

**“EYES ON THE PRIZE –
RACING TO SERVE”**

Based on I Corinthians 9:24



ASP
Appalachia
SERVICE PROJECT

2010

SATURDAY THE FINISH LINE

Saturday brings travel home, saying goodbye to new friends, and reconnecting with families. Vans are packed with dirty clothes and tired volunteers. You may want to sleep but don't miss out on the opportunity to reflect on what you have experienced this week at ASP.

READ THIS BLESSING TOGETHER:

“May the Spirit
Bless you with discomfort
At easy answers, half-truths, and
Superficial relationships so that
You will live deep in your heart.

May the Spirit
Bless you with anger
At injustice and oppression,
And exploitation of people and the earth
So that you will work for Justice, equity and peace.

May the Spirit
Bless you with tears to shed
For those who suffer
So that you will
Reach out your hand
To comfort them.

And may the Spirit
Bless you with the foolishness
To think you can make a difference
In the world,
So you will do the things
Which others say cannot be done.”

Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice by Alan Jamieson

SUNDAY “ON YOUR MARK – READY SET GO!”

It is Sunday, the day we arrive at our ASP center. It is a day of unknowns – where will we be staying? what will our worksite be like? who are the staff and all the other volunteers? will I be able to do what is expected of me? am I ready for the race?

READ TOGETHER THE PARABLE OF THE 3 SERVANTS, MATTHEW 24:14-18 (paraphrased from Message Bible)

“It's also like a man going off on an extended trip. He called his servants together and delegated responsibilities. To one he gave \$5000, to another \$2000, to a third \$1000, depending on their abilities. Then he left. Right off, the first servant went to work and doubled his master's investment. The second did the same. But the man with the single thousand dug a hole and carefully buried his master's money. After a long absence, the master of those three servants came back and settled up with them. To the one with the \$5000, His master commended him ‘Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner’. The same commendation was given the servant with \$2000. The servant given \$1000 said, ‘Master, I know you have high standards and hate careless ways, that you demand the best and make no allowances for error. I was afraid I might disappoint you, so I found a good hiding place and secured your money. Here it is safe and sound down to the last cent. The master was furious. ‘That's a terrible way to live! It's criminal to live cautiously like that! If you knew I was after the best, why did you doles than the least? The least you could have done would have been to invest the sum with the bankers, where at least I would have gotten a little interest. Take the \$1000 and give it to the one who risked the most. And get rid of this ‘play-it-safe’ who won't go out on a limb. Throw him out into utter darkness.”

DISCUSS:

- 1 Why was the master so hard on the servant with one talent?
Does God have the right to your talents?
2. What strengths/talents do you bring to this work crew?
3. What weaknesses do you bring?
4. What might really irritate you during the work week?
5. What will you do this week to “go out on a limb”?
How can our work crew use our talents together in serving God this week?

PRAYER: Thank you God for helping us prepare and arrive at ASP today. Thank you for each person in our work crew and the talents we each bring to ASP. Be with us in the unknowns and the challenges as we “go out on a limb” to serve you this week. Amen

MONDAY RUN!

Mosey Monday can be both an exciting and hard day at ASP. You have to find your worksite, meet your family, see the work you have to do, and develop a work crew team. It's actually time to get into the race!

READ THESE QUOTES TOGETHER:

“Running is the greatest metaphor for life, because you get out of it what you put into it.”

Oprah Winfrey, talk show host & marathon finisher

“There is something about drive, the competitive quest for greatness, about the search for mastery and striving for excellence that moves us really deeply. The real contest is to see if I can offer my best, to see if I can run and not give up in the face of a great demand.” John Ortberg, Presbyterian Pastor and author

DISCUSS:

1. What are the biggest challenges facing your work crew this week?
2. Have each crew member answer: What will be easy for you to accomplish on this worksite? What will be the most difficult?
3. Do you agree that the real contest is to offer your best and not give up?
4. As a work crew, how will you remember and encourage each other to give your best all week long?

PRAY TOGETHER: Dear God, thank you for bringing us to this home. Help us to do the best job we can this week. Help us to put the most we can into our work and our relationships with each other and our family. Amen.

The score was soon tied. In the closing seconds of the game, this kid intercepted a pass and ran all the way for the winning touchdown. The fans broke loose. His teammates hoisted him on their shoulders. Such cheering you have never heard!

Finally, after the stands were empty and the locker room was empty, the coach noticed the young man sitting quietly in the corner all alone. He said, “Kid, I can’t believe it. You were fantastic! Tell me what got into you? How did you do it?”

He looked at the coach with tears in his eyes and said, “Well, you knew my dad died, but did you know that my dad was blind?” The young man swallowed hard and forced a smile, “Dad came to all my games but today was the first time he could see me play and I wanted to show him I could do it!”

That’s positive motivation. God sees us. God loves us and whom we love back, he sees us and that inspires a great effort.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why was it so important for the football player to play in this particular game?
2. How did his dad’s dying affect his motivation to play well?
3. Reflect on the idea that God sees us and loves each one of us. How have you been aware of God’s presence this week and in this work crew?
4. God inspires us to do small things and great things with our lives. How will God seeing you inspire you after you return home from ASP?

PRAYER

Pray a circle prayer with each team member adding a thank you to God for seeing us. Ask for help to keep motivated to live for Him.

FRIDAY EYES ON THE PRIZE

READ THIS STORY from Bob Richards,
the former pole-vault champion. from geocities.com

There was a skinny young boy who loved football. Practice after practice, he eagerly gave everything he had. But since he was half the size of the other players, he got nowhere. He sat on the bench and rarely played. The boy lived alone with his father and they had a very special relationship. The dad was always in the stands cheering and he never missed a game even though his son was on the bench. This went on from grade school through college. He was kept on simply because he was an inspiration to the other members of the team.

At the end of his senior football season before a big playoff game, the coach met him with a telegram. The young man read the telegram and became silent. He mumbled to the coach, "My father died this morning. Is it all right if I miss practice today?" The coach put his arm gently around his shoulder and said, "Take the rest of the week off. And don't plan to come to the game on Saturday."

Saturday arrived and the game wasn't going well. In the 3rd quarter, when the team was 10 points behind, the young man slipped into the locker room and put on his gear. As he ran on the sidelines, the coach and players were astounded to see their faithful teammate back so soon.

"Coach, please let me play. I've just got to play today." The coach pretended not to hear him. There was no way he wanted his worst player in this close playoff game. But he persisted and finally feeling sorry for the kid, the coach gave in. Before long, the coach, the players, and everyone in the stands couldn't believe their eyes. This little unknown, who had never played before was doing everything right. The opposing team couldn't stop him. He ran, he passed, blocked and tackled like a star. His team began to triumph.

TUESDAY HOW'S THE WEATHER?

Weather and ASP – it's always unpredictable! Too hot, humid, cool, rainy, sunny, whatever! The climate impacts our work projects. And of course, there is the climate within our own crew. Are you enthusiastic, encouraging, energetic or tired, crabby, & homesick? How's the atmosphere?

READ QUOTES TOGETHER:

"Running shoes these days are more and more technologically advanced. I went in this store and they told me this model of running shoes can even predict the weather! I asked how and the salesperson told me: "Leave your shoes in the window for a little while: if they are wet ,it's raining, if they are dry, it's sunny, if you cannot see them, it's foggy."

from: runtheplanet.com

"There's no such thing as bad weather, just soft people."

Bill Bowerman

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. What has been the most unexpected thing for you at ASP?
2. How do you handle unpredictable or unexpected circumstances? Are you more likely to take it in stride or let it bother you?
3. Is your work crew showing signs of being soft?
Where do you need to toughen up to be able to get the job done?

PRAY TOGETHER: We thank you, God, for this day that you have given us. Help us to stay strong regardless of what the weather might be. Help us to work together and support each other. Help us to be tolerant and kind and to believe the best about each of our team members. Amen.

WEDNESDAY “RACE TO THE FINISH”

It is the middle of our work week. How is your ASP race going? How will you cross the finish line? We may all need help to cross the finish line strong. Barnabas is a Bible character whose name means ‘encourager’. We can learn much about Barnabas in Leonard Sweet’s book 11. “A Barnabas can hold us up when we are tired and weary, give us a hand when we are discouraged, remind us that God called us to this ministry at ASP.”

READ THIS STORY TOGETHER:

“I ran a marathon...once. I half-jokingly call marathons the “ultimate postmodern sport” because you don’t enter to win, but to finish. No one asks, “did you win the Boston Marathon?” but, “Did you finish?” The marathon was held in Dayton, Ohio, and all of us who were running had our names emblazoned on the backs of our T-shirts. I’ll never forget the experience of having those along the route encouraging me as I panted through my paces and staggered toward the finish line. Onlookers did more than stand there and gawk. The sidelines became part of the marathon’s mainlines by the constant yelling from mile one of “Go Len! Go, Len! Or closer to the end of the race, “Don’t give up, Len. Don’t give up.” These people didn’t know me from a number on a license plate. But these anonymous, spontaneous Barnabas Witnesses helped me finish that race in a new-record (for near last-place) time. Sometimes we are called to encourage people we don’t know. But we’re all in the same race.” From “11 INDISPENSABLE RELATIONSHIPS YOU CAN’T BE WITHOUT by Leonard Sweet, page 100.

DISCUSS:

1. When have you been discouraged and wanted to give up or run and hide off the ASP race track this week?
2. What got you back on track?
3. How have you been encouraged by a “witness”?
4. Who has encouraged you and how?
5. Who have you encouraged and how?

CALL TO ACTION: In the next 24 hours be a spontaneous Barnabas by encouraging every person you meet. Encouraging others could become habit forming and one of your spiritual practices. Have a **circle prayer** in your work crew, remembering to thank your “Barnabas”.

THURSDAY “HOW WILL YOU END THE RACE?”

We are thinking about the end of our work week. How do we make the transition from working and being with new friends to leaving this place? Sometimes the feelings we have when it is time to say good-bye can catch us by surprise. This is an opportunity to think ahead and prepare for another important part of our ASP experience.

READ TOGETHER ACTS 20: 25-27, 32, 36

(quoted from The Message Bible)

“And so this is good-bye. You’re not going to see me again, nor I you, you whom I have gone among for so long proclaiming the news of God’s inaugurated kingdom. I’ve done my best for you, given you my all, held back nothing of God’s will for you.”
“Now I’m turning you over to God, our marvelous God whose gracious Word can make you into what he wants you to be and give you everything you could possibly need in this community of holy friends.”

Then Paul went down on his knees, all of them kneeling with him, and prayed.”

DISCUSS:

1. Where have you done your best this week?
2. Who have you met that has impacted your life this week and how have you been impacted?
3. What does Paul teach us about saying good-bye when the race is finished?
4. How do you feel about saying good-bye when you leave family or friends?
5. Who will you need to say good-bye to before leaving for home on Saturday and how will you do that?
6. “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”
Philippians 4:4 How can saying good-bye be a joyful time?

PRAYER: Thank you God for this day. Thank you for all the new friends we have met this week. Please guide us as we work together one more day and as we find ways to say good-bye. Amen

Ideas taken from DEEP JUSTICE JOURNEYS LEADER’S GUIDE by Kara E. Powell and Brad M. Griffin. Pages 129-132