

WHAT SOLDIERS, ATHLETES, AND FARMERS TEACH ME ABOUT FAITH

Bruce's Extended Definition of Faith: The belief that God exists; the assurance of His control of my future; the confidence that His plan for me is eternally good because of His love; the trust to believe His promises to forgive my sins; the inner strength to obey when I don't fully understand His principles; and, the hope of heaven after my earthly life is over.

2 Timothy 2:3-7 – *“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets tied up in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. And the hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Think about these three illustrations, and the Lord will help you to understand how they apply to you.”* (NIV & Living)

WHAT THE MILITARY (soldiers) TEACHES ME ABOUT BIBLICAL FAITH

[PICTURE #1 - SOLDIERS]

2 Timothy 2:3-4 – [3] *“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. [4] No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer.”* (NIV)

Like an effective soldier...

1. I MUST DEFINE WHAT I AM WILLING TO DIE FOR

John 15:13 – *“The greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends.”* (New Living)

2. I MUST BE WILLING TO SACRIFICE MY COMFORT

2 Timothy 2:3 – *“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”* (NIV)

Ephesians 5:2 – *“Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins.”* (NIV)

Story of Richard Rescorla (1939-September 11, 2001)

3. I MUST ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

2 Timothy 2:4a – *“As Christ’s soldier, do not let yourself become tied up in the affairs of this life...”* (New Living)

WHAT SPORTS (athletes) TEACHES ME ABOUT BIBLICAL FAITH

[PICTURE #2 - ATHLETES]

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 – *“In a race everyone runs, but only one person wins the 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 ribbon or medal that won’t last, but we do it for an eternal reward that will last forever! 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 discipline myself, making sacrifices and training my body to do what it should, not what it wants to do. Otherwise I fear I might be disqualified from the race.”* (Living & New Century)

To win the prize...

1. I MUST INTEND TO WIN

1 Corinthians 9:24 – *“In a race everyone runs, but only one person gets first prize. So run your race to win.”* (Living)

1 Timothy 6:12 – *“Run your best in the race of faith, and win eternal life for yourself; for it was to this life that God called you when you firmly professed your faith before many witnesses.”* (Good News)

2. I MUST DISCIPLINE MYSELF

2 Timothy 2:5 – *“If anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.”* (New American Standard)

1 Corinthians 9:25 – [25] *“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. ...[27a] I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should.”* (Living & New Living)

Saying: *“The pain of regret is always greater than the pain of discipline.”*

3. I MUST STAY FOCUSED ON THE REWARD

Hebrews 12:2 – *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross...”* (NIV)

1 Corinthians 9:26 – *“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.”* (Living)

WHAT FARMING (farmers) TEACHES ME ABOUT BIBLICAL FAITH

[PICTURE #3 - FARMER]

2 Timothy 2:6 – *“The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.”* (NIV)

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 – [6] *“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. [7] Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”* (NIV)

Lesson: To reap a harvest I must plant generously in faith

Mark 10:29-30 – [29] *“Jesus replied, ‘I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, [30] will receive now in return, a hundred times over, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property—with persecutions. And in the world to come they will have eternal life.’”* (New Living)