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...So run, that ye may obtain. 1 Corinthians 9:24b

It's a given. Every single true believer in Jesus Christ is in the race. We've been selected, exhorted, trained and disciplined to run legitimately, with self-control and patience, enduring to the finish in order to obtain the prize of God's upward call to be with and be like Christ Jesus in all His glory. The prize is not exclusive; it's offered to every single certified athlete who finishes the race.

For the past two months, the work in Tepic and the surrounding Huichol villages has been chock-full of the reality of the selection process, training, discipline, and the endurance of some very motivated athletes in this marathon.

"Keneutanautsa" is the Huichol word for "Run!" That was the theme of this year's Huichol youth camp that was patterned after the upcoming 2016 Olympics. We laughed out loud as we reflected on the disaster it would be if the Olympics were held in the Sierra Madre: On your mark, get set, Keneutanautsa! Six syllables! This helps explain the difficulty of the Huichol Old Testament (OT) translation process. The nine mother-tongue-translators (MTTs) are modeling amazing discipline and perseverance on this project. The goal is in sight.

We made the decision early on, that in spite of very limited resources and the very rustic facilities we have available for hosting our camp, we would not limit admission. Every single person who wanted to come was welcome. The logistics of getting everyone to camp are overwhelming. We expected around



100 Huichol campers; 147 came, along with 20 Huichol volunteer cooks, an army of outstanding IBBM-Tepic youth staff, a few observers from other states who wanted to learn by experience how to go about organizing a successful youth camp, and a team of well-prepared Huichol teachers for a grand total of 222.

We wrote the curriculum in Spanish, and the OT MTTs translated it into Huichol. The IBBM youth staff organized and carried out corresponding extreme games, music and related activities. The campers learned what God's Word says about becoming one of *His athletes* (like Timothy), *the race* that believers are to run (not like Demas, but like John Mark who, though he deviated from the track,

got back in line for a winning finish) and *the prize* He has prepared for all who finish the race (like the incorruptible one Paul received).



The day after camp was over, Good Friday, Pastor Refugio and the believers from the church at La Bendición hosted a big baptismal celebration. Eighteen new team members who have recently joined in this race, proved their willingness to run legitimately. Several of those 18 are from Tutuyecuamama, a very remote village that the La Bendición teammates have been painstakingly evangelizing and training. (Salvador's story is in my Sept/Oct 2015 blog post here: <http://mexicoministry.com/>)

The following week, nine diligent, disciplined, self-controlled, and patient Huichol students finished a big lap around the track, completing five years of the Theological Education

by Extension (TEE) course. Pastors Martín and Nacho from IBBM-Tepic have also run with endurance as dedicated and exemplary coaches. The student graduates have already branched out to a half-dozen other Huichol villages to hand off the torch they've been passed, teaching other racers who are anxious to join the relay and run, as well.



Pastor Hilario from Los Aires has taken on the job of "trainer" for the relatively new little village church at Mojarras. He travels on foot for hours from Los Aires to reach the village, and he has worked with them in establishing their own local church. They have diligently dug the foundation, made their own adobe blocks by hand, and raised the walls for their new meeting place. The team members from IBBM-Tepic came alongside to help to finish it off before the rainy season hits, giving them a missions offering to buy the metal roofing materials and pay for transporting it as far as a truck can go toward the "uttermost parts of the earth". From there, the heavy pile of 3' x 6' metal sheets had to be hand-carried for hours to the village. Diligence and endurance in the race are easy concepts for them to understand.



There is, no doubt, a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, as well as many teammates still here cheering on and enabling the runners of this amazing squad. May we all run well, the race that is set before us, with our eyes fixed on the Goal as we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ...*So run, that ye may obtain. 1 Corinthians 9:24b*

All because of Jesus and in His love,

Debbie

View assorted digital pictures of the last two months' laps around the track here:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/debbiemellberg/collections/72157667814773976/>