

The Amazing Grace Race

Production Notes

by

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The Amazing Grace Race is all about the “race of life”—all believers are participants! Life is full of mountains and valleys, sharp turns and detours. The key to running the race successfully? Strive to follow Jesus’ example each and every day. This musical is based on Hebrews 12:1 and the “Heroes of the Faith” passage found in Hebrews 11.

CHARACTERS

1. **Coach** (adult male or female): The wise and encouraging running coach of The Amazing Grace Race. This coach serves as a “spiritual mentor” for the runners.
2. **Reporter** (boy or girl): An animated reporter. This character is not an announcer at the race; he is reporting to a radio or television station. As he watches the race he observes the action, asks questions, and eventually wants to join in! We used a young boy on the studio recording so that the Coach (adult female) and Reporter were totally different in sound and style. On the video we used an older female student, and that worked equally well.
3. **Spud** (boy): A lazy “couch potato” who always wants to quit when life gets rough; but eventually he leads his team to victory!
4. **Annie** (girl): Female runner who is spunky and stubborn at times. She and Riley must learn to forgive before getting back into the race.
5. **Riley** (girl): A second female runner, also spunky and stubborn at times. She and Annie must learn to forgive before getting back into the race.
6. **Anthony** (boy): runner
7. **Bella** (girl): Younger girl runner, or at least one that is more “innocent.”
8. **Jacob** (boy): Younger boy runner
9. **Kid 1 and Kid 2**: A couple of short, funny lines
10. **Scripture Reader**: Hebrews 12:1-2

Choir

The choir is in the “stands,” cheering the runners on during the race.

INSTRUCTIONAL DVD

Thanks to my friend Conya Hartman at Trinity United Methodist Church in Deland, Florida, we were able to get a great DVD performance of *The Amazing Grace Race*. This will help directors and choreographers visualize the musical “on its feet” in a live setting. The Instructional DVD contains a fully-staged performance of the entire musical featuring Conya’s talented kids at Trinity UMC, along with a step-by-step demonstration of the choreography by my good friend, Judith Burns. As an added bonus, Conya and her husband show some behind-the-scenes footage of how she and her crew created the set.

THE SET

The first decision you need to make as you consider how to best utilize your performing space for *The Amazing Grace* is where your choir (the crowd cheering on the race) will stand. I suggest splitting the group in half on both sides of the “running set” in the center of the platform.

Split Stage/Split Choir

The first option for staging is the “split stage” approach, with the choir on one side of the stage and the “race” (actors) on the other side. A second approach is the “split choir” approach, where the choir is on either side of the stage and the actors are in the middle.

The choir will be standing on **risers**. You can drape the risers, or do anything creative to make them look more like stands. One idea is painted flats behind them that have a stadium look. For scenery you can use a backdrop of a park, or if you are able to be more elaborate we used 6 backdrops painted to highlight some of the scenes from the musical: the Park, the Valley of Despair, a thunderstorm, a rainbow, and ended with the scripture verse from Hebrews. These were painted on 2 sets of rotating flats that are highlighted on the end of the video. If you are able to use a PowerPoint presentation, you can easily do slides of these same things.

Runners’ Stage

We used the runners across the front of the whole stage, and they would jog in place, then jog to stand in front of the next backdrop scene. By doing this, they appear to be moving, yet stay on the stage. They can also jog a “loop” to give the appearance of being on a track or running a course.

In the opening song, an option is to have the runners in position for “On your mark, get set, go!” and have them run across the stage and out into the aisles, then return onto the stage and join in at measure 70 for “Runnin’ the race with You.”

For the final race (during the song “Runner *with* The Race), have them run off the platform, through the church and disappear until about 8 bars before they “cross the finish line” together on the Reporter’s cue line.

For the other songs in the musical, we suggest that they start jogging in place for about 8 bars, then go to the choreography the choir is doing for the rest of the song.

SOLOS**The Race *with* Fixin’ My Eyes on You**

Several short solos from Choir at the top

In His Steps, in My Shoes

4 Solos

Couch Potato

3 sing/talk lines from choir

Spud and the Coach sing and talk

L-O-V-E, Love!

4 solos

A Better Way

2 solos, Riley and Annie sing and talk

Heroes of the Faith

Up to 7 small solos

Find Us Faithful

4 solos and the Coach

Bible verse reading in the middle

MULTI-MEDIA

An accompaniment DVD to play during the song, “Heroes of the Faith,” is available through Word Music. It features a split-track format, just like the accompaniment CD, so you can simply use the DVD as your sound source so that it will line up with the song. You could also take the time to film your own children running a race and crossing a finish line (possibly finishing in slow motion like the movie *Chariots of Fire*) to be timed to the finale (“Runner *with* The Race”).

MICROPHONES

If possible, the leading roles all have lapel microphones, with the exception of the Reporter, who should have a wireless hand-held mic. However, you may need to use hand-held mics if that is all that is available. In smaller, more intimate presentations, it might not be necessary to have mics. For the choir soloists, place 2 mics on the stage, one on Stage Left and one on Stage Right.

LIGHTING

Keep the stage well lit during the performance except for several moments. See if you can flash the lights to help enhance the “lightning” SFX before the song, “Heroes of the Faith.” It would be helpful to dim the lights if you use the DVD accompaniment video during the song, “Heroes of the Faith.” Additionally, if you prepare a video of your choir running for the finale (“Runner *with* The Race”), you will want to dim the lights during that video; bring the lights up as the runners come back to finish the race.

KICK-OFF PARTY IDEAS

- Team relay races, potato-sack races; serve sports drinks and watermelon.
- We did see a cute pajama-pancake race at one church!
- Place everyone's shoes in the center of the room in a large pile, and have a "race" to see which team can find all of their shoes first.
- Collect shoes to be donated through "Soles-4-Souls."
- A potato bar dinner (playing off of the character, Spud)

BIBLE VERSES (NIV¹)

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. (Acts 20:24)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (I Corinthians 9:24)

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (II Timothy 4:7-8)

And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:15)

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. (Ephesians 6:15)

Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. (Exodus 3:5b)

¹ Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ®. NIV®. COPYRIGHT © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2010 by International Bible Society®. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Finish Line

Rotating Scenery
*Park, Valley of Despair,
Bible Verse*

Open Stage area for Runner's

Rotating Scenery
*(Park, Storm,
Rainbow)*

Reporter

Starting Line

CHOIR

Sanctuary:



Opening Park Scene:



Close-up of Opening Park Scene:



Rainbow and Bible Verse:



Performance shots:

Lightning scenery:



Rainbow scenery:



Scripture Verse:**Stands for the "Fans":**

Badlands bog scenery:

