

9 Finishing With Joy

The church was crowded. It was harvest time. Everyone was bringing the tithes and offerings from their crops to the church. There was rejoicing as the people sang praises to God.

Kim thanked God for the many blessings he had received. Only a few years before he had not even been saved. Now his whole family was a part of the body of believers. And God was using him in the work of the church, too, as he yielded to the Holy Spirit. He had prayed for the sick, taught God's Word, and learned how to work with the leaders in his church.

As Kim listened to the singing he thought of another harvest-time—that time when his work would be done and he would meet Jesus face to face. What will that day be like?

Perhaps you also have asked yourself what the future will be for the Christian worker. This lesson will help answer that question. Let the truths it presents inspire you in your work for the Lord and fill your heart with joy.

The Plan

- A. The Work Finished
- B. The Joy Experienced

The Goals

1. Describe the work of Christians.
2. Identify rewards that faithful Christian workers will receive.

A. THE WORK FINISHED

Goal 1. Describe the work of Christians.

The Race Run

The New Testament compares the life of a Christian worker to a race that is run by an athlete. The apostle Paul writes, “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). In the Christian race, every faithful runner can be a winner! Jesus declared, “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done” (Revelation 22:12). What joy awaits the Christian worker!

To finish your race you must overcome tests and temptations. Your plans may not always succeed, but through the power of the Holy Spirit you can face each situation and be victorious. Matthew records, “He who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matthew 24:13). Therefore, believers are urged to live and work so we can say with the apostle Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

The Task Completed

The New Testament also compares the ministry of a Christian worker to a task that needs to be completed. Jesus realized that He had an important work to finish. Realizing the urgency of the task, Jesus said, “As long as it is day, we must

do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4). When His work was done, Jesus said to His Father, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4).

Jesus described our task in Matthew 28:19–20. One day our opportunities to be workers for the Lord will be gone. But each Christian worker can have the satisfaction of knowing that the task God has given him or her can and must be completed.

Application

1 In your notebook, complete the following sentence in your own words: The Bible’s comparison of the Christian life or work to a race that is run by an athlete teaches me that . . .

The Harvest Gathered

The New Testament says that the work of a Christian is like that of gathering in a harvest (Matthew 9:37–38). Harvest speaks of seed sown, of a crop ripened, of the fruit gathered. Harvest-time is always a season of great joy. There will be joy in heaven, too, at that final harvest-time. The joy of that harvest will come when the Christian workers see the multitudes who have eternal life, because the members of the body of Christ worked together to show them the love of Christ. As a worker for God, you will share in that joy. You will see the fruit of your labors—those who have believed in Jesus, the sick who were healed, the ones who were encouraged. What a wonderful time it will be!

Application

- 2** The Scripture that speaks of the Christian life as a race run is
- a)** Matthew 9:37–38.
 - b)** Matthew 24:13.
 - c)** Philippians 3:14.
 - d)** Revelation 22:12.

3 In your notebook, list three comparisons to describe the work of a Christian and at least one Bible reference for each one.

4 Match each description of the work of a Christian (right side) to what it teaches us (left side).

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| ... a Complete the work or job that was given | 1) Race that is won |
| | 2) Task that is finished |
| ... b Faithfully finish the course and reach the goal | 3) Harvest that is gathered |
| ... c Share in the joy of seeing the people who have believed in Christ | |



B. THE JOY EXPERIENCED

Goal 2. Identify rewards that faithful Christian workers will receive.

There is a payday for the hired worker. God has given us the privilege of working for Him, and He has set a time in His future plan to bring all Christian workers together. Each person will be rewarded according to his or her work (1 Corinthians 3:8; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

There will be different kinds of rewards. First, those who are faithful will be welcomed by the Lord himself, who will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Matthew 25:21). This approval from the Master will be precious beyond anything we can imagine.

Then, too, we will receive all that God has promised us—our inheritance. In Romans 8:17, Paul reminds “if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

Another reward will be the joy of seeing the people we have helped spiritually. The apostle Paul looked forward to this joy: “For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes?” (1 Thessalonians 2:19).

The Bible also speaks of workers receiving crowns. During the times the New Testament was written, the crown that a winning athlete received was just a wreath of flowers or vines. It did not last long, but it was still very precious; he had worked long and hard to gain it. In 1 Corinthians 9:25 we read that our crown, unlike one of flowers or vines, will last forever. It will be a glorious crown (1 Peter 5:4).

But the best reward of all will be to experience the full joy of being in the Lord’s presence forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17). This joy will never end!

Application

5 Suppose you wanted to tell a friend about the rewards a Christian worker will receive. In your notebook, write down five of those rewards and a Bible reference for each one.

Be a faithful Christian worker. Remember these words that Paul wrote to the workers in the first church; they are as true today as they were then: “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

You have finished studying *Christian Workers*. May the Lord bless as you serve in the church and use the gifts God gives you to bless and strengthen the body. As you continue to work more with other believers, review some of the lessons to remind yourself of the ministry gifts God has given or the duties of leaders. Never forget that the body of believers is Christ’s church. He is the one who will build a strong body and help you as a Christian worker.

Now that you have completed the second unit, you are ready to answer the questions in your student report for Unit Two. Review the previous lessons, then follow the instructions in your student report. Send your answer sheet to the address given on the copyright page of your study guide and ask about another course of study.

Check Your Answers

- 3** Your answer should include the following ideas (in any order) and at least one Scripture reference for each:

It is like running a race; Philippians 3:14.

It is like finishing a job or task; John 9:4; 17:4.

It is like gathering in a harvest; Matthew 9:37–38.

- 1** The Bible's comparison of the Christian life or work to a race that is run by an athlete teaches that there is a goal the Christian worker must reach. He must move toward that goal and allow nothing to distract him. (You may have written another lesson the comparison teaches you.)
- 4** **a** 2) Task that is finished
b 1) Race that is won
c 3) Harvest that is gathered
- 2** **c**) Philippians 3:14.
- 5** Your answer should include the following (in any order):
The approval of our Master, Matthew 25:21; an inheritance, Romans 8:17; the joy of seeing those we have helped, 1 Thessalonians 2:19; a crown, 1 Corinthians 9:25 or 1 Peter 5:4; joy of being in God's presence forever, 1 Thessalonians 4:17