

Big Dog Chase Me

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[0 : 00] Well, thanks for joining us today. I'm Pastor Steve Frenzemeyer. I'm one of the pastors here at First Christian Church of Greensburg. And I'm excited to be here with you today.

And I pray that as we go into the Scriptures today that we'll all get something out of what God has put on my heart to talk about today. So, usually I like to start off with stories because in my opinion, stories are a great way to convey the Gospel in a way that's kind of comical, but also you can kind of visualize it a little bit better.

So, I call them Steve stories because I'm Steve, of course. So, Steve stories are just things that I've either witnessed or things that have happened to me through life. And hopefully you'll enjoy the story and that you get something out of it.

So, a couple of years ago, this is several years ago, probably about 25 years ago or so, I was a youth leader here at First Christian Church. And we had taken our kids over to the Baptist Church, just a few blocks away for a concert or an event.

And so, we were leaving and the kids all came back and I stayed to have some conversations there. And it was probably 8 or 9 o'clock at night. And so, I was walking back to the church by myself.

[1 : 19] And I'm about just, I hadn't been away from the church, the First Baptist Church very far. And I could hear this sound, this sound of just wondering, what in the world is that?

So, I took a few more steps and heard the same sound again. And I turned around and looked. And here is this huge, huge dog.

I mean, I don't know what kind of breed it was, but it was a huge dog. And it seemed to have this logging chain wrapped around its neck and dragging the rest of it. And it's running as hard as it can directly at me.

Oh, no. Well, I'm kind of freaking out. And so, I take off running as fast as I can. Well, I mean... Run, Forrest, run! Run, Forrest! You know, I was a lot younger back then, so I could move back then.

So, I'm running just as hard as I can all the way down Jackson Street. I turn down the street towards the Methodist Church, come down there, and then I shoot up the alley running just as fast as I can.

[2 : 22] And so, I run up the alley, run up the alley up to the church parking lot, and there's some adult leaders standing there, and I run up to the church, and I collapsed on the hood of a car, and someone said, Steve, what's wrong?

And I'm just gasping for breath, gasping for breath, and I said, Big Dog! Big Dog! Big Dog chased me! And so, you know, life was a race that day.

You know, I was racing for my life. And, you know, I'm not a runner, you know, but life is so much like a race. And this race happened to be a sprint, okay, because, I mean, I had to get away quick. And so, I beat it. However fast that dog was, I was faster that day, so that was all that really mattered to me at the time. So, but life is like a race. And, but it's not a sprint.

It's a long race. It's a marathon. And the Bible refers to running a race, life is that, several times.

Now, my, like I said, my race was not a sprint, or was a sprint, but our life is very much like a marathon.

[3 : 36] And so, for me, you know, not being a runner, there's only two times that I should run. And the first is to run to something important, you know, like to dinner, or to see my wife or my kids, or running away from something dangerous, like the Big Dog.

Now, I know there are some that feel just, that like to run just for the fun of it. They run all the time, and I say, God bless them. Because I think there's something not right with them.

Because I just don't, I can't see running for fun being fun. But that's all right. And I can remember when my daughter was on the track team at Hanover College, and we would go to these big outdoor meets, and there would be these long distance runners that would go out, and before their race even started, would go out and run, you know, two or three miles just to warm up before their race.

You know, and in my mind, I'm thinking, guys, why don't you conserve that energy for the race? And then they would go run their race and put everything they have into it, and, you know, so the race was over, and what did they do?

They'd go run another couple miles to cool down. So again, I'm thinking to myself, if you can run another mile or two after your own race, then probably maybe you didn't run as hard as you could or run hard enough during your race.

[5 : 01] Now, before you runners get upset with me, you know, just please remember my running ignorance, and please don't hold that against me. So whether you're a runner or not, the Bible tells us that we all are in a race.

And today we continue our study of 1 Corinthians. And today we're going to pick up in 1 Corinthians in the ninth chapter, we're going to be starting with verses 24 and 25, okay?

And Paul writes, Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets a prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

Everyone who competes in the games is going into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Paul uses running and racing as an analogy of how living our lives is like preparing for a race and then running in that race. So here's the first thing.

[6 : 13] The race involves all of us. You know, we're all involved in this race. The human race. And this is an all-in situation. We don't get to decide if we want to participate or not.

We're all in this race simply because we were born and because we're human. Now before we go any further, let's kind of get a couple things straight, okay?

Life as we know it is not an athletic race or it's a competition. Life is not about who is physically the fastest. Life is not about who is physically the strongest.

Life is not about who has the most money or the most earthly possessions. Life is not about the best-looking person. And life is not about those who are intellectually the smartest.

Life is not about obtaining status or position. Our health, our finances, and our positions can come and go in just an instance.

[7 : 17] One phone call can change everything in our lives. The call from a doctor telling us what's wrong with our bodies. The call from our bank that all of our money is gone because of a bad investment or a money scam.

The call from our employer that our position at work is no longer needed and we're being eliminated. Ever had one of those phone calls?

Remember what it was like? Some of us think the race is all about our physical appearance, our abilities, and our performance. Some of us think that the race is all about gaining more money and stuff.

And some of us live with the mantra whoever dies with the most stuff wins. Well, it's actually quite the contrary. Actually, Jesus himself tells us in Matthew 6 verses 19-21, Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[8 : 39] All those things that we thought were important will eventually be meaningless. Everything you put your faith in other than Jesus will break. It will be taken, be lost, or end up having no value at all.

Money and possessions can go so quickly and our health can deteriorate in a moment. Our status in our social circles or our job sites can change in just a moment.

I once heard the saying, I was reaching the top rung of the ladder only to realize that my ladder was up the wrong wall. Here's a question.

Are you running in the right race? Is your ladder up the right wall? Are you chasing? What are you chasing?

What are you going after? What is your goal? Are you climbing the social ladder, the corporate ladder, the larger bank account ladder, or are we climbing the ladder to be a better parent, a better spouse, a better servant to the Lord?

[9 : 47] I like how verse 21 that we just read how it takes it one step further. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. So listen closely, okay?

there's nothing wrong with having a large bank account. And it's quite okay to be successful in business and in the world and have nice things.

And if our lives have balance and if we're keeping our focus on, our eyes on Jesus, all that is fine. It's fine. A treasure is something that we hold in highest value and hold in highest regard.

something we put our time, our energy, and our resources in. So here's another question. Where is your treasure?

And what is your treasure? Is it your house? Your bank account? Investment portfolio? Is it your physical health? Or is it in your garage?

[10 : 50] Or your man cave? Where are you spending your time? Are you spending it at the office? On the golf course?

Someplace else? Where are you spending most of your time and your energy and your resources? Because where you spend all that, that is where your heart is.

And that will be your priority in life. The next thing to take away is the race requires training. If you want to compete, you must train.

If you... So you have to put in the time. You have to put in the energy. And to make sacrifices along the way, you have to have discipline to be dedicated and to have the goal in sight.

My daughter Erin was a track and field athlete during college. She was a hammer thrower. And she threw shot put, the discus, and the indoor weight. And Erin was truly dedicated to her sport and to her craft.

[12 : 04] And during the school year, she was in the weight room every morning before classes even started. So at 6 o'clock, 5.30 in the morning, she's in the weight room. And then in the evenings, every evening, she had practice out throwing the implements.

And then during the summers, she would be in the weight room every evening. And every morning before the sun even came up, she would drive to Franklin several days a week just to throw the hammer and to be coached by someone that she really knew well.

And so she was so dedicated. But let me say this. The hammer is not a typical construction tool. But it's an 8.82 pound weighted ball that's on a four foot metal cable with a handle on it.

So in competition, the athlete enters the ring, swings a hammer above their head, and then starts spinning around three or four times and releases the hammer to see how far it will go without hitting anyone.

So Erin was good. Actually, Erin was very good. She was a conference champion several times. And in her sophomore year, she finished 16th in the nation among D3 hammer throwers at the collegiate level.

[13 : 27] Erin had a lot of success. great success. But only because of her great work ethic and her dedication to her sport, dedication to practice, and dedication to training.

You know, the race that we're in requires pretty much the same thing. It requires dedication. Dedication to the teachings of Jesus. It requires sacrifice.

Giving up what the world has to offer for the things of God. For worship. taking time to honor the Lord. Regular church attendance.

Being in the house of the Lord together with other Christians. Service. Serving others in the name of the Lord Jesus. And discipline.

Living out the Bible in our lives when we don't even want to. And then Bible study. Being in God's word. 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16 to 17 says, All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for leading, excuse me, for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the servant of God, that's you, may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[14 : 50] Here's a question again. Are you truly training to be more Christ-like? Or are you just going through the motions of your Christian walk to look good in the eyes of others?

Going through the motions can be very easy for all of us. You know, we look all Christian-like, we talk all Christian-like, we put on the good show when people are watching, we're putting on a facade.

We're living under false pretense in our lives. In other words, we're just going through the motions and essentially we're living a lie if that's all we're doing is just trying to look good.

But Jesus wants us to live an authentic life, a real life focused and centered on Him, putting Christ first and following Christ's leadings and seeking God's will.

Third takeaway here. The race has a goal. Every competition has a goal or prize. In athletic competition, the prize could be a trophy, a medal, or a belt.

[16:05] sometimes the prize is just to be able to have bragging rights for a while. In the ancient Greek Olympics, the prize was a crown made out of olive leaves.

But whatever the prize may be, that prize will fade or go away. So what are we looking for?

1 Corinthians 9.25 says, they do it to get a crown that will not last. But we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

I like that, a crown that lasts forever. At this point, we're not talking about a man-made crown or a prize, but a crown from the Lord. James 1.12 says, blessed is the man who perseveres under trial because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

The crown of life. I love that. 1 Peter 5.4 says, and when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

[17:20] 2 Timothy 4.8 says, now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to those who have longed for his appearing.

The crown of life. The crown of glory. The crown of righteousness. These are worth, are crowns that are worth desiring.

That are worth trading for, for sacrificing for, and for running towards. So let's run this race. The race in your life.

The life that God has given you, and only you to live out. Let us live that life out to honor him in all that we do.

Let's dedicate our lives to serving God, and to giving it everything that we have. giving it our very best to the very end. Now I want to talk to you about some several real life races that took place in the running tracks.

[18:33] Two guys, Dixon Hempfell and Orville Rogers. Now they may not be household names, but they have had a decade long rivalry on the runners track.

Dixon Hempfell and Orville and Orville. They have both been competing in the 60 meter dash and have become quite the rivalry and have been going head to head for over the last 10 years.

Now Hempfell has won the last five times they've raced. And you may be thinking, what, what, what's so special about that? Well, here's the deal.

Dixon Hempfell is a spry 92 year old and Orville Rogers is a very youthful 99. Many of us think that once we retire or once the kids are out of the house, we think we can slowly get out of the race.

We can stop serving and sometimes we even stop living. But God is calling you to live your life to the very end. to keep on running until God calls you home.

[19:44] So, if that's, if you're in that age group, finding the way to serve. Find a new way to serve the Lord. Find someone to mentor.

Start a new hobby. Try something new. Learn something new about God's character. But whatever you do, don't stop.

Don't stop living. But finish the race and finish strong. Heather Dornadin was a member of the University of Minnesota.

She was a Golden Gophers track team. At the 2008 Big Ten Indoor Championships, Heather was the clear favorite to win the 600 meter race.

So, here it is, race time. The gun goes off and Heather starts with the other runners. She runs out to a quick lead and holds that lead for 400 meters and then with about 200 meters to go, Heather's legs get tangled with another runner's, sending Heather toppling to the ground.

[20:55] And in an instant, she loses not only her first place status, but all the runners pass by her. And then here Heather is in last place by a lot.

Heather could have quit, but Heather quickly collects herself and starts running again, just hoping that she'll be able to at least just finish the race. So, on the backstretch of the track, she catches up with the pack.

And soon, she starts passing them one by one. And all of a sudden, she's in third place. So, coming around the fourth turn, she catches up with the leaders.

Coming into the homestretch, she's in with three of them, three of them neck and neck. And to the very end, she edges forward and passes them to finish, not only finish the race, but to come in first. I believe many of us, many of us listening and many of us here feel that same way. We've been getting knocked down time and time again. Health issues, financial difficulties, strained relationships, consequences of our sin, just one thing after another keeps knocking us down.

[22 : 20] But take heart, because David tells us in Psalm 37, 24, though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

If you've stumbled, God is right there to bring you back up and to put you on the path that leads to him. It doesn't matter how many times you have been knocked down.

It doesn't matter how many times you have failed. just keep getting back up. You know, sometimes we feel we just can't finish the race.

That our limitations, whatever they may be, our age, our health, or circumstances have just gotten us to the very best of us, and we just want to throw in the towel.

And it's then that our Heavenly Father comes alongside of us, and He lovingly puts His arms around us and He whispers into our ears and says, I've got you.

[23 : 28] Lean on me. Rely on my strength and let's finish this race together. So let's look at the last verses of the passage today.

1 Corinthians 9, verses 26-27 says, Therefore, do not run like someone running aimlessly. I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.

No, I strike a blow to my body and make it a slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

So here's Paul telling us not to live our lives without purpose, without a plan, or without putting any effort into it. in fact, there is a great purpose for your life and God has a plan for you and how for you to live your life because God wants His very best for you from the very start of our lives until the very last breath that we take.

So let us all continue to run in the race. Let's all continue to live life to the fullest and to live with the Lord Jesus Christ at the center.

[24 : 50] Let's all serve the Lord with all of our gifts and all of our talents no matter what your age is, no matter what is going on in your life, no matter how many times you've been stumbled and fallen, no matter how many times you have fallen, let us run to the very end, to the very end where we see Jesus face to face and we hear those precious words from Jesus and He tells us when the race is all done, when our time on earth is done and we hear these special words, well done, good and faithful servant.

you know, I hope today that you've been encouraged by this because you have to remember when Peter or when Paul wrote this letter, the Corinthians were just kind of slacking.

They weren't doing what they needed to be doing and so Paul gently and kind of up front just says, guys, some things need to change. Maybe some things need to change in our lives so that our hearts and our minds can be focused on Christ.

So instead of just kind of going through life haphazardly, we live with purpose and that we live with passion. Not only a passion for life but a passion for Christ and doing things Christ's way.

God, so I want to close today with a prayer. God, I thank you for your word. I thank you for the way that you love us.

[26 : 32] I thank you for the way that you take care of us and I thank you, Lord, that you're with us every step of this race. that, Lord, that you've never left our sides.

That you're constantly running beside us, encouraging us, giving us love, giving us strength because that's who you are. So, God, we thank you and we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, I hope you've been encouraged by the words today. And if you don't have a church home here at First Christian Church, we would love to have you not only join us again through here, but also we'd love to have you here in person if you don't have a church home.

And if for some reason something today you want to chat, please feel free to give us a call. We'd love to chat with you here at the church at 812-663-8488 or you can find us on the web at FCCGreensburg.com or on Facebook as well.

Thank you for joining us and have a great and blessed day.