

## **Let's Go Racing!**

By: Bobby Sullivan

### **How bad do you want to win the race? Bad enough to win!**

According to Jeff Foxworthy, you Might Be A Nascar Redneck if:

The first buck you ever shot was on a sign!

You run your business from a pay phone

· Your favorite NASCAR souvenir was a direct result of a crash in turn three....

· You can remember every NASCAR driver and their car number but you can't remember how old your children are...

· Your pet nickname for your wife is "Lugnut"....

· You can change a tire faster than you can change a diaper....

· You've spent more time on the top of a Motorhome than in one....

· You think - last 4 words of the National Anthem are "Gentleman start your engines"

· You make engine noises while watching racing on TV....

And my personal favorite: you might be a Nascar Redneck if someone asks the time at church and you answer "an hour and a half till race time."

REAL NASCAR REDNECK
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Lets face it outside of Chase Elliot the only real nascar champion is # 24 Jeff Gordon

APPLY: All kidding aside, Nascar is one of the all time favorite American Sports and current national past times. According to an ESPN poll, auto racing is the nation's 7th most popular sport . Thirty-eight (38) percent of the population over the age of 12 say they are NASCAR fans.

Other sports may have larger fan bases, but racing enthusiasts may be the most loyal. According to Nielsen data, Nascar was the 2nd most watched sport - second only to the NFL regular season games.

**In addition, NASCAR is the only major sport in the U.S. which opens its weekly ceremonies with an invocation. And it's not just any prayer – it's almost always a Christian one, invoking the blessings of Jesus on the event and its participants.**

In fact, Christian influences are prevalent in this sport - from sponsors to driver testimonies to trackside prayer services. privately-owned companies have sanctioned stock-car races since 1948 NASCAR makes no apologies for its connection to Christianity.

Racing and Christianity have a very close mindset. According to Professor Baker (professor of history at U. of Maine who often writes in newspapers and magazine about Sports and Religion) there is a logic to evangelical Christianity and racing having a cozy relationship. He says:

“In many ways they’re similar. Both are win-loss mentalities. In evangelical Christianity you are either saved or lost. You’ve gone to heaven or you’ve gone to hell, you win or you lose and that’s what sport is all about.

In auto racing, there is a process known as qualifying for a race.

If your performance is good enough - if you’re fast enough, and consistent enough - you can qualify for one of the best positions as the cars line up at the starting line.

But the Bible tells us there is a problem with us qualifying for the race to heaven.

We’re not good enough. We don’t have what it takes to qualify because of our own ability.

Romans 3:23 tells us “... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

All of us come to the race with damaged vehicles.

All of us come to this competition with tires that are worn and engines that have been abused.

It doesn’t matter how well we can conduct ourselves on

the track.

It doesn't matter how skilled we may be behind the wheel.

We'll never make it to the finish line as we are.

No matter how good we think we are – the Bible tells us we'll never be good enough for this kind of race.

You're not going to be good enough...

And I am not good enough... in and of ourselves.

And so God has stepped in

**LOOK WITH ME TO Colossians 1:12**

**It says we should be "... giving thanks to the Father, who has QUALIFIED you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light."**

**You and I couldn't do it – so God stepped in and did the "qualifying" for us.**

ILLUS: Lake Speed has been one of the prominent racers on the NASCAR circuit. He said,

"Most of my life I had all the things the world says will make you happy, the big house, the cars and boat and I had also been very successful. But there was still an emptiness inside. Nothing else had worked up to this time, fame, money, success and all the toys. After that I started going to church and really got into reading the Bible. Christ was the answer for me. He put my life back together.

## Darrell Waltrip

Darrell Waltrip is in the NASCAR hall of fame for good reason. He has raced in nearly 100 races in his career, including 22 top 5 finishes, a modern NASCAR record, including track records from multiple tracks, and having won the Coca Cola 660 a record five times. **It wasn't until 1983 that Waltrip put his trust in Christ, however it would be another decade or so before he began to feel convicted about not putting God first in his life (Matt 6:33). That's when he began to look at the needs of others as being more important than his own. God had blessed him greatly and now he decided he'd spend the rest of his life trying to serve God, by serving others. He came up with the idea of Motor Racing Outreach (MRO), where he could provide prayer and spiritual support for the racers and their families, all of which must live with the fear of tragedy. Today, Waltrip does expert analysis on national broadcasts of NASCAR racing events and has even written a book about his life's experiences.**

## Kyle Eugene Petty

Kyle Eugene Petty is the son of the famous hall of famer, Richard Petty, who for so many, is a legend as big as the late Dale Earnhardt, who was killed in a freak accident during the final lap of the Daytona 500 in February, 2001. Drivers live with this kind of threat every time they climb into the car. Life is fragile, but even in the safest cars there are, they are all just one split second from eternity. Petty realized that even though he'd been going to church all his life, he felt like he was just "going through the motions." Something was missing. After his uncle was killed in a pit road accident, he realized that if racing was going to be his life, he needed the sovereign hand of God in his life. He turned his life over to the Lord and said that unless you build your house on the Rock (Jesus Christ), it's going to fall and fall hard.

## Robert "Bobby" Labonte

Bobby Labonte, even as a young boy, was seemingly always worried about the future (like many of us are) and he lived a life of trying to please everyone which is impossible, because you can't please everyone. He became discouraged over this when he read and finally understood what a Bible verse said. He read Matthew 6:34 where Jesus said, "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." That's what he wanted, instead of worrying over things he had no control over. When we turn our lives over to God, we should say, "Here are the keys God, you drive." That's just what Bobby Labonte did. He gave God the car keys and said, "You drive" and even though he's behind the wheel, he understands that God's the one directing the car

## Jeff Gordon

Jeff Gordon is one thankful man. He recognizes that God has blessed him, acknowledging that his daughter is a precious gift from God. For Gordon, his trust in Christ came very late in life, and he regrets that, but is thankful that he is now in the faith. Even though Gordon's one of the all-time leading racers in NASCAR history, he realizes that life is so much more than winning or losing a race. The winning is in his relationship with God and says that he prays regularly and now, later in his life, he says God has a much more significant role than before

## Hebrews 12:1-3

The scene that is set in Hebrews 12 is that of a Track and Field event. The runners have gathered and the event is about to begin. We read in verse one, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for

the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."

There can be little doubt that the "cloud of witnesses surrounding us" (v. 1) are those who have just been described in the earlier part of Chapter eleven as who have through faith have faced all kinds of difficulty. Leon Morris suggests that the language may refer to a relay race, in which the "witnesses" are those who have already finished their leg of the race and have passed the baton on to us.

The heavenly arena is filled with those who have gone on before. **The question is, are they "witnesses" in the sense that they are watching and cheering for the contestants or are they witnesses in the sense that they have left examples for us to follow.**

Although it may be encouraging to believe that it is both. **The word "witnesses" does not mean spectators. It is a word from which we get the English word "martyr."** They are witnesses to us that God can see us through. Think for a moment about who is there.

**Abel is there**, having offered a better sacrifice, a sacrifice offered with an attitude of faith.

**Abraham is there**, a man who was willing to leave the land of his father's and follow God's command to go to a country that he had never seen before.

**Enoch is there**, a man not known for his impressive accomplishments but rather for his walk with God.

**Noah is there**, the man who trusted God enough, to withstand the ridicule of his neighbors and obey God's command to spend 120 years building a boat on dry land .

**Mighty Moses is there**, who led Israel out of slavery in Egypt and delivered the Ten Commandments, he stands with the shine of having been in the presence of God still upon his countenance.

Before we consider what this passage has to say, I need to make one matter very clear. The race is not in order to get to heaven and only those who win get in. What every original reader understood is that one does not get to compete unless they were a citizen. Our citizenship in heaven is settled the moment we accept Jesus as our Savior. We are as sure of heaven at that moment as we will be when our life is over and we are escorted into His presence.



**1 Corinthians 9:24 “ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.”**

**The word “run” is the Greek word “trecho”, and indicates a constant and continuous pace.** It depicts a runner or a racer in a huge stadium before adoring crowds of fans. In order for him to win, every ounce of his strength and complete attention to detail is required.

Paul had all this in mind when he wrote the next verse  
 People compete for one or two reasons; they like the sport and they want the victory!

You can't possess what you're not willing to pursue! PBS

The Greek word for victory is *nike*. No wonder Phil Knight chose this word as the name of his shoe company.  
 One of the keys to being successful in anything you do is **persistence**. . It is the ability to maintain action regardless of your feelings. You press on even when you feel like quitting. When you work on any big goal, your motivation will wax and wane like waves hitting the shore. Sometimes you'll feel motivated; sometimes you won't. But it's not your motivation that will produce results — it's your action.

Persistence allows you to keep taking action even when you don't feel motivated to do so, and therefore you keep accumulating results.

***Persistence is the prescription for possibility***

**Dale Carnegie:**

Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.

**Louis Pasteur:**

Let me tell you the secret that has led me to my goal: my strength lies solely in my tenacity.

**Be persistent in what you believe:**

Doubt is deadly!. Faith without works is dead. Faith is to persistence what doubt is to failure.

“Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds,” (Proverbs 27:23).

Have you ever walked into a room and felt anger in the atmosphere? Have you ever walked into a room and felt love and energy and excitement? Of course. Your thoughts have presence. They are like currents moving through the air. Those thoughts are capable of drawing people toward you, or driving people away from you.

The person who is not persistent has never really been persuaded and will never be persuasive.

You must believe you will win long before you ever enter a race!

No matter what form of racing you enjoy, the final objective for everyone who is in the competition is to

gain the victory, to win the prize.

**VIDEO CLIP I SHOWED** : 2007 Daytona 500

everyone thought the winner of the race would be Mark Martin. And he was in the lead up until the last few moments when Kevin Harvick put on a burst of speed and edged Martin out at the finish line.

Martin is a legend on the Nascar circuit, but it wasn't always so. At one time in his life, he was just a so-so driver with a tendency to live life loose and party hard. But then he lost a close friend in a racing tragedy. He said:

"When I lost that person, it totally changed my life because it made me realize... what is the most important thing in life. I'm not sure if (my friend) was prepared, and I decided right then and there that I WAS GOING TO BE READY in case something was to happen to me. I couldn't put that off. I needed to be ready. If something was to happen to me going to, from or during any racing event, or going to the grocery store for that matter - my concern is what happens to me after that. That's a lot more important to me today than when I was a kid or in my teens."

Mark Martin re-dedicated his life to Christ, making certain that he knew Jesus Christ personally. He didn't do it merely as an eternal life insurance policy, however. "I also needed the strength of the relationship, the strength it gives to deal with all the things that are

important in life;' he said. "Having that relationship has made life more manageable."

**Now the moment of our race has come. The writer encourages us that if we are to run a good race there are four things we must do!**

**First, We Must Lay Aside Every Hindrance (v. 1)**

**"...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us..."**

**•Lay aside every weight.**

"Let us lay aside every weight..."

When it speaks of laying aside "every weight" the "weight" (onkos) is not bad or evil in itself; it is simply something which weighs us down, diverts our attention, saps our strength or dampens our enthusiasm for the things of God.

**Wilbur Chapman said, "The rule of my life is this: Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life or makes Christian word difficult, it is wrong for me, and as a Christian I must turn from it!"**

**•Lay aside every sin**

"... and the sin which so easily ensnares us."

An even more significant hindrance to Christian living is

sin. Since the writer uses a definite article "the sin" he seems to be referring to the specific sin(s) each of us, individually is most likely to commit.

**What is the sin that so easily entangles you or me?**

Is it that we are jealous of what someone else has? Is it envy? Is it a Critical spirit? Is it hatred? Is it lust? Pride? Whatever sin it is, it must be stripped off and left behind!

Not Only Must We Lay Aside Every Hindrance but...

**Second, We Must Run With Endurance**

**(v. 1) "...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."**

The writer compares the Christian life to a foot race, but it is a marathon not a sprint! The word "race" used here (agon) is the word we get our English word "agonize" from. As with any nascar race it doesn't matter how fast you start, or even if you are the pole setter, if you don't finish. In **2 Timothy 4:7-8 the Apostle Paul says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (8) Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."**

Hebrews 12:1 tells us to "run with endurance" the race set before us.

***"Endurance" (hupomone) is the steady***

***determination to keep going. It means continuing when everything in you wants to slow down or give up!***

So the writer is telling us, it is time to run! Some of you today, may be coasting or panting on the sidelines. It is time to run! Some of you may be complaining about the condition of the race. It is time to run! Some of you are out of shape spiritually and ready to offer excuses for your sluggishness. But it is time to get up and run! The writer is saying, "If you are not a Christian, get in the race, because you cannot win if you don't enter you can't win!"

"If you're a Christian, run with endurance and don't give up!"

Not Only Must We Run With Endurance but ...

YOU MUST BE PERSISTANT IN YOUR PLAN  
A PLAN IS A WRITTEN LIST OF ARRANGED ACTIONS  
NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE A DESITED GOAL. SOMETIMES  
YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING YOU HATE TO CREATE  
SOMETHING YOU LOVE.

### **Third, We Must Shift Our Focus (v.2)**

"... looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

We are to deliberately lift our eyes from those things

which might distract us and focus with utter concentration on Jesus. ***The word "looking" comes from a Greek word (aphorao) that has the idea of concentrating your gaze. It means to look away from other things so that you can focus all your attention on one object.***

In much the same way a coach will tell his runners, "When the gun sounds, start driving as hard as you can. Don't look back. Listen to your spotter. Report to the crew chief how your car is running and what the track is like.

Keep your eyes on the finish line and keep on driving."

As the old hymn says, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

We are to focus on Jesus as our "author" (archegos – literally pioneer) of our faith. Jesus is both the initiator and the completer of our faith.

Not Only Must We Shift Our Focus but ...

#### **Fourth, We Are To Consider the Savior**

(v. 3) "So consider carefully how Jesus faced such intense opposition from sinners who opposed their own souls, so that you won't become worn down and cave in

under life's pressures." TPT

**The story is told that, "Two gas company service men, a senior training Supervisor and a young trainee were out checking meters and parked their truck at the end of the alley and worked their way to the other end. At the last house a woman looking out her kitchen window watched the two men as they checked her gas meter. As they finished the meter check the older supervisor challenged his younger co-worker to a foot race down the alley back to the truck.**

**As they came running up to the truck, they realized that the lady from the last house was huffing and puffing right behind them. They stopped and asked her what was wrong. Gasping for breath she said, "When I see two gas men running full speed away from my house, I figured I had better run too."**

Many of us as Christians understand that we should be running the race but I wonder if we are a lot like this woman, we are running but we don't know why!

"the winner ain't the one with the fastest car its the one who refuses to lose"

~ Dale Earnhardt





"I don't feel I'm a step above anyone on this team. I'm just another link in the chain."

 [Jeff Gordon](#)

11 Timothy 4:7-8 " I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord will award for me on that day-and not only me, **but also to all who have longed for His appearing.**"

So the question is "How bad do ya wanna win the race? Bad enough to win!"