

Finishing Strong

Theme verse: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful."* – 2 Timothy 4:7

Opening Connection: The Courage to Keep Going

(Welcome students, open in prayer, then engage them.)

"Sometimes the world notices courage in the unlikeliest places. At the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Eric Moussambani stood on the pool deck—terrified. He was from Equatorial Guinea, a country with only two swimming pools, and he had learned to swim just six months before. His two competitors were disqualified at the start. That left him—alone—to swim the 100-meter freestyle... something he had never done in his life. He could have quit. Instead, he dived in. The crowd started with laughter... but ended with a standing ovation. His time didn't matter. His heart did."

Ask:

- What truths about courage, challenge, or commitment do you see in Eric's story?
- When have you been in a situation where you wanted to quit, but you pushed through?

Transition:

"Starting something is exciting. But finishing? Finishing well? That takes something deeper. Most people start with passion, but not everyone finishes with purpose. According to a study by Dr. J. Robert Clinton, only 30% of the leaders in the Bible finished strong. Today, we're going to learn how to be part of that 30%—leaders who finish the race God gave them, no matter the cost."

Main Points

1. Finishing Strong Means Facing Challenges Head-On

- Leadership will bring obstacles—logistical, relational, spiritual.
- In the ancient world, every runner in a race expected pain and exhaustion before the finish line. Quitting wasn't honorable.
- In ministry, challenges will test your patience, faith, and vision.

Ask:

- What challenges stop leaders from finishing strong?
- What unique challenges do *teen leaders* face today?

2. Finishing Strong Requires Courage

- Courage in leadership isn't about feeling fearless—it's about standing firm when fear is screaming in your ear.
- In the first-century church, courage was the reason the gospel spread. People stood up for truth knowing it could cost them everything.

Ask:

- Who's the most courageous person you know, and why?
- When has fear tried to stop you from leading well?

3. Finishing Strong Demands Perseverance

- *Greek term in Scripture: hypomonē*—steadfast endurance under pressure.
- Leaders are tested most when the excitement is gone and the grind remains.
- Perseverance is the difference between leaders who burn out and leaders who inspire others to the end.

Ask:

- Why do so many quit before they finish?
- Share a time you pushed through to the end—how did it shape you?

4. Finishing Strong Requires Excellence

- It's not just about crossing the line—it's about *how* you cross it.
- John the Baptist (Matthew 3; 11:1-15; 14:1-12) lived simply, spoke truth, and stood firm until his final breath. He didn't compromise to make life easier.
- These passages outline the life and ministry of John the Baptist, a relative of Jesus who was commissioned by God to prepare the way for Christ's ministry. John lived a pretty remarkable life, but it wasn't a glamorous one. He lived minimally, having no room in his life for luxuries. His goal was to glorify God and prepare people's hearts for the coming Messiah. He firmly stood by the message he preached, even when it angered the ruling

powers. During his imprisonment, John continued to speak truth, and he was eventually killed for his convictions.

- Excellence means doing your best before God, even when no one else sees.

Ask:

- Have you ever taken a shortcut and regretted it?
- What does it look like to lead with excellence as a teenager?

Historical/Biblical Tie-In: John the Baptist

- In his culture, prophets were rare and often rejected.
- Speaking against leaders like Herod was dangerous—John knew it could cost him his life.
- Yet he held to his mission until the end, showing that finishing strong is rooted in *faithfulness*, not comfort.

Ask:

- What challenges did John face?
- How did he keep his focus on Christ even in prison?

Life Application Challenge

"Most leaders don't fail because of one giant mistake—they fail from a thousand small compromises. You are at an age where the habits you form now will shape the way you finish later. Whether you're graduating, moving to the next grade, or just stepping into a new season, decide today: I will be a leader who finishes the race God has set for me—faithful, courageous, and excellent."

Living It Out:

- Where do you need to commit to excellence?
- What challenge do you need to face head-on this week?
- Who can you encourage to keep running their race?