

It's a Race !

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Suggested Props & Illustration:

- † Barrel Race Setup in Arena
- † Barrel Racer Assistant on Horseback
- † OR Improvise with 3 barrel-type setup & stick-horse with rider in a classroom setting.
- † The horse/rider take up the correct position with each point of the lesson. [We used a young lady from our children's church with her barrel racing horse; she ran the barrels a couple of times to illustrate a complete run; then took up position to do one barrel & hold up; then the second & hold up; etc until the entire lesson was accomplished.]

Introduction:

Barrel racing is very exciting. The horse and rider come charging into the arena breaking the beam to start the race. Then accelerating as fast as they can, head for the first barrel.

After making a very fast turn around the barrel they head for the second and then the third. **The rider has to get the horse as close to the barrels as possible without knocking them down while riding as fast as they can.** After the third barrel the rider leans forward and gives the horse free reign so it will run as fast as possible to cross the beam again to end the race. This race is pushing the limits of horse and rider.

Barrel racing is exciting, it is fun, and it is dangerous. Barrel racing is a serious race. **We are going to use barrel racing to illustrate another serious race: The race that every Christian enters when they are "born again".** Some people think that they can get born again or saved and then go about their lives to suit their own pleasures until we go to Heaven. Our Christian life is more like a barrel race.

Heading Home

Read: *II Tim. 4:7 "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"*

Paul is approaching the end of his life and says he has finished his course.

He stated in *Phil. 1:23-24 "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ: which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."*

Just like a barrel racer, he is anxious to cross the finish, but knows that he is still getting around the barrels and can't go Home yet.

Paul knew what he needed to do in his race before he could head home.

The barrel racer also knows what needs to be done before he/she can "head home". The racer wants the shortest time possible, but also knows he has to circle all 3 barrels (no short cuts!) or no time.

The Bible describes how wonderful Heaven is. We look forward to being in our Lord's presence, but we have a race to run here. God does not want us day dreaming about Heaven so much that we neglect what is needed for the race here.

Barrel One

Eph. 4: 22 "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;"

To be in the race, you must enter the race. Being saved/born again puts you in the Race. The Bible says that once a person has repented and accepted Jesus as Savior, that they must **"Put Off"** their former sinful lusts. According to the Bible, God's Word, one of the most difficult sins to overcome is the sin of LUST, that is, wanting stuff. Wanting stuff leads to other sins as well.

In our flesh we want stuff: We want to be noticed and we want to have power. All that has to be tuned out so we can focus on what the Lord wants us to do with our life.

The barrel racer has to tune out the thought about crossing the finish in great form and getting a prize. She has to focus on getting around the first barrel without knocking it over.

Barrel Two

Eph. 4: 24 "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in rightness and true holiness."

You must **"Put On"** the new man. The Bible says a Christian is a new creature.

You don't keep circling the first barrel of repentance unto salvation. You must move onto the second barrel and focus on circling barrel two. You have to circle very tight to the barrel with your horse set low, but you don't want to knock it over.

Remember that the Christian race is more important than a barrel race and it is actually more dangerous with more serious consequences.

I have seen more horses go down at barrel two than at any other barrel. This is a key point in the race.

The same is true in the Christian race. You have to "put on the new man" not just clean up the old man.

The Holy Spirit is in every Christian, but many are too busy to listen to that still small voice. You must spend some quiet time with God so you can hear the Holy Spirit and listen to His instructions and directions.

Barrel Three

Eph. 4: 25 "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor:..."

You need to **"Put Away"** your selfishness. The verse says you should share the "Truth" with everyone you can.

At this stage in the race you can depend on your horse to be focused so you can get around the barrel with minimal reigning, so you can focus on the run to the finish.

In our Christian race we have the truth and should be sharing salvation. We are focused and our life should be an example of the Christian life so that others would want a life like we have as well as want to go where we are going.

When we cross the finish we will be rewarded for how well we ran the race. Are you telling others about Jesus and living a life that will please Him?

Summation:

Review briefly each barrel. Then remind the students that Headin' Home is not possible unless they entered the race to begin with. The Entry Fee has been paid by Jesus Christ. Present Salvation at this point.