

ERIC LIDDELL – AN OLYMPIC HERO WITH HIS EYES ON ANOTHER KINGDOM

BIG IDEA

Eric Liddell was a great runner who always wanted to live in a way that pleased God. Since he was a small boy, the medals he wanted most of all were the ones that God hands out at the end of our lives.

PREP *(Kids can help!)*

Cut the gold, silver and bronze medals from the pictures in the appendix. Attach a length of string or ribbon to each

For added drama, find a party popper, whistle or something to use as a “starter” (or say “ready, steady, go!”)

Write on a small piece of paper the verse 1 Samuel 2:30 “He that honours me, I will honour”

Put everything into the Faith Box before you start

INTRO

Heroes are great, not just because of what they do but also because of the way they do it. Paul and Peter and Silas and Lydia and all the other heroes of the early church showed us how to follow Jesus with all our hearts. They were heroes in God’s kingdom. Down through the ages thousands and thousands of followers of Jesus have also become heroes. Many of them we may never know about, but today we are going to talk about a hero who was also a great runner, Eric Liddell. But the most important race he ran was the race of life and the race of following God’s calling.



GAME

A RUNNING RACE OUTSIDE

SET A COURSE (e.g. to the corner and back) Stagger the start according to age. Blow the whistle for the start and cheer and clap as they finish. For added fun, have a slow-motion race to the theme of Chariots of Fire!

*When you are back inside... have a “medal ceremony”. Pile cushions to three different heights and award the medals you have made!
Have someone blow an imaginary trumpet call as you announce the medal winners, and you may even want to sing the national anthem.*

QUESTIONS

What is the most challenging physical thing you have ever done?

How did you prepare for it?

What did you learn about yourself from the experience?

Ask the person who won gold to put their medal on the table and ask everyone what it is.

QUESTIONS

Do you know anyone from our country who has won an Olympic medal? How did they win it?

What is a gold medal worth?

What sport would you choose to compete in if you could try for the Olympics?

If you were in a competition, who would you want to be there to cheer you on?

What would be the best prize you could win?

Take out the piece of paper with 1 Samuel 2:30 written on it and put it beside the medal.

QUESTIONS

What do these two things have in common?

Listen to the story and see if you can work it out!

READ

It was the men’s 400m final at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris. Representing Great Britain was Eric Liddell, the son of missionaries to China. He had already won bronze in the 200m but had only just made into the final of the 400m. As the race was about to begin, an American masseur handed Eric a piece of paper with the words of 1 Samuel 2:30 written on it. ‘Those who honour Me, I will honour’. Why did he do that? The reason is because a few months earlier Eric Liddell had chosen not to compete in his best event – the 100m, because it was going to take place on a Sunday. Eric loved Jesus and believed that Sunday was God’s special day and thought that to run on Sunday would be to disobey God. Many people couldn’t understand why Eric would do this. The newspaper headlines were cruel. They thought he had let the country down. Even the Prince of Wales begged him to change his mind! But Eric had put God first. Eric had honoured God with his decision. Now back to the race. Eric kept the piece of paper in his hand. The gun went off, and Eric began running with his unusual running style – his head back and mouth wide open. That day God honoured Eric Liddell and at the finish line Eric came in first, five metres ahead of everyone else. He had won an Olympic gold medal! After the race Eric said: “The secret of my success over 400m is that I run the first 200m as fast as I can. Then, for the second 200m, with God’s help I run faster.”

continued over...

Eric was a national hero. He could have gone on to more Olympic competitions and a really successful athletics career, but he chose to put God first again. He followed in his parents' footsteps and became a missionary to China and served there until he died.

In China Eric looked after the poor, taught the Bible, started up Sunday Schools and told people the good news of salvation through Jesus. During this time, China and Japan started fighting each other. By now Eric had a wife and children who he sent to Canada. Eric stayed behind in China, and never saw them again. He was captured by the Japanese and became a prisoner of war.

While Eric was a prisoner, Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister organised a prisoner exchange and Eric was chosen to be released and set free. But instead he gave his place to a woman who was pregnant. Desperately thin, dressed in rags and suffering from a brain tumour, Eric Liddell died in China as a prisoner of war.))

NOTE TO PARENTS

A series of "heroes" books written by Renee Taft Meloche and beautifully illustrated by Bryan Pollard are available at www.bookdepository.com

These are rhymed stories of famous Christian heroes, both men and women, and are suitable for readers in the 5-10 age group.

EXPLORE

Eric Liddell put God first and gave up the chance of winning an Olympic medal in the 100m run because he thought he would disobey God by running on Sunday. He also put God first by giving up fame and a career in athletics to go to China to tell people the good news about Jesus. Eric is a real hero who teaches us to put God first in everything.

QUESTIONS

Are there some things that you are you tempted to put first, before God?

Can you name any other medal winners from the 1924 Olympic Games?

Most great athletes are only remembered for a few years, and then quickly replaced by new sports heroes. It is more than 100 hundred years since Eric Liddell was born, and he is still remembered as a hero today because of the way he ran the race of life.

What was the best prize Eric Liddell won?

He did not live his life and run his race to earn prizes or the applause of other people, but rather, to glorify God. His legacy lives on in the people he influenced for God and the example he leaves for us all to follow.

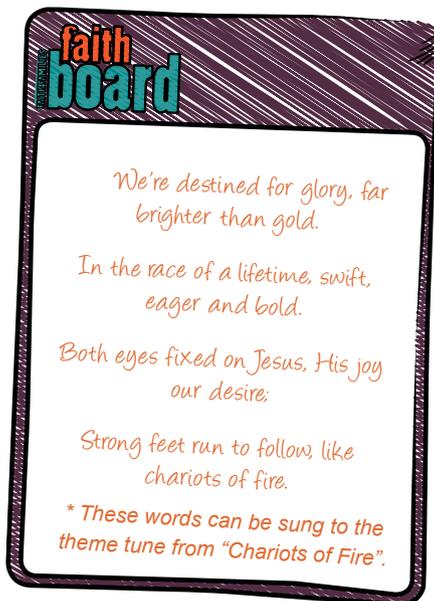
PRAY

Pray for a person working in another country as a missionary – talk about the way they are living heroic lives too.

LIVE

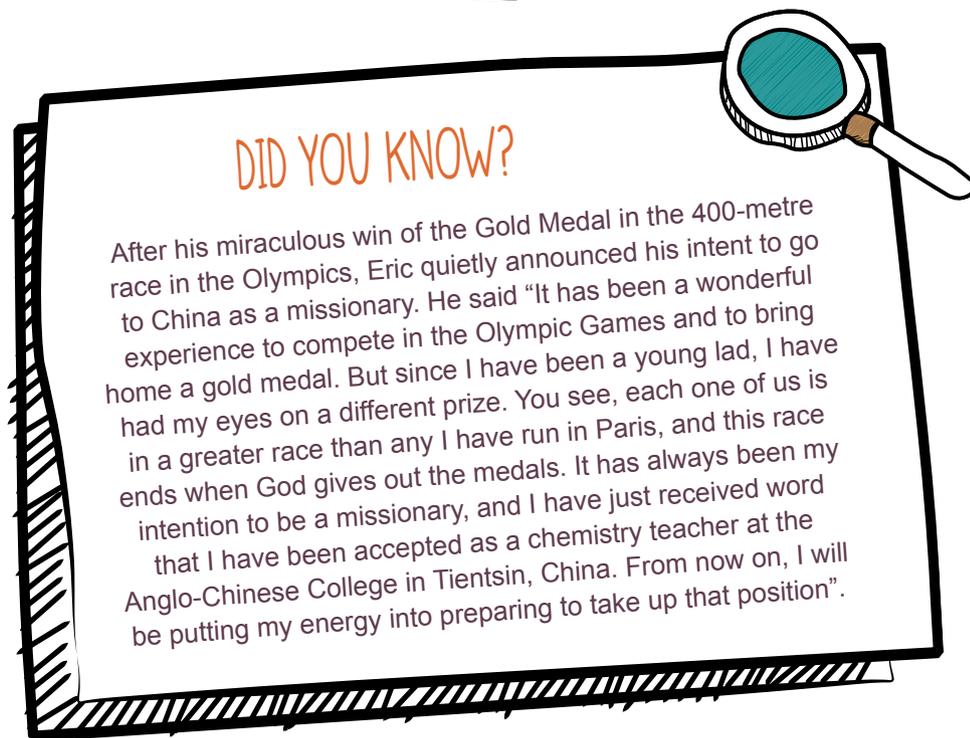
Think about what you do on Sundays. Does it honour God in a special way? Does it create a space where you all can rediscover Jesus at the centre of your lives, and your family life? What might you do differently this Sunday in honour of Eric Liddell?

FAITH BOARD



OTHER IDEAS

- 1** Watch "Chariots of Fire" together as a family (the movie that retells the true story of Eric Liddell and Harold Abrahams, two men driven by a need to run).
- 2** Find out what you can about the famous All Black Michael Jones – how was he similar to Eric Liddell?
- 3** Have fun finding out who knows the dates and locations for past Olympic Games.



BUY FOR NEXT SESSION

- A bag of aeroplane lollies



SESSION ELEVEN

GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE MEDALS

