



Eric Liddell **(1902 – 1945)**

A Man of SACRIFICE

Eric's Story

Eric Liddell didn't look much like a champion when he ran, and people mocked his strange running style. But he was the fastest runner in all of Scotland. He had become a national hero, and his countrymen waited with eager anticipation to see him compete at the 1924 Olympics in Paris, where Eric was expected to win the gold medal.

Eric did his best to win races, but he had a greater goal. Following his parents' example and God's call, he planned to be a missionary to China. Jesus was far more important to him than the Olympics.

As the time for the Olympics approached, Eric announced that he would not run the 100-meter sprint — his best event! The trials for the race were scheduled on Sunday. Eric had always set aside the Lord's Day for rest and worship. He felt it would dishonor the Lord to run on the Lord's Day, so he faced the monarch of Great Britain with his decision.

The people of Scotland were furious! Eric had crushed their hopes for a win for their country. It seemed to Scotland that Eric was disgracing his country and refusing victory, fame, and glory.

Eric competed in the 200-meter and 400-meter races, instead of in his usual race. Though these had never been his best events, Eric surprised the world by winning the gold medal and setting a new world record in the 400-meter event. He also won a bronze medal in the 200-meter.

Because he was a hero, people listened to Eric, and he used every opportunity to witness about his faith in Christ. He sacrificed his comfortable life in Scotland to serve, with his wife, as a missionary in China for 20 years. Then, as World War II reached them, Eric sacrificed the opportunity to leave China, staying instead to help the wounded and to share his faith. Eric died in China in 1945.

Key Bible Verse:

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."
(Romans 12:1, NIV)*

Key Word: SACRIFICE

Sacrifice: Giving up something that is prized for the sake of something else considered to be of higher importance.

Great Britain is made up of England, Scotland, and Wales.

How do you think American football fans would react if one of the teams in the Super Bowl refused to play because the game takes place on Sunday?



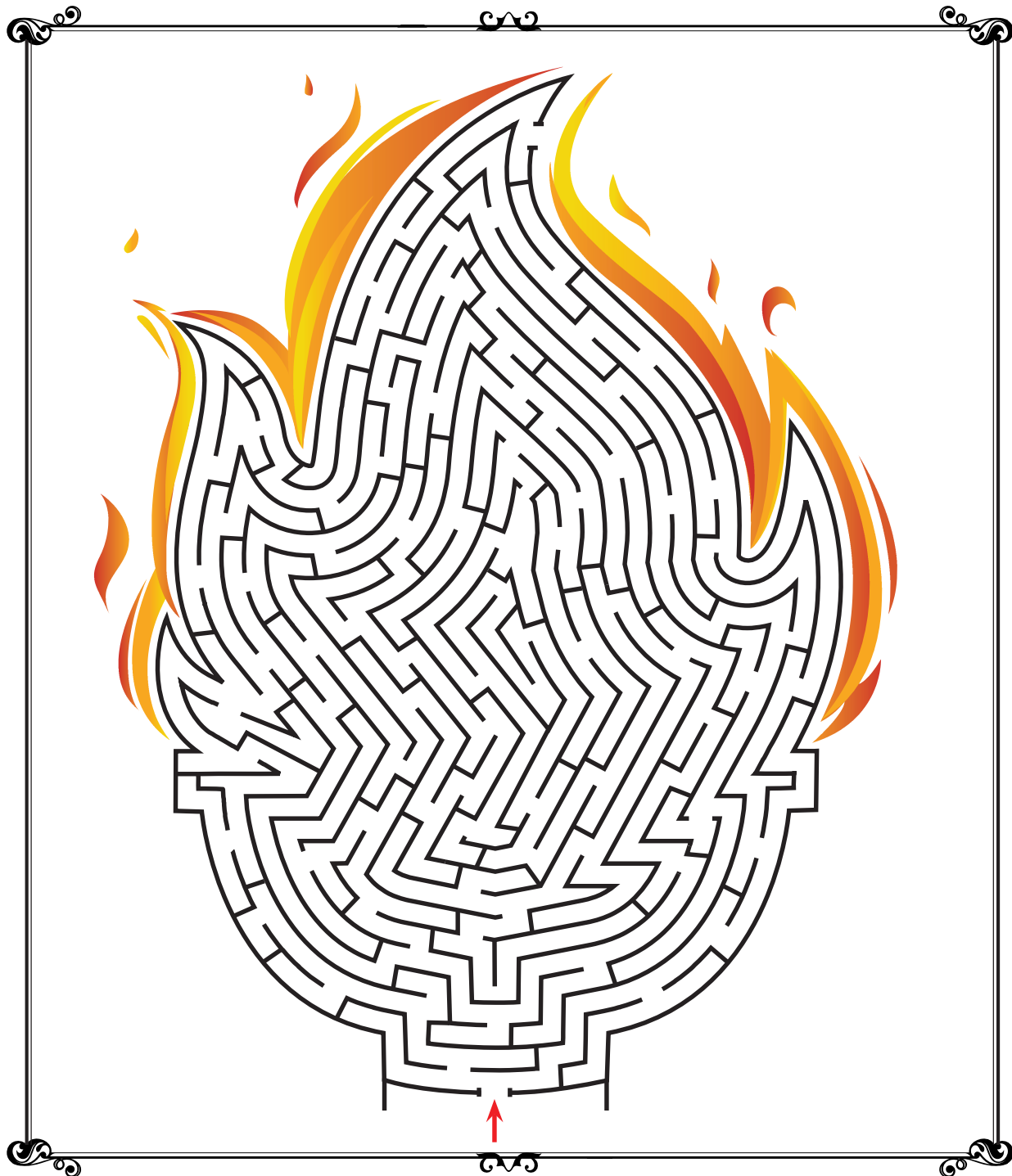
A Missionary Family

- ✓ Eric was born in 1902. Many people in America, Scotland, and other Western countries believed that the 1900s would see no more wars, sickness, and poverty. They thought education and technology would conquer serious problems. Even Christians were optimistic, but they understood that people have a problem with sin from which only Jesus can save us. They continued their missionary work around the world. Eric's parents were among the missionaries.
- ✓ Eric had two brothers, Robert and Ernest, and a sister, Jenny. At age 5, Eric began attending a boarding school in England for children of missionaries. Eric was an excellent athlete during his school days.
- ✓ A classmate described Eric as "lion-hearted but always modest." What do you think he meant?
- ✓ Eric never prayed to win a race; he prayed that God would be glorified by the event.
- ✓ Eric's nickname was "the flying Scotsman" because he ran so fast.
- ✓ On the day of the 400-meter race that hardly anyone expected Eric to win, someone handed him a note that said, "Them that honor Me, I will honor" (from 1 Samuel 2:30, KJV). How did Eric honor God? How was Eric honored? (See "Eric's Story" on the previous page.)
- ✓ Eric served as a missionary teacher in China, teaching Chinese students and leading students in athletic activities. He and his wife had three daughters, Patricia, Heather, and Maureen. But he never saw Maureen, because she was born after he died.
- ✓ During World War II, Japanese soldiers took over the area where Eric worked. By that time, he had sent his wife and two daughters to Canada for safety. Foreigners, including Eric, were sent to internment camps. Eric was friendly and encouraging to others in the camp, but gradually became weaker under the poor conditions. His family received a telegram about his death several weeks after he died. The war ended six months later.
- ✓ Eric's story was featured in a popular 1981 movie, *Chariots of Fire*.

Internment Camp

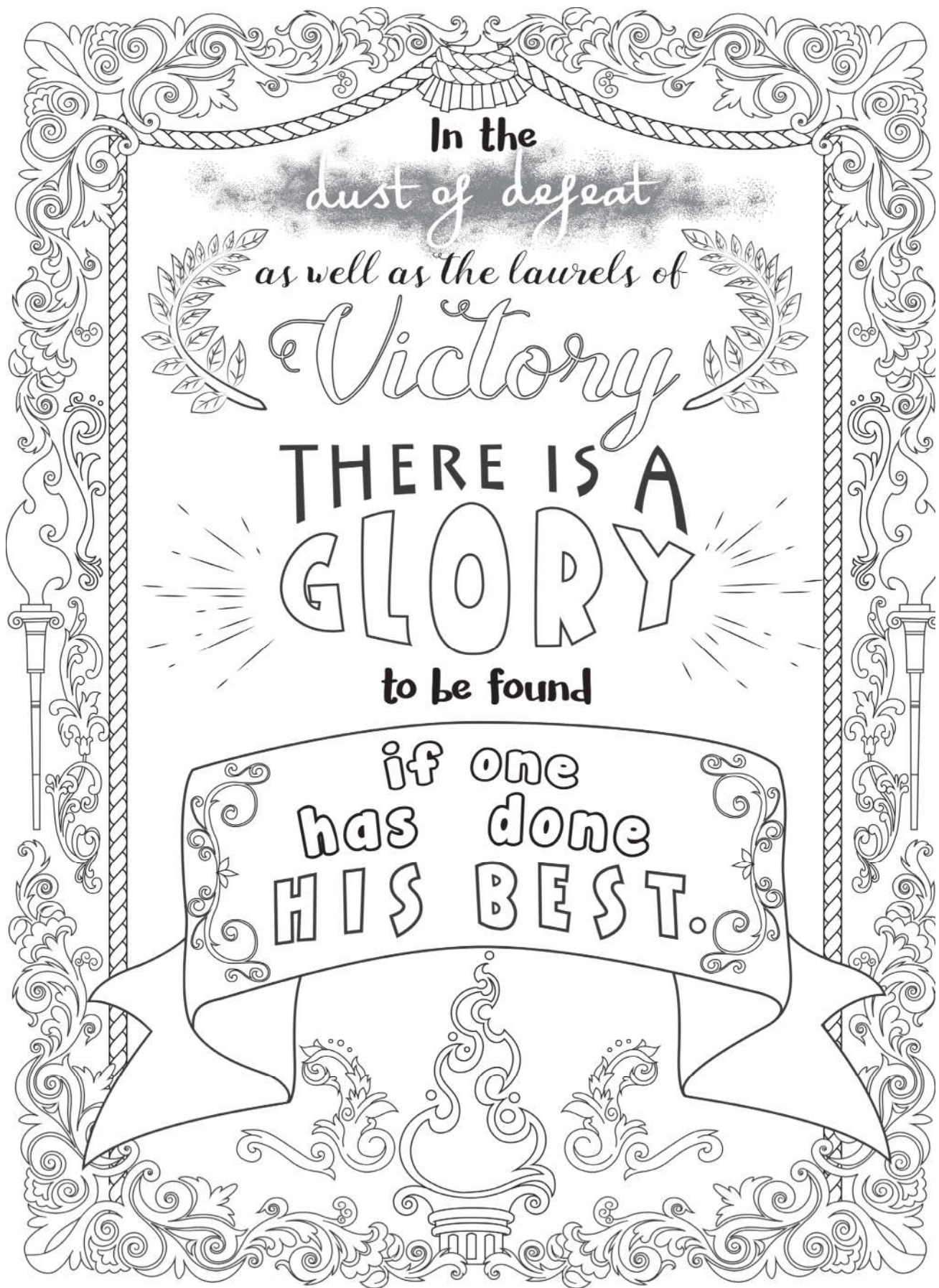
A prison camp, often used during wartime, where the government imprisons people from enemy nations or who could be a threat to them.

Burning Torch

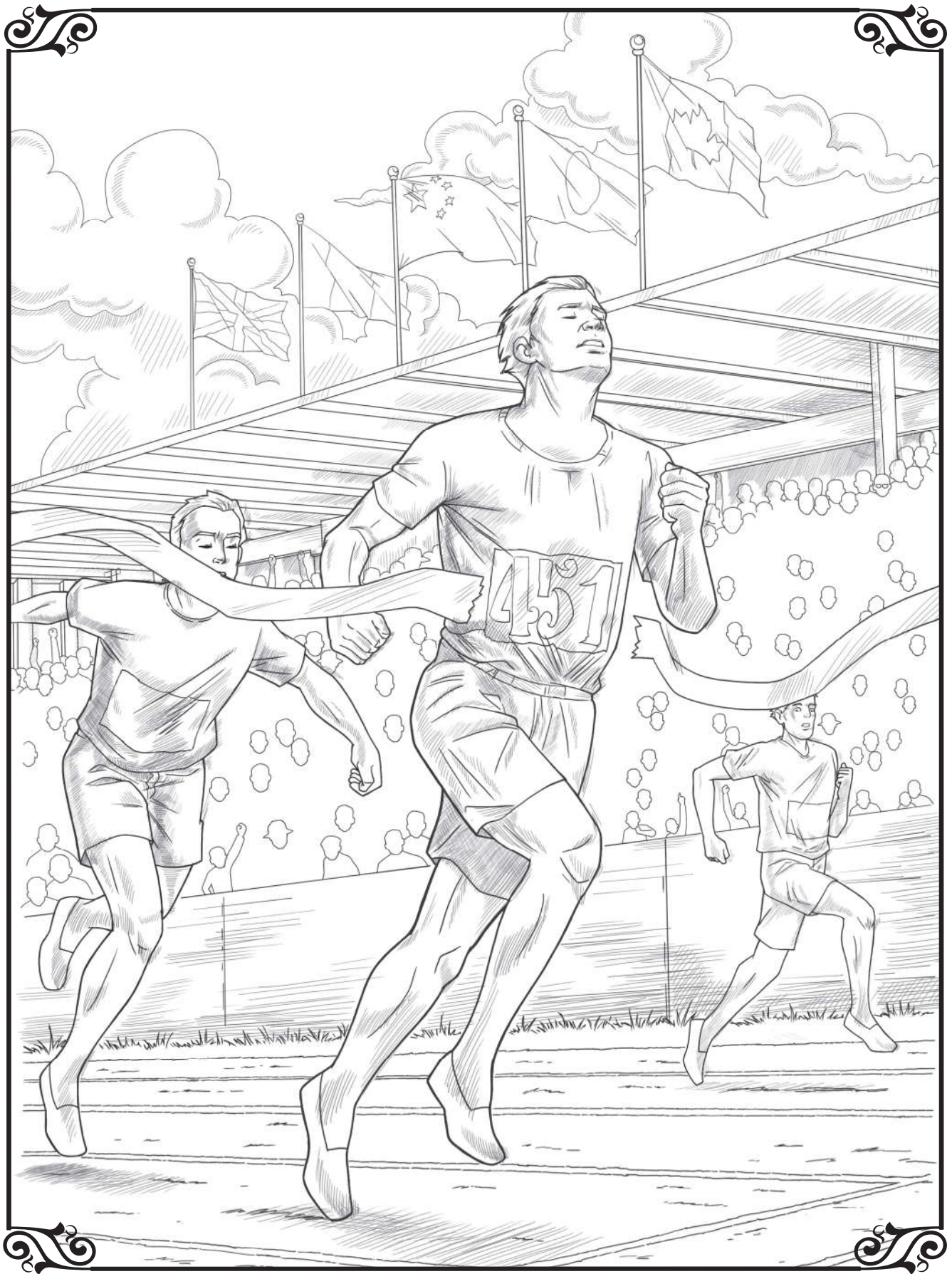


The ancient Olympians used a flame to remember acts of their mythical gods. The torch remains a part of modern Olympic ceremonies. In the Bible, torches light the way to God's truth. (See Isaiah 62:1.) In some instances, God is revealed through fire, as to Moses in the burning bush and to Israelites in a pillar of fire.

Start at the bottom and find your way through the maze in the burning torch!



Eric's saying



Eric unexpectedly won a gold medal in the 400-meter race.

Some Games from Asia



Missionaries sometimes have to learn games and customs that are new to them. Try the variations of the following games from Asia.

Sepak Takraw

Sepak takraw is like volleyball, except the players cannot use their hands to hit the ball. Championship players are very good at striking the ball with their feet. The game goes by different names and has different rules depending on the location in Asia where it is played.

Variation 1

With another player, or with two teams, try hitting a balloon back and forth across a rope or string to each other without using your hands or arms.

Variation 2

Tap a ball, balloon, hacky sack, or bean bag into the air lightly with your foot. See how many times you can bounce it off your foot before it hits the ground.

Challenging Variation

Divide into two teams. Each team forms its own circle, and each team has a balloon. One player on each team starts by tapping the balloon into the air with their feet two or more times. The player then gently passes the balloon to another player on the same team with their foot. The second player taps the balloon in the air with their foot two times and passes it also.

Each time the balloon is hit and passed successfully without the balloon hitting the ground, the team gets 5 points. If the balloon is dropped or caught with the hands, the game starts over with the next player in the circle, but the team continues adding to their previous score. The team with the highest score at the end of 10 minutes wins.



What Do You Think?



Eric Liddell made three important decisions that changed his life.

- He decided not to run a race in his best Olympic event because it was on a Sunday. His decision angered and disappointed many in his country, including the monarch of Great Britain.
- Eric decided to stop competing in big races and sacrificed a life of fame to be a missionary in China.
- Eric decided to stay in China during the war, sacrificing his health and life to help the people there.

Do you think he made the right decisions? Why or why not? *(Write your thoughts on the lines below.)*

Do you ever have difficult decisions to make?

What would you do in the following situations — or what would you tell a friend in that situation if they asked for your advice?

Two of your friends are planning to play a mean trick on a classmate. The classmate seems to have no friends in the class. You want to be loyal to your friends, but you feel sorry for the friendless classmate. What would you do?

Your parents don't allow you to go to the park on your own, even though it's right on your block. One day you hear a scream and see an 11-year-old girl fall off the top of the slide. You don't see anyone else in the park. What would you do?

After months of saving, you finally have enough money to get the skateboard you've been wanting to buy. Then a missionary visits your church and talks about kids in another country who have no Bibles and have never heard of Jesus. The price of your skateboard could buy dozens of Bibles. What would you do?

Your decisions today may not have the same kinds of consequences as Eric's decisions. But learning to make hard decisions today, based on your faith in Jesus, will increase your faith for the decisions you will make in the future.



Have you ever heard the saying, “Be true to yourself”?

What do you think of the saying? Is it biblical advice? What does it mean to be “true to yourself”?

Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Another way of saying this is, “If people want to follow me, they must give up the things they want. They must be willing to give up their lives daily to follow me” (Luke 9:23, NCV).

Romans 12:1 (NIV) says, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

Do those verses encourage us to be true to ourselves?

People “sacrifice” when they give up something that they want for the sake of something else they believe is more important. Eric Liddell sent his family to a safer place, but he stayed in China regardless of the danger. His health, life, and family were valuable to him, but they were not as important to him as God’s call to serve and witness to the people of China. Do you think he was true to himself, or did he deny himself?

Keep a log of what you do for a day. Did you get out of bed when you wanted to sleep longer? Did you complete tasks without complaining or arguing? Did you stay with your chores until they were done, instead of getting distracted by entertainment or something else? Did you sacrifice anything you wanted?

To Think About

- If you ever do things you should do instead of what you feel like doing, are you being “true to yourself”?
- Do you agree with the quote, “Most of the world’s work is done by people who don’t feel like doing it”?
- Can you ever deny yourself and be true to yourself at the same time?

If you think about Christians enjoying unbroken fellowship with God in heaven for eternity, are Christians actually being true to themselves when they sacrifice earthly desires to obey God’s call?