

Faithful Home
Bible Studies



*A Race
Well-Lived*

Michelle Moore

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Published by Faithful Home Bible Studies

Cover art designed by Shawn Mobley.

Author picture by MasterPieces in Motion.

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ISBN: 9798537899655

This book is dedicated to:

My loving husband, Michael, thank you for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself and for never leaving my side during this difficult race.

My amazing daughter, Elizabeth, thank you for being such an encouragement to me. You have made me a better person. I love you to the moon and back.

My sweet son, Joshua, you ran your race so well and although you will not come back to me, one day I will come to you.

My dear sisters at Mt. Comfort Church of Christ, thank you for making the journey through this study with me while encouraging me to keep running.

Content

5	About the Author
6	About the Cover
7	Training Plan
10	The Race I Am Running
12	Week 1: Starting the Race
23	Week 2: Run Your Race
35	Week 3: Run with the Team
46	Week 4: Run with Discipline
57	Week 5: Run with Purpose
68	Week 6: Run without Baggage
79	Week 7: Run with Perseverance
90	Week 8: Run over the Hurdles
104	Week 9: Run with Joy
115	Week 10: Run with the right gear
125	Week 11: Run towards Jesus
136	Week 12: Run with Faith
147	Week 13: Finishing the Race
158	Conclusion
161	Facilitator's Guide
162	Endnotes

About the Author



Michelle Moore is a wife, mom, educator, writer, and speaker. She spent 20 years teaching Spanish at both the high school and junior high level and now serves as a high school Academic Facilitator.

She and her husband, Michael, have been married for 27 years and are blessed with two incredible children. Elizabeth and her husband, Christian, live right outside Washington, DC, where he is on active duty with the army. They are expecting their first child. Michelle and Michael's son, Joshua, ran ahead to Heaven at the age of 16 in 2013. He lived a life devoted to Christ, and one day they will be reunited with him for all eternity.

Michelle and her husband live in Northwest Arkansas where they worship with Mt. Comfort Church of Christ. They are active with both the Razorbacks for Christ ministry and the Young Adult ministry. You can connect with her through her blog, *With Eyes on the Cross*, at witheyesonthecross.com.

About the Cover

The silhouette on the front cover of this book is the silhouette of someone very special and very precious to me. It is the silhouette of my son, who was called home at the very young age of 16. Even though he didn't walk this earth long, I learned so many valuable lessons from him about running the race and running it well. His only goal in life was to get to Heaven and to bring along as many people with him as possible (even if they were kicking and screaming).

I am a much different person today than I was on October 29, 2013, when he headed out on that last run. I pray that I can follow his example of sharing Jesus with everyone I meet on this race.

Training Plan

One of my favorite passages of scripture comes from Ecclesiastes 3:1 “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under Heaven.” We are all in different seasons. Some still have small children at home and their schedules are determined by the demands of those little people. Some have older children who are pretty self-sufficient and can usually set their own schedules. Some are retired and busier than ever. Some are retired and have more free time than ever before. Some are caring for aging parents. We are all in different seasons, with different constraints on our time, and yet we are all striving to follow God! Whatever season you are in, whether on a mountaintop and things are going incredibly well or in a valley when everything seems to be going wrong, I pray that you will pursue God and keep your eyes on the prize!

This study is not intended to be a one-size-fits all study. God made each one of us to be unique! Hallelujah! Some have more time available to study early in the morning, others during their sweet babies’ afternoon naps and others late at night when the house is quiet. Some can devote hours in their day to one-on-one time with God while others are fortunate to have 15 minutes alone. Wherever you are, this study can be adapted to fit your schedule.

The goal is simple: to reflect on where we are now and to study those who have gone before us so that we may pursue Heaven with total abandon. Spending time in prayer will be invaluable throughout this study. At the end of each lesson, I have included a prayer. These are only intended to serve as examples and to help you get started if you are struggling with what to say to God. Prayer is something that is very personal between you and God. It is a time for you to open your heart to Him.

Each week has four sections:

Warm-up: Every run begins with a gentle, low impact warm-up. It’s a time to slowly ease the body into the tough work ahead. We are going to use this section to prepare our minds for the task ahead by reading and reflecting on personal questions. My prayer is that you will not rush through these questions. Instead, really spend some time reflecting and praying as you respond. This is also where we will get started on our memorization work for the week.

Meet the Pacer: A pacer in a race is typically an experienced runner who can run at a predetermined pace. Other runners who want to finish a race in a desired time only have to keep up with that pacer to meet their goal. Scripture is full of “pacers” - someone with experience running a difficult race who stayed focused on the cross. What we learn from our Bible pacers will help us stay the course in our own races. Many of these stories will be familiar to you. I pray that you will take the time to read them slowly and carefully so that you won’t miss the smallest details.

Staying on Pace: The middle of the run is always the toughest. This is a continuation of the “Meet the Pacer” section. It’s the rest of the story, so to speak. Information that we need to keep us strong mentally.

Finishing Strong: The first three sections are all about learning from others. In order to really grow, it’s important to put that learning into action. This section is exactly that, a call to action, an opportunity to practice some of the strategies for running your own race well.

Memorization Tips

When we are climbing mountains or jumping hurdles, scriptures that we have tucked away in our hearts will guide us and keep us on pace. These tips will help with scripture memorization so that we can keep our eyes and our hearts focused on the cross instead of the obstacle in front of us.

1. Choose one of the 3 scriptures that you want to memorize. Be reasonable with your expectations of yourself.
2. Repeat the first phrase of the scripture over and over until you can say it with confidence. If there is a hand gesture or movement that you can add that will make your memory even stronger.
3. Repeat the second phrase of the scripture over and over until you can say it with confidence. Again, try to add a hand gesture or movement.
4. Add the first two phrases together and repeat those over and over until you are confident that you have it.
5. Continue these steps until you have memorized the entire passage.
6. PRACTICE throughout the day, when you are getting ready, as you are driving, whenever you have a little pocket of time to test yourself.

That’s the training plan! Whether you use this for personal study or in a group, I pray that you become stronger and more confident in your race towards the ultimate finish line - Heaven.

The Race I Am Running

I distinctly remember thanking God in September 2013 for my perfect life; which is funny, because no one's life is perfect. However, mine felt about as close to perfection as possible. I adored the man that I married 20 years prior. We had an amazing son and an incredible daughter who brought us so much joy and delight every single day (and they were teenagers – crazy, right). Less than two months later all I could sputter out to God was “why”? October 16th, we learned that my mom had an inoperable tumor. Doctors gave her 2 ½ years to live. October 29th, I found myself at the emergency room while they tried to resuscitate my sixteen-year-old son who had collapsed due to ventricular fibrillation while on a run. Three days later we had to say good-bye as he left this earth to receive his eternal reward in heaven. Eight short months later, my mom also left this earth. I told her to dance through those pearly gates! Oh, I hope she did!

Saying that the following year was difficult would be quite the understatement, and I desperately wish that I could say I thrived. That would be a lie. Some days I felt accomplished if I brushed my teeth and had on matching shoes. Other days I would smile and then immediately feel guilty. I did not know it was possible for someone to cry so much.

As a new year approached and many people started making their resolutions, I knew that I could not do it. I did not have it in me to compile a list of things that I should or should not be doing. Then, I came across something different – someone had posted on social media that instead of a resolution, she had chosen a word as her focus for the coming year. A single word, not a long list that would leave me feeling burdened, just a word. I considered a few – joy, peace, perseverance. Then, a few phrases came to mind – believing God or all things new; however, the one that He seemed to be putting on my heart was “running my race.”

Our son was a cross-country runner. His life was also a race. One that he ran so well. While he had a heart condition that prevented him from playing contact sports, that did not stop him from loving football and soccer, nor did it stop him from encouraging other players. He could have chosen to be bitter. He could have chosen to hate God. Instead he chose to run his race to the fullest and trust God even though he did not understand why this had to be his race.

The year following his death, I struggled with anger, bitterness, depression and jealousy. At times, I forced myself to logout of Facebook, especially around the holidays to avoid seeing the happy faces of intact families. I don't begrudge anyone a happy family, I just want mine back. The way it was in September 2013 – the mountain of laundry, the hectic schedule, the empty pantry, the dirty dishes, the smelly socks after one of his long runs. I do not understand why God has put me on this path. So, like my son, I have to choose whether to trust Him and run the race marked for me, or become angry and bitter because this is not the race I want to run. Your race may look very different from mine. We each have to run our own races knowing that there will be difficulties. As we run, we can cling to the promise that God will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). My prayer is that you can run yours wholeheartedly. Maybe our paths will even cross, and we can encourage one another as we run alongside each other. If not, I look forward to seeing you at the finish line, where we both will receive a crown of righteousness!

A light gray silhouette of a person in a running pose, positioned on the left side of the page. The figure is shown from the side, with one leg forward and arms slightly bent, suggesting motion.

Week One

Starting the Race

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25

Warm-up

Day One

Did you know that you are in a race? I have zero athleticism so that is a little unnerving for me. However, our son was an avid runner. When he first started running, he was too young to run alone, so I started running so that I could “run” with him. Notice I put that in quotes. I do not think you could call what I did running. I was only trying to keep him in sight. He had a five-mile route. I would struggle along behind him until I saw him turn around and then I would turn around and head home. He would pass me, beat me home and then come back to wherever I was and run home with me. After his death, I became an avid runner. For many reasons, the primary one being that a 5K was planned in his memory, and I did not want to get to Heaven only to hear him say (with that huge teasing grin of his), “Mom, seriously is that all you had.” As I began to run more and more, I noticed how training for a race is a lot like striving for Heaven. And since this is the most important race I will ever run, I want to do it well because along with my Creator and my Savior, I have a lot of treasures awaiting me when I arrive.

Before we jump into our study, let’s take a minute to think back to a day when you were rewarded for something you did well. Surprisingly, my memory comes from a 3rd grade all-star softball game (remember I told you that I have zero athletic ability). I was so terrible at softball that the assistant coach would take me to the far end of the field during practice and try to teach me something, anything that might be helpful to the team. I would love to say it paid off; sadly, if I am being honest, I am pretty sure it was pure luck. One hot dusty day on a field in south Arkansas, I was standing between first and second base when the batter hit the ball straight to me. I closed my eyes as tightly as I could and held my glove as high up in the air as I was able to reach. Somehow, I caught that ball and did not drop it! My reward – I was toted around the field on the coach’s shoulders while my teammates clapped and shouted for joy. I am certain that I am the only person on my team who still remembers that day, because for me it was an unforgettable moment, albeit one that pales in comparison to the moment I strive for every single day. It’s a moment I hope you are also striving for - the moment we leave our earthly bodies and enter Heaven to receive an eternal reward.

While our race on earth will end with a finish line that is unimaginable, it will take a strong commitment from us. Which brings us to our first step in training. Making the commitment. In our race for Heaven that commitment means obedience to God. Although we are all called to be His disciples, not everyone will make that choice. It is a conscious decision to serve and honor God here on Earth while we wait to be called home. God will not force us to choose the path that leads to Heaven nor will He force us to spend an eternity in Heaven with Him. That is a decision we must make every single day as we run our race. And while some of those races are not easy, God promises a reward that is so amazing and so incredible, it is beyond anything our minds can fathom – the glory of Heaven and an eternity with our Creator.

Commitment in running means setting the training schedule and obeying it. What does commitment to God look like? I am so grateful for all of the examples of obedience in scripture. Notice how some are called to obedience in bold ways and others in much smaller ways. Noah demonstrated obedience by building an ark. Jonah (after a little persuasion) went to Nineveh and shared the gospel. Daniel continued to pray to God even after the king issued a decree against it. Contrast those examples with the widow who gave her two mites. Lois and Eunice taught Timothy the Word each and every day. John cared for Mary after the crucifixion of Jesus. There are so many examples of faithful followers in scripture and no two examples are exactly alike. We are all called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). We are called to use the talents He has blessed us with to serve Him (1 Corinthians 12:11). By obeying the calling, we are declaring ourselves servants to God and God alone. The good news is, we don't have to fit a cookie cutter mold of obedience.

❑ [What is holding you back from fully obeying God's call in your life?](#)

Write out the following scriptures. Circle, underline, or highlight the words and phrases that stand out to you. Make notes about what each scripture means to you. Choose one to memorize. Tuck it away in your heart so you are prepared as you run the race set before you.

1 John 5:3

Romans 6:16-17

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Meet the Pacer: Abraham Day Two

Abraham is someone who demonstrated obedience in life-changing ways. As you read through the passages below, try to put yourself in Abraham's shoes. Imagine what it must have been like to have God call you to obedience the way He called Abraham to obey. How would you have reacted to being told to leave your home in a time when family was your identity and as the oldest child it was your responsibility to become the next head of the family?

Read Genesis 12:1-4.

Verse	God's command to Abram	God's promise to Abram
1		
2		
3		

What was Abram's response to God's commands?

How old was Abram when he left Haran?

Did you notice that God gave Abram two commands and made him five promises in those four short scriptures! God blesses our obedience. Although it may not be the way we anticipate, we are always blessed when we obey.

- ☐ God has given us many promises in scripture as well. What is your favorite promise from God?

Read Genesis 15:1-6.

How did God describe Himself in the vision?

What was Abram's question to God?

What does verse 6 say about Abram?

“Abram believed the Lord.” Such a simple phrase, so let's be careful not to make light of it. He made a conscious decision. Tuck this away. We will come back to it!

In verse 2, God told Abram “I am your shield, your very great reward.” Do you know the purpose of a shield? In battle, it was used to protect a soldier from weapons that were in close range. A shield was carried right in front of the body to cover the head and torso, the most vulnerable parts of the body. The word “shield” is used more than 90 times in the Old Testament. In many of those scriptures, God tells His people to take up their shields and fight. Now, God is our shield. Do you understand what that means? When we obey Him, HE is our shield. He covers our hearts and our heads to protect us from the attacks and lies of satan. I love the way the Psalmist said it in Psalm 3:3, “But you are a shield around me, O Lord; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.”

Read Genesis 21:1-3.

What promise did God fulfill?

How much time had passed since God made the promise to Abraham?

In verse 1, scripture tells us that “the Lord did for Sarah what He had promised.” It just didn't happen overnight. Sure, it was only six chapters from the time God made the promise until He fulfilled it; however years had passed. Let's take a

quick look at the timeline: Abram was 75 when he left Haran (12:4), he was 86 when Ishmael was born (16:16), he was 99 when he was circumcised (17:24), and he was 100 when Isaac was born (21:3). Sometimes, we read through scripture and do not truly grasp the amount of time that has passed between events. Think back to everything that has happened to you in the last fifteen years. It's easy to read six chapters and forget that as someone waited for God to fulfill a promise, hours turned into days, days into months and months into years. You aren't the only one struggling as you wait on God's timing. Abraham walked that path too, and continued to obey in the waiting.

❑ What promises has the Lord fulfilled for you?

Read Genesis 22:1-4.

What inconceivable thing did God ask Abraham to do?

What did Abraham do?

Abraham must have been shocked by God's request. After all, God had promised him a son, years had passed before the promise was fulfilled and then a short time after fulfilling this promise, He asks Abraham to use his own hand to sacrifice Isaac.

I can't help but wonder what that morning must have been like for Abraham. He got up early. I doubt he slept much. He gathered his supplies and got his donkey ready. Can you picture his shoulders drooping as he went about his work? Then he spends three days walking to Moriah. How difficult it must have been to even carry on a conversation with Isaac knowing what he was about to do.

Read Genesis 22:5.

What pronoun does Abraham use to tell the servants who would be returning after worshipping?

How could Abraham possibly have known that both of them would return?

If you spent any time in Sunday school, you know how this story ends. Abraham tied Isaac to the altar and just as he raised his hand to kill him, was stopped by an angel of the Lord. Abraham chose to fully surrender his life to God and to obey, even when God asked him to do hard things. Abraham did not have to sacrifice his son. His was a happy ending. Not all of them are. Why do some have to die and others do not? I do not know. Obedience isn't always easy. Obedience is always blessed by God.

❑ What makes obeying God's call difficult for you?

Staying on Pace Day Three

Read Romans 4:18-25.

What do these verses say about Abraham's obedience through faith?

In addition to Abraham, to whom was this passage written?

Let's personalize this passage.

Against all hope, _____ in hope believed.
(your name)

Without weakening in faith, _____ faced
(your name)

(your situation)

Yet _____ did not waver through unbelief regarding
(your name)

the promise of God, but was strengthened in faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised.

Can you obey God knowing with full confidence that He is also your shield, your exceedingly great reward and will never leave you nor forsake you? Just like He did with Abraham, He promises to walk alongside you and be your strength through any trial you face. You will never walk alone.

Read Hebrews 11:8-12 and 17-19.

What does scripture tell us that Abraham did by faith?

Share a way that you have obeyed God:

By faith _____ obeyed when
(your name)

_____ .
(your situation)

Read Hebrews 11:13.

Was Abraham's faith ever made sight?

Like Abraham, our obedience to God doesn't mean that we will get all of the answers we want. At least not this side of Heaven. Even still, we can hold tight to God's promises that He will reward our obedience.

- What have you learned from Abraham's story that will help you in your race to be obedient?

Whatever you are facing today, I pray that Abraham's example of obedience will be a blessing to you. Perhaps like Abraham you have been forced to leave your family, had to make sacrifices that were difficult, had to wait a long time for an answer or maybe you are still waiting. While Abraham was not perfect, he was

obedient. In Genesis 12, we read where he and Sarai told a half lie to the Egyptians. In Genesis 16, we read where he went along with Sarai's plan to get a son by using Hagar. God does not call us to be perfect. He does long for us to seek after Him and obey Him. He blesses those who obey Him (Psalm 128:1).

❑ What does obedience look like for you?

Maybe God has asked you to live boldly the way that Abraham, Noah and many others lived. Or, maybe He has asked you to obey in what you think are smaller, quieter ways like training your children, maintaining your home or sending notes of encouragement to others. Quiet obedience is still obedience. It is a daily commitment, a conscious decision to trust that He will do what He says He will do even when we don't understand why. Whatever He is asking of you, will you commit today to being obedient to God's plan for your life?

Remember that shining moment? Do you remember how it felt? Does it still make you smile to think about it? Picture another one with me - the moment you pass through those Pearly Gates and hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:21) Pause for a moment and try to see it in your mind. A place so beautiful it can't be described with human words. A feeling so glorious that nothing on earth can compare. A moment so precious and perfect - that moment when for the first time, we will meet our Creator and our Savior. Will you run towards Him with abandon? Will you drop to your knees with overwhelming gratitude? Regardless of how it plays out in my mind, I am certain it can't come close to the actual moment. A moment that I long for and strive for everyday while God calls me to keep working for the Kingdom here on earth.

Father, obedience is hard especially when we don't understand the why behind what You are calling us to do. We long to be obedient, sometimes we just don't know how. We pray that You will give us eyes to see what You are calling us to do and a heart that strives to do it. When we mess up, please bring us back to You quickly and safely. While we walk this earth, Father, we will spread the good news and glorify Your name so that others will see You in us and desire to follow You and You alone. Thank You for being our shield and our very great reward. In the name of Your precious Son, amen.

Finishing Strong

Day Four

God told the Israelites to tell their children about the past. Knowing the stories of the past is one of the ways we can overcome satan (Revelation 12:11).

Write a letter to your children or your grandchildren and share with them how God has blessed your obedience to Him. If you don't yet have children or grandchildren, write it to a friend or to yourself to open in the future when the race gets tough and you need to be reminded of God's faithfulness in your obedience.

On your mark... Get set... **Go!**

The day you were born your race began. It will continue until the day you leave this earth. Our entire lives are a race, not a competition, a race towards the ultimate finish line - Heaven. It's a race that requires constant training, focus, and discipline. As Christians, we are so fortunate to have the best Coach who has provided us with the perfect training plan.

This study focuses on following that plan so that every time we step up to the starting line and face off against the enemy, we are equipped with everything we need to run our race well.

Many of these lessons stem from a very tragic event in Michelle's life, the death of her son, Joshua, at the age of 16. He was a runner whose life was a race well-lived. After his death, Michelle became a runner. The more miles she ran, the more she reflected on the similarities between running and striving for Heaven. She weaves her own experiences into a Bible study prayerfully designed to give you strength and encouragement as you run your race towards Heaven.

The purpose of this 13-week study is to:

- Dive into scriptures where we will meet some pacers and learn how they ran their races with discipline, perseverance, joy and so much more.
- Reflect on where we are in our race and how we can stay the course so that when we cross that ultimate finish line, we will hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Michelle Moore

is a wife, mom, educator, writer, and speaker. She and her husband, Michael have been married for 27 years and are blessed with two incredible children. You can connect with her through her blog, *With Eyes on the Cross*, at witheyesonthecross.com

