

News Story Summary

On Sunday, November 2, runners from around the world gathered in New York City to participate in the 2014 New York City Marathon. This elite course encompasses all 5 boroughs of the Big Apple and is considered a prime marathon.

When the New York City Marathon began in 1970, there were 127 entrants. Fifty-five men finished and the one female entrant became ill and dropped out. The prizes in 1970 included inexpensive wristwatches and recycled baseball and bowling trophies. The entry fee was \$1 and the total event budget was \$1,000.

This year, over 50,000 runners paid over \$200 each to enter this race. Some runners applied but were not chosen to be in the race. The winners of this year's marathon—Wilson Kipsang and Mary Keitany, both runners from Kenya—collected prize money of \$100,000 each plus bonus money.

Discipline is strategic in preparing for this (or any) marathon. The New York City Marathon offers its own unique challenges, including a number of hills, the brisk Northeast wind, navigating the streets of New York, and crossing five bridges scattered along the course. A training schedule is provided by the organizers of the race to encourage runners to have a detailed plan for running, resting, training, and sensible preparation. They also provide medical tips as well.

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the term “2014 New York City Marathon,” “History of New York City Marathon,” and “Training for New York City Marathon.”)

Focus Attention

Prior to the study, search the Internet for a photo of a marathon runner and print it out. If you have group members who run or have run, enlist them to bring their running attire (shorts/pants, shirt, sweat bands, running shoes, and so forth).

On the board, write *Run for your life!*

As group members arrive, call attention to the photograph or running gear supplied and the statement on the board. Direct the group to discuss what qualities they can readily identify that make a good runner (commitment, discipline, good shoes, and so forth).

Share briefly about this month's New York City Marathon. Include information about the history of the race, the suggested training regimen, and the course as well as this year's winners and their prize money.

Comment: You've probably hear the old adage: Life is like a race—not a sprint but a marathon! Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Say: The writer of Hebrews uses the metaphor of a runner in today's passage from Hebrews 12. Foot races were common in New Testament times. Plus the writer found a natural correlation between an athlete who runs a marathon and a Christian who runs the race of life.

Ask: What kind of training does a marathon runner do in preparation for a race? What kind of preparation should a Christian make to "run a good race"?

Challenge members to think about the preparation and training needed in order for a believer to "run a good race" and "finish the course" as we examine Hebrews 12:1-7.

Challenge

Ask: What kind of training regimen do you think the winners of the New York City Marathon completed? Other than the prize money, what other rewards do you think Wilson Kipsang and Mary Keitany received by completing the marathon?

Challenge members to consider their own Christian "training regimen." Ask them to consider: *What weighs you down? What encumbrances do you need to "throw off" or "lay aside"? What distracts you from your training plan or discourages you from the discipline necessary to endure? What will be your ultimate prize?*

Lead in prayer and ask God to give each group member the strength and resolve to run the race set before them. Thank God for the "cloud of witnesses" that encourages and inspires us to finish the race with excellence.