Therefore, since we are surrounded
by such a great cloud of witnesses,
let us throw off everything that hinders
and the sin that so easily entangles.
And let us run with perseverance
the race marked out for us,
fixing our eyes on Jesus,
the Author and Perfecter of our faith.

Hebrews 12.1-2

Dropouts, Deadbeats, and Doers

Hebrews 12.1-2

New Years Eve

The shortest race in the Olympics is the 100 meter sprint;

the longest is the 42, 195* meter marathon.

*26 miles, 385 yards

Following Christ is not a sprint; it's a marathon.

And its not who crosses the finish line first—

it's ***if*** you cross the finish line.

In a race everyone runs, but only one person gets first prize.
So run your race to win.
To win the contest you must deny yourselves many things
that would keep you from doing your best.
An athlete goes to all this trouble just to win
a blue ribbon or a silver cup,
but we do it for a heavenly reward that never disappears.

So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step.
I fight to win.
I'm not just shadow-boxing or playing around.
Like an athlete I punish my body, treating it roughly,
training it to do what it should, not what it wants to.
Otherwise I fear that after enlisting others for the race,
I myself might be declared unfit and ordered to stand aside.

2 Corinthians 9.24-27

You were running a good race,
Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?

Galatians 5.7

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith;
test yourselves.
Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—
unless, of course, you fail the test?

2 Corinthians 13.5

[God] has reconciled you by Christ's physical body
through death to present you holy in his sight,
without blemish and free from accusation—
if you continue in your faith, established and firm,
and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

Colossians 1.22-23

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you
of the gospel I preached to you,
which you received and on which you have taken your stand.
By this gospel you are saved,
if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.
Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

1 Corinthians 15.1-2

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
and I have remained faithful.
And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness,
which the Lord, the righteous Judge,
will give me on the day of his return.
And the prize is not just for me
but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.

2 Timothy 4.7-8

One foot in front of the other—over and over

The writer to the Hebrews repeatedly emphasizes “let us” as the action steps we must take in response to the work that Christ has done for us.

- Let us draw near to God — the deliberate and consistent practice of spending time with God. (10.22)
- Let us hold unswervingly to the faith we profess — growing deeper and stronger in our faith as Jesus-followers. (10.23)

- Let us consider how we can motivate one another toward continuous acts of Christlike love and actions of good works done in the name of Christ. (10.24)
- Let us not be at church less as time goes by; let's elevate our game, meeting together more and more—encouraging, worshiping, praying, fellowshipping together—because the "Day" is coming. (10.25)

- Let us recognize, strip off and deny ourselves of everything that distracts or hinders us in following Jesus well. (12.1)
- Let us be alert to how easily we can be entangled by sin—anything that does not lead us closer to Christ. (12.1)
- Let us run with endurance, determined not to be a dropout or a deadbeat—always showing up, always staying active. (12.1)

- Let us keep our eyes on Jesus—being with him, becoming like him, doing as he did—step by step, making progress and getting closer to the goal of finishing as a “good and faithful follower”. (12.2-3)

This year how did you run? What did you do to run better
and get closer to Jesus?
How much farther are you as a Jesus-follower
than this time last year? Or is it less?
Do others see you going gaining ground or dropping out?

What is your plan for running this race in 2025?
Do you have a plan?