

SERMON

# Run with Your Eyes on Jesus

## *Hebrews 12:1-3*

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Our family finally saw the highly acclaimed movie “Chariots of Fire” a few weeks ago. That was quite an experience. It is rare that something designed for entertainment conveys a worthwhile message, but “Chariots of Fire” is one movie that does.

The movie focuses on the real lives of two young Britons in the 1920s as they trained to run in the 1924 Olympics in France. One of the men, Harold Abrahams, was a Jew. He ran more than anything else to silence the anti-Semitism of his day. His race was first, his country second.

Eric Liddell was the other runner. He was the son of a Protestant minister and a missionary to China. Running was just a joyful diversion to him. And, as the movie develops, it becomes clear that, to Eric Liddell, his God was first and his country second.

Liddell ran against Abrahams only once, and he won. But that is not important to the moral of his life. Both represented Great Britain in the 1924 Olympics. When Liddell contemplated competing in the events, he had to weigh carefully whether he was shirking his obligations to God’s work. Family and friends were divided over whether or not he should compete.

A superior in his denomination offered some advice. He said Eric’s talent for running was a gift from God to be used for God’s glory. His missionary work could stand the delay if he would use the competition to reach people. He summed up his advice: “Run to the glory of God.”

And Liddell did. After months of training the team set off for France. En route he learned that the preliminary heat for his event was to be held on Sunday. But to Liddell, Sunday was a day of worship and meditation, not secular endeavors. He couldn’t run on Sunday.

Even the ranking officials of his government couldn’t dissuade him. They insisted that loyalty to the crown transcends loyalty to God, but he couldn’t buy that. They were at an impasse. The stalemate was broken only when a teammate offered to exchange events so Liddell wouldn’t have to run on Sunday.

Liddell accepted. He went to the blocks thinking: “Run to the glory of God.” And he won. Newspapers all over the world headlined the story of this young man who refused to compromise his convictions. People everywhere knew that God came first in Eric Liddell’s life because he ran to the glory of God.

