

THE GREAT RACE

by Stefanie Noonan



CHRISTIANPUBLISHERS

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The Great Race

A play in praise of church
volunteers

by Stefanie Noonan

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Off-stage Voice

Paul

The apostle

Sarah

Abraham's wife

John

The Baptist

Peter

The disciple

Moses

Leader of Israelites

Mary

Magdalene

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PRODUCTION NOTES

PURPOSE

To encourage modern-day Christians to persevere in their great race, as the Apostle Paul did in his. To praise members of your specific local church for their current works of service. Via humor and the saints of old, to spur us on to be heroes for one another in our generation.

SCENE DESCRIPTION

The time is the present. A gathering of biblical saints watch from the grandstands of heaven and cheer on the people of your local church as they run their race on earth.

SET

Simple portable bleachers, lawn chairs, or park benches will do. A fog machine works well to give the heaven setting the appearance of being in the clouds.

COSTUMES

All wear white robes. The women may also wear ornamental veils. In addition to his white robe, John the Baptist may wear items that create an appearance of living in the wild (gunny sacks, leather scraps, feathers, pelts, dreadlock hair, etc.). Paul needs a watch.

PROP LIST

Rolling cooler with soda, bullhorn, fried “locusts” (a crunchy food like chips), wild honey, flags or pom-poms, baton (such as used in relay races), staff, hat, tub of water, hand towel, sunglasses.

RUNNING TIME

20-25 minutes

Father Abraham*Written By: Unknown**Copyright Unknown*

Father Abraham had many sons,
Many sons had Father Abraham.
I am one of them, and so are you,
So let's all praise the Lord.
Right arm!

Father Abraham had many sons,
Many sons had Father Abraham.
I am one of them, and so are you,
So let's all praise the Lord.
Right arm, left arm!

Father Abraham had many sons,
Many sons had Father Abraham.
I am one of them, and so are you,
So let's all praise the Lord.
Right arm, left arm, right foot!

Father Abraham had many sons,
Many sons had Father Abraham.
I am one of them, and so are you,
So let's all praise the Lord.
Right arm, left arm, right foot, left foot!

Father Abraham had many sons,
Many sons had Father Abraham.
I am one of them, and so are you,
So let's all praise the Lord.
Right arm, left arm, right foot, left foot,
Chin up!

Father Abraham had many sons,
 Many sons had Father Abraham.
 I am one of them, and so are you,
 So let's all praise the Lord.
 Right arm, left arm, right foot, left foot,
 Chin up, turn around!

Father Abraham had many sons,
 Many sons had Father Abraham.
 I am one of them, and so are you,
 So let's all praise the Lord.
 Right arm, left arm, right foot, left foot,
 Chin up, turn around, sit down!

Actions

Right arm: Clench fist, bend and extend arm upward repeatedly throughout song.

Left arm: Add left arm in same motion as right.

Right foot: Add right foot stepping up and down.

Left foot: Add left foot stepping up and down.

Chin up: Add head nodding up and down.

Turn around: Add turning in place while continuing other motions.

Sit down: Do just that!

1 *(Fog fills the stage, giving set a “heavenly” appearance as the*
 2 *following lines are heard.)*

3 **OFF-STAGE VOICE:** *(May be pre-recorded and played over*
 4 *loudspeaker.)* “Therefore, since we are surrounded by
 5 such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off
 6 everything that hinders and the sin that so easily
 7 entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race
 8 marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the
 9 author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set
 10 before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and
 11 sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”
 12 *(Hebrews 12:1-2).*

13 **PAUL:** *(Enters carrying a relay baton. He limps in pain as he*
 14 *slowly crawls to bleachers/chair/park bench. He groans as he*
 15 *places his aching feet into a tub of steaming water.)* If you’ll
 16 all just give me a minute while I catch my breath.
 17 *(PAUL blots his face with a hand towel and takes a couple*
 18 *deep breaths.)* Thank you. I’m the Apostle Paul. I’ll be
 19 your tour guide this morning. I hope you will all excuse
 20 me. I know it’s not very hospitable of me to soak my
 21 feet while you’re here visiting the grandstands of
 22 heaven, but that was some race I just finished! *(Sucks*
 23 *in a very deep breath.)* But just to smell the sweet
 24 fragrance in this stadium, I would run it all over again!
 25 Yes! The grandstands of heaven are something else!
 26 *(With great longing)* Oh, that I could describe the
 27 unfathomable to your human minds. And to imagine —
 28 this is only the outer court! Today is a great day here
 29 in the grandstands as we anticipate the most vital race
 30 of all time. Shortly, this stadium will be brimming. This
 31 crowd will be immense — not like your puny little
 32 Super Bowl gatherings down below! All who have gone
 33 before you — the “saints,” as you call us — will be
 34 gathering here today. I understand that’s your
 35 terminology for us — “saints”? *(Chuckles.)* Now, don’t be

1 upset, I'm not making fun of you. It's become a rather
 2 amusing inside joke up here. "Top of the morning to
 3 you, Saint Peter." "Thank you kindly, Saint Paul."
 4 "Hope to see you at the stadium, Saint John."
 5 *(Chuckles.)* Had you known us in our day, you'd laugh
 6 too! *(Pause)* Oh, but they are great people indeed. I look
 7 forward to introducing you to some of the "saints"
 8 sitting in my section today. I wish that I could
 9 introduce you to everyone but there's no time. Of
 10 course *we* have all of eternity, but some of your clocks
 11 are winding down — tick-tock, tick-tock — if you know
 12 what I mean. Today as you visit us in the grandstands,
 13 you will observe some of the greatest heroes who have
 14 ever lived as they run the most important race of their
 15 lives! *(SARAH enters pulling a rolling cooler full of sodas.*
 16 *She hums "Father Abraham" softly.)*

17 **PAUL:** Good morning, Sarah!

18 **SARAH:** Morning, *(Smiles)* Saint Paul. Hey, look — across
 19 the way! There's King David and his son Solomon!
 20 *(Waves.)*

21 **PAUL:** So it is. *(PAUL waves. SARAH sits as she continues*
 22 *humming. As PAUL speaks, she begins to tap her leg and bob*
 23 *her head to the beat.)* Where are Abraham and Isaac this
 24 morning?

25 **SARAH:** Oh, they're coming. Had this brainstorm idea for
 26 another song last minute. They seem to think it'll be a
 27 great hit, but if you ask me, it just goes on and on and
 28 on. Now I can't get the melody out of my head. *(SARAH,*
 29 *still tapping and bobbing, begins to sing "Father Abraham"*
 30 *aloud. Lost in the song, she jumps up, thrusting out her*
 31 *arms.)* "Right arm, left arm!" *(Embarrassed)* Oh — excuse
 32 me. *(JOHN THE BAPTIST enters carrying a bullhorn, from*
 33 *which his dogmatic personality comes blasting through.)*

34 **JOHN:** *(Using bullhorn to project his voice)* Repent! For the
 35 kingdom of heaven is near! *(Matthew 3:1).* Make straight

1 the way for the Lord! (John 1:23).

2 **SARAH:** (*Praying*) Please, please, God, I know he's your
3 cousin, but just for today, let John the Baptist sit on the
4 other side of the stadium. (*JOHN sits directly in front of*
5 *SARAH.*) This huge stadium, and the Voice of One
6 Calling in the Wilderness always has to sit right in front
7 of me! (*SARAH moves.*)

8 **JOHN:** (*To SARAH, through the bullhorn*) *Repent!* (*SARAH is*
9 *startled and jumps. JOHN begins snacking on "crispy*
10 *locusts."* *PETER enters, full of zeal. He runs around the set*
11 *once and then stops. He continues running in place as he*
12 *speaks.*)

13 **PETER:** Tell me I haven't missed it. Have I missed it? They
14 didn't start without me, did they?

15 **PAUL:** No, Peter. You're just in time.

16 **PETER:** I've been anticipating this race since the crack of
17 dawn!

18 **JOHN:** (*Mouth full*) *Cock-a-doodle-doo!*

19 **PETER:** That's not funny, John! You know I hate that
20 rooster routine! "Peter, Peter, Peter, before the rooster
21 crows thrice, you'll deny Christ. Before the rooster
22 crows thrice, you'll deny Christ." What kind of a word
23 is "thrice" anyway? Just say three times!

24 **JOHN:** (*Holds up three fingers.*) Three times.

25 **PETER:** All right! I feel bad about it, OK? It's people like
26 you who give people like me a bad name. What about
27 my confession of Christ? Why can't I be remembered
28 for that! Or — or my speech at Pentecost — or healing
29 the crippled beggar. What of that? "Noooo, Peter,"
30 everyone says. "You can't even walk on water without
31 sinking." Well, at least I got out of the boat! Shouldn't
32 I get a few points for getting out of the boat? So don't
33 give me any more cock-a-doodle-doo!

34 **SARAH:** (*Sniffing*) Ugh. What is that smell? Don't you guys
35 smell it? I just got another whiff. It's rancid! It smells

- 1 like ... (*Dubious*) camel's hair? (*JOHN sits wide-eyed with*
2 *a look of guilt on his face as others sniff, too.*)
- 3 **PAUL:** Now I smell it! It does smell like camel's hair!
- 4 **PETER:** There's only one person I know who's fond of
5 camel's hair! (*JOHN sits up tall, trying to look innocent as*
6 *ALL turn to him.*)
- 7 **ALL:** (*Together*) John the Baptist!
- 8 **JOHN:** All right, all right. It's my camel's hair thermals. I
9 know I was supposed to trade them in at the gate when
10 they gave me this robe, but some things are hard to
11 part with. (*MOSES enters. He whips a staff about in the*
12 *air.*)
- 13 **MOSES:** Not true, John. Nothing is too hard to part ... with
14 my staff! Not even the Red Sea!
- 15 **ALL:** (*Together*) Morning, Moses.
- 16 **MOSES:** (*Sniffing*) What is that pungent odor? Reminds me
17 of the plague of frogs dying along the Nile. (*Pause*)
18 Peter, is this seat taken?
- 19 **PETER:** (*To JOHN*) Some people appreciate me. This seat is
20 reserved just for you, Moses.
- 21 **MOSES:** (*Sitting*) Cock-a-doodle-doo!
- 22 **PAUL:** Look at all the runners gathering for the race.
- 23 **JOHN:** (*Chomping*) Let's get the show on the road!
- 24 **MOSES:** John, John, dear, dear John. Must you talk with
25 your mouth full? The only thing worse than a plague of
26 locusts is sitting next to a man eating locusts. (*JOHN*
27 *pulls out a jar of honey.*)
- 28 **JOHN:** Have you tried them dipped in wild honey? (*MOSES*
29 *discovers they aren't half bad as he and JOHN dip locusts*
30 *into honey and eat while PAUL addresses audience.*)
- 31 **PAUL:** The breakfast of champions. Now do you see why
32 the little inside joke earlier about you referring to us as
33 saints was so funny?
- 34 **PETER:** Take it easy on him, Moses. Ever since that little
35 head thing, John's been a little, uh, wacky. (*Bent over,*

1 *laughing hysterically*) Wacky! Whacked out! Isn't that
2 funny? You get it? Wacky?

3 ALL: *(Together)* We get it.

4 SARAH: Hey, there's Mary. Why is she in the middle of the
5 stadium with all the runners? Mary — over here!
6 *(MARY enters carrying decorative flags or pom-poms.)*

7 MARY: Hi, Sarah!

8 SARAH: Mary, you could have gotten trampled. The race is
9 ready to begin.

10 MARY: Oh, I know. I just get so excited watching them line
11 up. I made these for the race. *(MARY gives a flag or pom-*
12 *pom to each person.)*

13 PAUL: OK, John, the runners are ready. Take it away.

14 JOHN: *(Using bullhorn)* On your mark ...

15 PETER: Hey — where is St. Mark?

16 JOHN: On your mark ...

17 PETER: There he is. Down there by Elijah. *(Waving)* Hi,
18 Mark!

19 JOHN: *(Annoyed, tapping foot)* Are we ready, Peter? On your
20 mark, get set, ready ...

21 ALL: *(Jumping up, together)* GO! *(Whenever a "runner" passes the*
22 *grandstands, the ACTORS move their heads from left to*
23 *right in unison as they make a "Swoosh" sound.)*

24 ALL: *(Heads move left to right)* Swoosh ...

25 PAUL: And they are off! Look at them go! Do you suppose
26 they know the responsibility they run with?

27 MOSES: Sometimes I wonder what it must be like to be a
28 part of the church's final race.

29 JOHN: I say the finale makes ushering it in all worth it!
30 Look at that body of believers rounding the bend.

31 ALL: *(Together)* Go _____! *(Insert your church's name.)*

32 PAUL: And _____ *(Insert your pastor's name)* is leading the
33 pack with his supportive _____ *(Worship*
34 *team, elders, etc.)* keeping right by his side! Why do you
35 suppose they consider us such heroes and champions

- 1 of the faith? Just look at the determination they press
 2 forth with.
- 3 SARAH: Quick! Here comes the _____ (*Insert your*
 4 *youth group's name*) around the corner.
- 5 ALL: (*Heads move left to right*) Swoosh ...
- 6 SARAH: Go, _____! (*Insert your youth pastor/youth*
 7 *leader's name.*)
- 8 PETER: What a wonderful leader you are, _____!
 9 (*Insert name of youth pastor/leader.*)
- 10 MARY: Look over there. Here comes the woman who runs
 11 the whole race on her knees!
- 12 ALL: (*Heads move left to right*) Swoosh ... go, _____!
 13 (*Insert name of woman in congregation known for praying.*)
- 14 JOHN: (*Chanting name from above*) _____,
 15 _____ (*name again*), she's our woman. If she
 16 can't do it, no one can! Goooo, _____ (*name*
 17 *again*)! (*JOHN beats fist in air, grunting loudly.*) Oogh,
 18 oogh, oogh, oogh! (*ALL stare at him until JOHN stops.*)
- 19 ALL: (*Heads move left to right*) Swoosh ...
- 20 PAUL: (*Removing hat*) Ladies and gentlemen, there goes a
 21 man of monumental repute. Now that man knows how
 22 to run a race! _____, (*Insert name of man*) my
 23 hat is off to you!
- 24 PETER: Did you see the size of his calves?
- 25 PAUL: How about the size of his heart?
- 26 MOSES: Who is that stirring up such a cloud of dust? (*ALL*
 27 *cough, choking from the dust.*)
- 28 ALL: (*Heads move left to right*) Swoosh ...
- 29 MOSES: Yes, now I see! If you want to be great in God's
 30 kingdom, learn to be a servant like _____ and
 31 _____! (*Insert name of couple in church known as*
 32 *faithful servants.*)
- 33 SARAH: Wait 'til you see the size of your crowns!
- 34 ALL: (*This time their heads move the opposite direction, from*
 35 *right to left.*) Swoosh ...

- 1 **PETER:** Who is that? She's going the wrong way! She's
 2 going to get trampled! Oh, I can't look.
- 3 **MARY:** It's OK, Peter. Look, there's _____. (*Insert*
 4 *name of church member.*) She/he is headed back to get
 5 her going the right direction again. Atta girl/boy,
 6 _____! (*Insert church member's name.*)
- 7 **JOHN:** (*Singing to the tune of "Johnny B. Goode"*) Go, go. Go,
 8 _____, (*Inseert above name*) go. Go. Go,
 9 _____, (*Insert above name*) go. Go, go, go! (*ALL*
 10 *stare down JOHN. He stops singing.*)
- 11 **ALL:** (*Heads move left to right*) *Swoosh ...*
- 12 **SARAH:** Go, Faith!
- 13 **PETER:** Her name's not Faith.
- 14 **SARAH:** Oh, I know that — but that's what I nicknamed
 15 her. She's such a great woman of faith.
- 16 **MARY:** I love the way she _____. (*Name*
 17 *something specific about faithful woman, i.e., she organizes*
 18 *events for the ladies in the church.*)
- 19 **SARAH and MARY:** Go, _____! (*Insert name of*
 20 *faithful woman.*) Your consistency is your strength!
- 21 **PAUL:** Here comes one of my young heroes. Only ____
 22 (*Insert child's age*) years old, and quite a little man.
- 23 **MOSES:** Yes, he is! Did you know that lad lends a hand
 24 wherever he goes? (*List a few simple specifics about a*
 25 *young boy in congregation, e.g., serving hot chocolate at the*
 26 *church camp, spreading bark at the school, pricing items for*
 27 *the church garage sale.*) I could go on and on!
- 28 **ALL:** (*Heads move left to right.*) *Swoosh ...*
- 29 **ALL:** (*Ad-lib*) You're in the race, _____! (*Insert name*
 30 *of lady.*) C'mon! You can do it!, etc.
- 31 **MOSES:** I haven't been this excited since the Great Exodus!
- 32 **JOHN:** Makes me want to break forth with song! (*JOHN*
 33 *loudly begins singing the chorus of an upbeat church song.*
 34 *ALL join in singing and dancing about. Song ends for*
 35 *everyone but JOHN, who goes up an octave and sings louder.*

1 MOSES and PAUL take JOHN by his arms and sit him
2 down.)

3 **SARAH: Look at the precious children!**

4 **ALL: (Heads move left to right.) Swoosh ...**

5 **SARAH: I waited ninety years to have my first. I about died**
6 **laughing when the angel of the Lord told Abraham I**
7 **would have a child. Literally about died laughing. “Oh,**
8 **Abey!” I laughed. “A child? You’re crazy! I’m ninety**
9 **years old, and you’re practically dead!” (Softly) A child.**
10 **Who knew? Looking back, I guess being pregnant at**
11 **ninety wasn’t so bad. Everything already hurt, and my**
12 **skin was so saggy I sure didn’t have to worry about**
13 **stretch marks!**

14 **JOHN: (Into his bullhorn) Let the little children come! Do not**
15 **hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such**
16 **as these! (Luke 18:16).**

17 **ALL: (Heads move left to right) Swoosh ...**

18 **PAUL: Speaking of children, look. See that? What a blessed**
19 **sight. It’s _____, (Insert name of a female Sunday**
20 **school worker) who volunteers in Sunday school, and the**
21 **unforgettable _____, (Insert name of another**
22 **female worker) who helps out in _____. (Nursery,**
23 **children’s church, Sunday school, etc.)**

24 **SARAH: Now that’s my kind of hero!**

25 **JOHN: You go, girlfriends!**

26 **ALL: (Heads move left to right.) Swoosh ...**

27 **MARY: Who was that? Slow down!**

28 **PETER: Look at that zeal!**

29 **MARY: Slow down before you spontaneously combust! (ALL**
30 **look horrified as they cup their hands over their mouths and**
31 **freeze momentarily.)**

32 **ALL: (Heaving a sigh of relief, ad-lib) Whew! Yikes! Oh, wow!**

33 **MARY: That was a close one. Poor thing. How do you run**
34 **a race when you’ve just learned how to crawl?**

35 **MOSES: There’s your answer, Mary. Now why didn’t we**

- 1 think of the _____ (*Small groups/foundations*
 2 *class/new additions class, etc.*) in our days?
- 3 **PAUL:** Pace yourself! Pace yourself!
- 4 **SARAH:** Look at _____ and _____ (*Insert name of*
 5 *very elderly couple*) run!
- 6 **PETER:** What kind of fuel do you suppose they use?
- 7 **JOHN:** I'd say *supremely* unleaded!
- 8 **SARAH:** Do you suppose they know that they are thought of
 9 by many as a second mother and father?
- 10 **MARY:** And adopted grandparents by others? (*ALL make a*
 11 *toast with soda cans from cooler.*)
- 12 **ALL:** To heroes!
- 13 **PAUL:** Ordinary people who do extraordinary things!
- 14 **PETER:** (*Runs around set.*) This is such an exciting race that
 15 it makes me want to get out there and run it all over
 16 again! (*PETER trips.*)
- 17 **PAUL:** (*Helping PETER up*) Why, Peter? You almost fell flat
 18 on your face the first time.
- 19 **ALL:** (*Heads move left to right.*) Swoosh ...
- 20 **MOSES:** There goes _____! (*Insert name of member who*
 21 *volunteered behind the scenes.*) Just this year he/she
 22 worked hours doing _____. (*Name a project*
 23 *he/she worked on.*) Way to run, _____! (*Insert*
 24 *name.*)
- 25 **ALL:** (*Heads move left to right.*) Swoosh ...
- 26 **PAUL:** Let me assure you, _____, (*Insert name of*
 27 *member who also volunteered behind the scenes*) that you
 28 earn an A-plus for _____. (*Name the project*
 29 *completed.*)
- 30 **ALL:** (*Heads move left to right.*) Swoosh ... (*ALL stand in respect.*)
- 31 **MOSES:** There's my gal/guy!
- 32 **ALL:** (*Say person's name with great fondness.*) _____!
- 33 **MOSES:** She/he sure tickles the children in _____
 34 (*Children's church/Sunday school*) with his/her _____
 35 (*Puppet ministry/craft/story time*). _____, (*Insert*

- 1 *name of person*) you have my vote too!
- 2 **MARY and SARAH:** *(Cheerleading)* Your service is of great
- 3 value!
- 4 **JOHN:** *(Tearfully)* Love you, _____! *(Insert name of*
- 5 *above person.)*
- 6 **MARY:** Hey, look! Nathaniel the Prophet started the wave
- 7 across the stadium. Get ready, guys ... tidal wave! *(ALL*
- 8 *jump up and do the wave.)*
- 9 **SARAH:** *(Laughs.)* Did you see Noah's face? Boy, does he
- 10 hate it when we do the wave!
- 11 **MOSES:** Look at all the _____ *(Insert slang name of*
- 12 *local church, e.g., Westside Community Church =*
- 13 *"Westsidiers")* bringing up the rear of the pack. Here
- 14 comes Pastor _____ *(Insert pastor's name)* again!
- 15 **JOHN:** *(Using bullhorn)* The kingdom of heaven has been
- 16 forcefully advancing. And forceful men lay hold of it!
- 17 (Matthew 11:12).
- 18 **PETER:** *(Putting on sunglasses)* Oh, the sun is setting so soon,
- 19 and it seems like the race just began. *(ALL return to*
- 20 *seats.)*
- 21 **PAUL:** Maybe for you, Peter. You're not the one running it.
- 22 That was some race, huh guys? Don't worry, Peter.
- 23 They'll be back tomorrow to run again.
- 24 **JOHN:** The great race just about wore me out!
- 25 **SARAH:** I feel as exhausted as some of them look. *(ALL ad-*
- 26 *lib small talk with one another as they sit and catch their*
- 27 *breath. MARY rises quietly and goes off alone.)*
- 28 **MOSES:** Mary, you're awfully quiet.
- 29 **MARY:** Oh, I was just thinking. Sometimes I still can't
- 30 believe I crossed the finish line.
- 31 **PETER:** Hey, if I made it, anyone can.
- 32 **PAUL:** *(Puts arm around MARY.)* I'm glad you're here, Mary.
- 33 I've heard so much about you and always wanted to
- 34 meet you, but things were just so busy on earth.
- 35 **MARY:** Meet me? I saw you, Jesus, and some of the other



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