

Integrity: “I Can’t Run”
Adapted from *Hero Tales, Volume II*, by Dave and Neta Jackson

Olympic medalist Eric Liddell left athletic fame in Britain to become a missionary teacher in China. He left a legacy of simple faith, humility, and sacrificial service to the One who was always the center of his life: Jesus Christ.

“Hey, Liddell!” yelled one of my Olympic teammates. “The schedule just arrived!”

My team representing Britain—from Scotland, Ireland, England, and Wales—had been eagerly waiting for the 1924 Olympic timetable to see what days and times our sporting events had been scheduled. July was just around the corner, and soon our team would be heading for Paris.

“Two seconds! Your time’s up.” I grabbed the timetable and ran my finger down each day’s events, looking for the 100-meter race, my best event. Suddenly, the color drained out of my face, and I looked up at my teammates.

“I can’t run.”

“What?! Can’t run? What are you talking about?” my teammates asked.

“They’ve scheduled the first heats for the 100 meter on Sunday.”

“So? What’s the problem?”

I took a deep breath. “I don’t run on Sundays. Sunday is for worshiping God, not sports. At least for me.”

My teammates just stared, but no one laughed at me. They respected me too much for that. Even the British officials, though dismayed by the news, tried to get the schedule changed—without any luck.

But when the news got out that Britain’s brightest hope for winning a gold medal in the 100-meter race *for the first time ever* was refusing to run, others were not so kind.

“Why can’t he run on Sunday and just dedicate the race to God?” some grumbled.

“He’s a traitor to his country, that’s what he is,” others said darkly. “What kind of man would refuse to run for Britain, just because the chosen day doesn’t suit him?”

Newspapers scolded me, and people wondered why I was making such a fuss. But I really wasn’t making a fuss. I was sticking to a commitment I’d made long ago—a promise to honor Sunday as the Lord’s day, a day of rest from work and sports.

Still, I was part of Britain’s Olympic team, so I began training for the 400-meter race, which was not scheduled for Sunday. Unfortunately, it was not my strongest event. When my team arrived in Paris, newspapers were still criticizing my decision to not run in the 100. On Saturday, I marched with my other British teammates, dressed in our cream-colored pants, blue blazers, and white straw hats, in the opening ceremonies. But on Sunday, when the qualifying heats were run, I was speaking at a Scots Kirk, a Scottish church, in Paris about my commitment to Christ.

On Thursday and Friday, I qualified in the initial races and the semi-final for the 400-meter, though my times were nothing special. Just before the 400 meter, a trainer who deeply respected me handed me a note that said, “In the old book [the Bible] it says, ‘He that honors me I will honor.’ Wishing you the best of success always.”

I shook hands with my rivals and lined up on the track for the final race. The pistol cracked...and when the race was over, I had not only won the 400 meter but had set a new world record of 47.6 seconds!

The crowd roared. No one had expected me, a 100-meter man, to run such a race. Criticism turned to admiration. Britain and the world had a new hero—and new respect for a man who lived what he believed.

Integrity is making choices that honor what you believe, even when people misunderstand you.