Date: 8/20/2016

Title: Run with Endurance

Theme: The race God has set before us is even bigger than the Olympics

Object: Pictures of medals and medal winners

Text: Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV) 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.

Has anyone been watching the summer Olympic games on TV?

Have you seen the gymnastics and the swimming?

The Olympic games are played every four years in a different city of the world.

This year they are being played in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The Olympic Games is a gigantic competition between athletes from all over the world.

There are more than 11,500 athletes competing for medals in the Olympics.

These athletes come from 207 countries around the world.

There are 306 events in 28 sports.

The athletes compete for medals that look like this. [Show picture of medals, explain gold, silver and bronze]

So far in the Olympic games, the USA has won 38 gold medals, 35 silver medals and 32 bronze medals for a total of 105. No other country is even close. China is in second place for total medals and they have only 65.

The USA has the best gymnast in the world, Simone Biles. She has four gold medals. She just won her 5th gold medal in these games on the floor exercise. [Show picture]

And the USA has the best swimmer in the world, Michael Phelps. He has the most gold medals of anyone in Olympic history: 23 golds and 28 total medals. [Show picture]

The athletes that compete in the Olympics have worked long and hard to get better at their sport.

And when they compete in the Olympics, they will keep their eye on the prize and not let anything stand in the way of doing their very best to win a gold medal.

Now you and I may not be in the Olympics, but the Bible says we are in a race that is even bigger than the Olympic games. [Read text again]

The Bible says that being a Christian is like being in the Olympics.

There is a massive stadium filled with cheering people. We’re in the race.

Before we run, we need to lay aside every weight and anything that would slow us down.

Have you noticed in the Olympic games, the athletes don’t wear any clothes that will slow them down?

Even the swimmers put a rubber cap on so their hair doesn’t slow them down in the water.

In our race as Christians, it is sin that slows us down.

And sometimes, sin makes a Christian go so slow that he thinks he can never win and he drops out of the race.

The Bible says that we should throw off anything that would hinder us and the sin that so easily entangles us and trips us up.

And how can we do that? We bring our sins to Jesus. We tell Him we are sorry for our sins, and we ask Him to forgive us. And if we love Jesus and trust Him, He will forgive our sins because He died for them on the cross.

Then we can run the race with endurance, never giving up.

And we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. He’s standing there at the finish line encouraging us to do our best.

If we finish the race, and fall into the arms of Jesus, we don’t just get a gold medal, we get to walk on streets of gold in the kingdom of God forever.

Do you want to go for the gold? Let’s keep our eyes on Jesus and finish the Christian race!