**

Being a Christian does not mean we have already arrived. It means:

- * There is a **race** ahead of us
- * There is a **fight** set before us
- * There is a **crown** prepared for those who overcome

Jesus Himself said:

*“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”***

*> — *Revelation 22:12**

But we cannot receive that reward without embracing the cost
Paul described

“I discipline my body and bring it into subjection...”

1 Corinthians 9:27

If worldly athletes discipline their bodies to win trophies that will lose value tomorrow, how much more should we discipline ourselves to obtain the ****imperishable crown****—one that lasts forever?

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The Great Cloud of Witnesses

The Bible tells us of a “great cloud of witnesses” surrounding us—read Hebrews 11. These were people who overcame through endurance:

- * They lived as **pilgrims and strangers**
- * They looked toward **the world to come**
- * They considered earthly life as **nothing** compared to eternity
- * They were persecuted, tortured, cut in pieces, stoned, and killed—but did not give up their faith

The Bible says the world was **not worthy** of them.

How will we become like them if we do not deny ourselves today?

Paul concludes by saying:

“Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race set before us.”

Hebrews 12:1-3

What Are the Athletes Around You Teaching You?

On that Day, how will you feel when you see people you once knew—perhaps more talented or more beautiful than you—who denied themselves the pleasures of this world and now shine like stars, while you stand with nothing?

How will you feel when those who had every opportunity to enjoy the world refused, choosing Christ instead—and now reign while you lost everything?

The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force (Matthew 11:12).

Beloved, lay aside the things of this world.

Store up treasures in heaven.

If you have not yet surrendered your life to Christ, **now** is the time. Begin building the crown you will receive on that Day.

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Reflection Question

*What are the athletes around you teaching you about your own Christian race?

May God bless you.

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