Good morning, boys and girls!

Is there anybody here who would rather walk than run? We all like to run. It’s more fun to run than to just walk. You can’t play tag or football (soccer) or baseball unless you run.

The Bible even tells us we should be good at running: “Run in such a way as to get the prize” (1 Corinthians 9:24, NIV).

The Bible writer named Paul apparently knew something about running races, because he said to some people who were losing a race: “You were running a good race. Who cut in on you?” (Galatians 5:7, NIV).

Pathfinders and even Adventurers sometimes run a marathon. That’s a long race to see how many people can finish. Maybe the writers in the Bible knew about marathons when one writer said: “the race is not to the swift” (Ecclesiastes 9:11, NIV).

There is a famous story about how a marathon got its name. It was originally the name of a city. An enemy army landed at Marathon, and the people in a city named Athens, (still here today), had only 10,000 men in its army. The people in Athens sent a powerful runner named Pheidippides (anybody with that name here?) to a city named Sparta for help. Sparta is over 136 miles (220 kilometers) from Athens. That’s a long run! It took him three days—a really long run!

When Pheidippides got back to Athens, he found out that all the men had left for Marathon to fight the invaders. All that was left in the city were old people, some people with physical disabilities, and the women and children.

They were all scared, so they begged Pheidippides to run some more. They asked him to run to Marathon, find out what was going on, and run back to tell them. That’s a lot of running!
The Athenians and the Spartans were pretty good fighters, so they battled the far larger enemy army, and eventually, history tells us that the Persians broke and ran for their ships. More running, this time in the opposite direction.

Pheidippides, barely rested, then ran almost 15 miles (24 kilometers) back to Athens to tell the people about the victory. Pheidippides was so worn out from all that running that he barely made it back. The people saw him coming. They waited for his message.

Pheidippides staggered as he neared the city, and the people rushed out to meet him. “Rejoice, we conquer!”

And guess what? That was it. Pheidippides couldn’t make it anymore. He fell down and died. That’s how a long race today got to be called a “marathon.”

None of us want to run so much we die.

In the Bible the Christian life is sometimes compared to a footrace. Few people can physically do what Pheidippides did, but we can all show the same devotion he showed as we run the Christian race, “looking unto Jesus” (Hebrews 12:2, NKJV). You can win this contest, for in it “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong” (Ecc. 9:11, NKJV).

Let us say a little prayer to thank Jesus for bodies and ask for strength to continue the race to His throne.