



## LIFE IN THE SPIRIT MARATHON

### **Production Notes**

A three-act skit, using a marathon to illustrate the Christian walk.

**SUMMARY:** We focus on five runners in the “Life in the Spirit Marathon.” Each faces challenges and realize their need to spend time in the secret place of prayer in order to finish the race.

**THEME:** The retreat theme was “In the Secret Place,” with the emphasis being on our need to find quiet time with the Lord. The visual theme was doors, representing the secret places where we enter into God’s presence. In this skit, we see a group of ladies running a marathon. Along the route, there are “secret places” to stop and receive rest, strength, healing, refreshing, to draw near, and gain perspective. We see the results of those who spend time in those secret places compared to those who don’t make the time to stop.

### **CHARACTERS:**

- \*Narrator
- \*Race Coordinator
- \*Running Ruby - Average, middle of the road, wants to enjoy the run; dressed as a casual runner
- \*Sprinter Sally - Over-achiever, self-confident, focus on works; dressed in the best running gear
- \*Burdened Betty - carries a heavy backpack which weighs her down
- \*Lagging Lucy - not in shape, no endurance for the race; wears sweats
- \*Worldly Wendy - one foot in the world, wants to make a fashion statement; wears high fashion, inappropriate for running, including high heels
- \*Bad Guy - not a part of the race, but tries to distract and discourage the other runners; wears all black

### **ACTS:**

Act 1 “The Race Begins”

Act 2 “Trials and Perseverance”

Act 3 “Nearing the Finish Line”

### **SETTING AND PROPS**

The props for this skit can be very simple - a start and finish line, and then something to represent the “secret places” along the race route. We used doors, where the races could go behind them when they entered in to the secret place. Chairs would work well too. Each secret place was labelled.

Use a cap gun or whistle to start the race.

Each runner should have a number, as in a real marathon.

**TIMING:**

Act I	Approximately 20 minutes
Act II	Approximately 15 minutes
Act III	Approximately 5-10 minutes

**Act I Summary**

We meet the runners who are preparing for the race to begin. They get instructions and learn of “secret places” found along the course where they can stop for restoration and refreshment.

**Act II Summary**

We find the runners mid-course, experiencing their unique problems and realizing their need for the “secret place”

**Act III Summary**

End of race and the finish line is in sight. The secret place gives them perspective looking back on what they have been through.

## LIFE IN THE SPIRIT MARATHON

### **Act I - The Race Begins (At the race site, prior to the race)**

Secret Place: Restoring Your Soul (green pastures, cool waters)

*Lucy, Betty, Ruby and Sally are stretching out, preparing for the race.*

**Narrator:** We're here at the “Life in the Spirit 2013” Marathon, and the participants are preparing for their upcoming race. None of our competitors have prior knowledge of their course, so when the race begins, they have no idea what is in store for them! This is an endurance race, and to finish well our racers must fix their eyes on the goal. While each of our racers will face their own unique and challenging journey, they will have the blessing of being together for much of the race. The course will take them through many twists and turns, hills and valleys; there are detours and desirable distractions, attempting to lure the racers off course. Some legs of the race may seem dark and laden with obstacles and seemingly impossible challenges; others may seem easy, carefree--and even joyful. The runners must pay attention and continually examine themselves to make sure that they are staying on their course. The race is taxing, the road is narrow and the weather is unpredictable. However, everything that they need to finish this race has been provided for them. But will our runners be wise enough to take advantage of what is offered to them?

**Race Coordinator:** Listen carefully, runners. You have made the life-changing decision to run this marathon, so run for the prize. The key to finishing this race is found in the careful reading of our course brochure (*holds up Bible*) and in the “secret places” that are available for your use throughout the race. No matter where you are, a secret place is never far away, and you can take advantage of many opportunities for rest, refreshment and restoration during this marathon. Use these secret places to study the tips for a successful race that are found in the race brochure. Examine yourself in light of the guidelines and make sure that you are not off course. Enjoy the comfort and encouragement you'll find there. Use your time in the secret place to gain strength to face the uncertainties ahead. This marathon will drain you. The secret places are like gas stations, and you NEED to take these opportunities to fill up your tank! Also runners, you must remain alert during this race, because there is an enemy that lurks around the marathon route, seeking to cause trouble. He's hoping to get you off track. I've even heard that he will steal your shoes. Remember, ladies, this is not a sprint. You must run this marathon with patience and perseverance. Don't give up! Should you have any problems, I will not be far away and will provide on the spot assistance. Please be at the starting line in precisely 15 minutes.

*(Runners are stretching out. Bad Guy is lurking around them.)*

**Sprinter Sally:** Are you guys excited? I’m so pumped for this race. Woo-Hoo! I am ready to run. I feel strong. I’m hydrated. I have new shoes! Take a look at these shoes, Super Gel GT-4200s; Besides being super light, they have the technology to give me the support I need as well as lightweight soles to cushion my run. Speed is the name of the game, and I have a feeling that my time on this marathon will be my personal best. We have ideal conditions for running a marathon--the air is crisp and the sun is shining. Let’s go!

**Bad Guy:** *(to Sprinter Sally):* Is that so? I see some clouds on your horizon.

**Sprinter Sally:** Clouds? Clouds won’t even slow me down.

**Bad Guy:** Well, there may even be a storm ahead for you. I see winds of adversity in your future! *(evil laugh)*

*(Sprinter Sally has a look of uncertainty as she continues stretching)*

**Burdened Betty:** Did I hear the coordinator say that there would be hills and obstacles? I missed that when I read the brochure.

**Running Ruby:** Did you even read the brochure? This is not a “fun run,” Betty...it’s a marathon. The brochure said not to be surprised when we encounter various troubles and trials...

**Sprinter Sally:** Good thing I trained for hurdles!

**Lagging Lucy:** Good grief! Speed? Hurdles? Trials? I just hope I can stay on the course. And I hope my course is flat and downhill. I need smooth sailing with the wind at my back all the way! Otherwise, I’m in trouble.

**Bad Guy:** *(to Lucy)* Look around you, Lucy. You are no match for these girls, Lucy. They’re in shape; they have trained; for pete’s sake--they are looking forward to the hurdles. How did you even end up in this marathon? There is NO WAY that you could qualify for an endurance race like this. You’re not in shape. You haven’t trained. And your shoes are pathetic! Why don’t you just bow out now? Save a little dignity while you can.

**Lagging Lucy:** Hey! I know all that. But for your information, I didn’t have to qualify for this race. None of us did. Someone else did the qualifying for all of us. I could never qualify, and He knew that. He made the way for all of us to enter the race and even paid our entrance fees! All we had to do was believe and show up...He did the rest. And He promised that we would finish the race if we followed the route He set before us.

**Sprinter Sally:** My last marathon was the Death Valley marathon. Now let me tell you, that was one hot, miserable and crowded marathon. And who wants to end up in Death Valley? When the opportunity to run this marathon came up, I was glad to head over here. It was an easy decision.

**Burdened Betty:** Well, I read enough of the brochure to know that we are promised an abundant run! There’s life and peace and victory to be had. I don’t want to miss that!

**Running Ruby:** But why are you wearing that backpack, Betty? That will slow you down for sure. What do you have in there?

**Burdened Betty:** You know how our brochure told us to leave the past behind and press on to the finish line? Well, there were just a few things from my past that I couldn’t leave behind...at least not yet.

**Running Ruby:** Like what? The brochure said that everything we needed would be provided for us on this run.

**Burdened Betty:** There are a few hurts from my past that I just can’t let go of yet, and maybe just a couple minor pebbles of unforgiveness. They shouldn’t affect my run too much. And maybe I can get rid of them, pebble by pebble as the race goes on.

**Bad Guy:** *(to Betty)* A few pebbles? Don’t deceive yourself! That’s more like a boulder of bitterness toward your parents that you have in there.

**Burdened Betty:** I admit...there is that.

**Bad Guy:** And there may be another boulder under that, and you can’t get rid of those boulders by yourself. You’re stuck with them. And what about all those worries you carry with you wherever you go? And don’t you have a few besetting sins in that backpack of yours? You have to keep your backpack with you, so no one gets a glimpse of what you have in there.

**Burdened Betty:** Shhhhhhhhh! Don’t say that out loud! I don’t want anyone to know what’s really in here. I don’t want anyone to know how heavy it really is....

**Sprinter Sally:** That backpack is going to slow you down. And I for one am not going to wait around for you, Betty.

**Running Ruby:** I really can’t help you, Betty. I have all I can do to get through the race, with my husband and my kids and my aging parents. I don’t need any more burdens. Besides, didn’t I read that we need to lay aside every weight?

**Lagging Lucy:** Don’t worry, Betty. If you are going slow, I’ll probably be right there with you! I’m pretty sure I’ll be toward the back of the pack. I’m not a marathoner like these other girls.

**Running Ruby:** I really can't help you, Betty. I have all I can do to get through the race, with my husband and my kids and my aging parents. I don't need any more burdens. Besides, didn't I read that we need to lay aside every weight?

**Bad Guy:** *(to Ruby)* Nothing like a family to wear you out! And those responsibilities aren't going anywhere. Those kids can be annoying and their activities are overwhelming; they'll pester you to death while you are trying to have a good run, and before you know it, your anger will show it's ugly face. And by the way, if the kids are at the race, they'll eat all the protein bars and drink that smart water that you bought just for yourself.

**Running Ruby:** You're right about that. I am tired all the time. I have no time for myself, and everyone demands something from me..

**Bad Guy:** You've got that right. Your kids are demanding, your husband wants you to cook dinner for him, and your parents need you too. What business do you have running this marathon?

**Worldly Wendy:** *(walking in late, handbag and high heels)* Whew! I was afraid I was going to be late! You haven't started the marathon yet, have you?

**Running Ruby:** No, we haven't started, but the gun will sound in less than 10 minutes. You better hurry, Wendy; you aren't even dressed for a marathon!

**Worldly Wendy:** Who said you had to forsake fashion in order to run in the “Life in the Spirit 2013” Marathon? Aren't these shoes the cutest? And this designer handbag is just big enough to hold all my essentials.

**Sprinter Sally:** Those shoes wouldn't last five minutes in the mall--much less on a marathon!

**Worldly Wendy:** *(gasp)* Who says so?

**Running Ruby:** Aren't you worried about uneven road surfaces and potholes with those heels? And carrying a purse for your essentials? What essentials? Have you read the brochure? Everything we need will be provided to us on this race.

**Worldly Wendy:** Maybe so...but I have other necessities. I need lip gloss to keep my lips supple and hydrated, sunscreen SPF 75, some cash in case there are some cute boutiques along the route. Those are essentials for me!

**Sprinter Sally:** Do you have bandages for the injuries those shoes are going to cause you?

**Bad Guy:** *(to Wendy)* They’re just jealous! I love those shoes, dahling. They make your outfit pop! I wouldn’t change a thing. I heard there might even be some “trendy” shops just a little off the beaten track. But you’re prepared for that.. just keep that cash handy.

**Running Ruby:** Hey! Look down the track, girls--before the first turn. I think I see one of those secret places the race coordinator was talking about. We won’t have to travel long before we can get refreshed.

**Race Coordinator:** You’re right, Ruby. That is the secret place that we call “Restoring Your Soul.” There you can find green pastures and cool waters. This may just be the beginning of the marathon, but it is not too soon to stop at a secret place. You need the refreshment and direction that secret place will give you. You need to make it a habit to regularly stop at the secret places along your route...even if you don’t think you need to stop. This marathon isn’t for the faint of heart.

**Bad Guy:** *(to Sally)* That will put you behind before the day even gets started. *(to Lucy)* You’ll lose the little momentum that you barely have. *(to Betty)* That backpack you’re carrying won’t even fit in the door! *(to Ruby)* And you know that you have miles to go before you sleep. *(to Wendy)* Forget the secret places--use that time for shopping!

**Sprinter Sally:** I can’t take a break that soon. It will put me behind for the day...and this is a very busy day. I just don’t have the time.

**Lagging Lucy:** It just seems too soon to stop. If I start running and then stop that soon, I’ll lose whatever momentum I have. Next time I see one, I’ll stop then.

**Burdened Betty:** My backpack is perfectly balanced right now. Who is going to help me get it back on if I stop at that secret place?

**Running Ruby:** I do have a long day ahead of me. That’s a perfect reason to stop and see if there is a protein bar in there, and some refreshing water. I’m going to check it out.

**Worldly Wendy:** Shopping?! Good thing I brought my purse...

**Race Coordinator:** Ladies, take your places on the starting line! Remember, the prize goes to those who finish...

*(ladies line up on starting line)*

**Running Ruby:** Anybody happen to know what the prize is?

**Sprinting Sally:** Who cares? I’m going to finish and I plan to take the prize home. You all are going to eat my dust!

**Coordinator:** On your mark, get set, GO

**Sprinting Sally:** *(gets a head start and looks back)* Love you girls! See you at the finish line.

*The other runners fall in line, Running Ruby, Worldly Wendy, Betty Burdened, and Lagging Lucy pulls up the rear. The race coordinator is trying to motion runners in to the secret place, but only Ruby runs to the secret place; everyone else continues running offstage.*

**Narrator:** Our runners have begun their “Life in the Spirit 2013 Marathon.” All were instructed as to the benefits of the secret place, but only one actually stopped. We’ll catch up with them this afternoon and find out how they are doing.



## **Act II - Trials and Perseverance**

Secret Place: Resting (for the heavy laden)  
Secret Place: Strengthening (exchanging your weakness for His strength)  
Secret Place: Healing (for your backslidings)  
Secret Place: Refreshing (in the presence of the Lord)  
Secret Place: Drawing Near (mercy and grace in times of need)

*(Scene opens with the runners in disarray. Sprinter Sally is collapsed by the side of the road as Ruby is jogging up; farther down the road, Worldly Wendy has her shoe heel stuck and has turned her ankle, and even further we see Burdened Betty, on her knees from the weight of her backpack, and finally, Lagging Lucy is bent over with a cramp. Bad Guy is lurking.)*

**Narrator:** We are here at the “Life in the Spirit Marathon 2013”, and our runners have passed the halfway point of the marathon. All of our runners have encountered various trials on their individual routes, but some have fared better than others. Unfortunately, a storm did pass through, so the conditions on the route were more treacherous than expected.

**Sprinter Sally:** Wow. I can’t move another inch. It just hit me, all of a sudden. I hit the wall--guess I depleted all my glycogen. I thought I had eaten plenty of carbs before this run. Now I’m exhausted and I have zero energy...I can’t move forward another step.

**Bad Guy:** That’s right. You’re done in. No one recovers from glycogen depletion and finishes the race. You did your best. Oh well. Too bad, so sad.

**Running Ruby:** *(slowing as she reaches Sally)* Sally, what is going on? You look drained. I never thought I would catch up with you.

**Sprinter Sally:** I was going gangbusters, but then there was a storm and I found myself trying to run against the winds of adversity. All of a sudden I hit that “runner’s wall” everyone talks about.

**Running Ruby:** Oh you mean glycogen depletion? I read about that. Here, take my hand. I’ll help you. There’s a secret place not far from here where you’ll find strength for the weary, and maybe a carbohydrate snack.

**Sprinter Sally:** Why would you want to help me? My plan was to leave you in my dust....

**Running Ruby:** We’re all in this together, Sally. We’re in the race to finish, and to bring as many as we can with us to the finish line--not to leave others in our dust. Have you even stopped at one secret place along your journey?

**Sprinter Sally:** Well...I've considered it. I thought I could do this marathon in my own strength, until I had to deal with those winds of adversity. I tried to focus on pushing through in my own strength. It has always been enough before, but not this time. *(looking at the secret places)* But I could use some strength right now. I still feel pretty weak.

**Bad Guy:** Those gel shoes really let you down. *(sarcastic)* It was just toooo bad about that storm. It took the wind out of your sails. Better luck next time, you're such a failure.

**Sprinter Sally:** Somehow, I don't think you're really on my side; but you're right about one thing. Trying to do this race in my own strength was a failure. I think I should try this secret place. Maybe I'll get some strength there.

**Running Ruby:** Come on, Sally. I bet you will. I've stopped at just about every one, and here I am, still making progress. Here I'll help you to this secret place. You can take your shoes off for a minute, and exchange your weakness for His strength.

*(Ruby helps Sally to "Strengthening" secret place, then turns back to road)*

**Worldly Wendy:** Ow-ow-ow! I think I've sprained my ankle! I've had a terrible time, and now my heel caught in a pothole.

**Running Ruby:** Are you OK, Wendy? I'm surprised you didn't hurt yourself sooner, to tell you the truth. I don't know a lot about running a marathon, but even I knew that those high-heeled shoes wouldn't be good for running a marathon. When it comes to an endurance run, high heels just don't cut it! By the way, is that what you were wearing when we started?

**Worldly Wendy:** I knew I wouldn't be able to go too fast in these shoes, but I didn't realize that there would be muddy areas of temptation along the marathon route where I could get stuck! First my heels got stuck and then I slid on my back down the hill! Luckily, I landed at a Nordstroms. So I replaced my muddy running gear, and headed back to the road--but then I tripped on this pothole of sin.

**Running Ruby:** Backsliding is so dangerous! Wendy, why didn't you think to get some actual running shoes while you were at Nordstroms? And now here you are injured because of those heels in a pothole of sin. Let me help you up; you might have a serious injury. I'll help you to that secret place of healing. *(Worldly Wendy is limping)*

**Bad Guy:** Wait, wait. Here's another pair of heels. Aren't they adorable?

**Running Ruby:** Those don't match your outfit, Wendy. Besides your foot is swollen--they won't fit. Let's go! *(Ruby helps a limping Worldly Wendy to the secret place "Healing")*

*(Running Ruby get back onto the course, just to find Betty)*

**Burdened Betty:** *(bent over, backpack askew, breathing hard)* Ruby, I'm so glad to see you. This backpack slipped and now I can't get it back into place.

**Running Ruby:** Betty, are you hurt?

**Burdened Betty:** I didn't have an accident, if that's what you mean. My backpack slipped and I lost my balance. It is so heavy that unless it is perfectly positioned, I can't move. Could you try to adjust it?

**Running Ruby:** *(tries to adjust backpack, but can't)* What is in that backpack, Betty? I thought you just had some pebbles in there! You were never meant to be carrying any heavy burden in this marathon. Why didn't you leave it with the coordinator? Remember, they said everything we needed would be provided.

**Burdened Betty:** It seemed wrong to leave it behind. I don't want to leave my problems for somebody else.

**Running Ruby:** Look at that secret place. It says "Resting." Why don't you go in there and just dump your backpack so you can finish the race. Look! There is rest for the heavy laden--and you sure are heavy laden.

**Bad Guy:** Hey, I gave you that backpack. It was a gift; think how much it cost! You need to think this through. You've always been so attached to it.

**Burdened Betty:** It got heavier every step that I took! There is no way I can finish this race and carry it too! I would be permanently stooped over. My shoulders hurt! When I brought it to the race, I didn't know what a burden it would be. *(Ruby helps her to the "Resting" secret place)* Thanks for your help, Ruby. I don't think I could have gone another step. *(lays down backpack; goes in secret place)* Maybe I can get a mercy massage. *(Ruby returns to road)*

**Lagging Lucy:** *(bent over, holding her side)* Ruby! I need help. I've got a stitch in my side. I don't know what to do!

**Bad Guy:** What did I tell you? Out of shape, lack of training. It was bound to catch up with you.

**Running Ruby:** Those cramps can be debilitating, Lucy. Take some deep breaths. You might be dehydrated. Have you been stopping at the secret places along the way? Every secret place I've stopped in provides Living Water.

**Bad Guy:** You can't afford to stop. Slow and steady wins the race. Who needs Living Water?

**Lagging Lucy:** Well I can't go much farther in this condition, that's for sure.

**Running Ruby:** See that secret place over there labeled “Drawing Near?” I'll take you there. I'm sure it will have what you need.

**Lagging Lucy:** Sure, I'll try anything. *(she heads over to the secret place, holding her side)*

**Running Ruby:** Wow, I'm all alone all of a sudden. And I'm feeling a little drained myself.

**Bad Guy:** You've got answers for everyone else, but look at you. You want to give up too. What a hypocrite you are. Save your strength for all those family obligations and responsibilities. Johnny has soccer three nights this week, Mary has ballet, your husband has invited coworkers for dinner Friday night, and you need to check on your aging parents.. And don't forget those ministries at church. Take it from me, it's time to throw in the towel on this marathon!

**Running Ruby;** Oh, yeah...no, I don't think so. I see another secret place. “Refreshing.” That's what I need. I can make it that far, even without my friends' help. And by the way, YOU are no friend of mine. *(Ruby goes into her secret place)*

**Bad Guy:** Aaaaugh! *(Bad Guy slinks off stage in frustration)*  
*(Each runner emerges from her secret place)*

**Running Ruby:** Hey guys! I'm tired of racing on my own. Let's join up and give each other strength.

**Sprinter Sally:** I don't care about doing my personal best. It's more important that we all make it to the finish line

**Worldly Wendy:** *(wearing sneakers)* Even with these new shoes, I think I may still need some support and accountability from you guys. So I'll stick with you.

**Lagging Lucy:** All I needed was that nice cold glass of perseverance. I may be slow, but I'll keep on.

**Burdened Betty:** With my backpack gone, I feel free and energized! Let's go!

*(All run off stage together)*

**Narrator:** Our runners all encountered difficult times. They may have given up without encouragement from others and the blessings found in the secret places.

### **Act III - Nearing the Finish Line**

Secret Place: Gaining Perspective (God meant it for good)

**Narrator:** We are here at the Life in the Spirit Marathon 2013, and our runners are nearing the finish line. All of our runners have persevered and overcome the various trials they encountered on their individual routes. They've grown stronger along the way, and they have drawn strength from one another. They have discovered the joy of running the race together, and most importantly, they have made use of the secret places.

*(all runners come on stage, arms linked)*

**All:** There's the finish line!

**Sprinter Sally:** Our time wasn't all that bad

**Lagging Lucy:** And I'm not the straggler

**Worldly Wendy:** I'd never tried running shoes before.

**Burdened Betty:** My shoulders feel like they haven't felt in years

**Running Ruby:** I knew we could do it!

*(cross finish line, hands in the air)*

**Race Coordinator:** We have some finishers! Way to go girls! Obviously, you've learned some lessons on this marathon you've been on. Take a moment to cool down and head to that secret place where you'll find some refreshment and gain perspective. When you're done, we'll catch up with you and find out about your run.

*(all go into the secret place, and then exit one by one)*

**Burdened Betty:** It makes sense, now. There was a purpose for all those hurts in my life. I wasn't meant to have to bear the burden of unforgiveness. Once I let it all go, I was able to run more freely. He intended to carry my heavy baggage all along. Now He has given me a glimpse of how even those hard things are being used for my good and for His glory.

**Running Ruby:** I love that we can gain a different perspective in the secret place. I get so bogged down with the day to day responsibilities of my family--and I end up worried and troubled about many things. I forget sometimes what really matters. Stopping regularly in the secret places on this marathon really made all the difference!

**Worldly Wendy:** (*limping*) It was in the secret place that I saw the emptiness of the detours that were distracting me. Even though I looked awesome and I was heading to the same finish line that you all were, those detours did cause me to backslide, and I was conforming to the world instead of being transformed.

**Lagging Lucy:** I had never run before, but here I am at the finish line. I don't need to compare myself to others--that isn't wise. He who began a good work in me is going to finish it! He orders my steps and will see me through, step by step. But I have to stay hydrated with that Living Water.

**Sprinter Sally:** I began this marathon in my own strength, and failed miserably! I learned that it is in my weakness that He is strong. He is the one who enabled me to pace myself in order to reach the finish line along with these friends who encouraged me to press on through that wall when I hit it.

**Narrator:** I think our runners have done well, and have learned the value of the secret places along their journey. This is not the end of their stories. This is one of many marathons that they will have to run in their lifetime. Hopefully, they have learned to search out the secret places, take advantage of that time for restoration and refreshing, no matter where they are on their marathon.