

The Race Not Run

Ready:

“Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’”

-Luke 9:23

Set

I was training for a marathon—the beautiful, romantic, epic Paris Marathon. But, because I am a follower of Jesus, each morning begins with God, reading His Word and seeking His heart for the day. From there, I head off to work, where I run on my lunch breaks and then do my long runs on Saturdays.

After Christ, my family is the second-most important thing in my life. Normally I train with my wife, and we relish the time together. This time around, however, my training was going far better than I’d dreamed!

It all started when I ran six miles at an 8-minute-per-mile pace, which is fast for me. Because my wife wasn’t at that pace, I began to run alone. Soon I bested the 8’s and changed my goal to 7:30’s. Not long, and I started targeting 7’s even though I struggled to be at my 100-percent best at work in the afternoons.

Then, one morning, God blatantly switched on the light for me. My wife and I had always adjusted our training plans so that we would rest on Sundays. However, because I hadn’t run the day before this week, I was planning to knock out a long run before church. But, as I sat before Him, the long run looming, He showed me clearly through the book of Judges what had happened.

The Lord was no longer the center of my everyday decisions; my running was. Instead of adjusting my day to Him, I was adjusting my day to my sport. Running had become my idol.

Immediately I quit training. I didn’t quit running, but I chose to start running with my wife again, to work out a little less hard so I could retain sufficient energy to glorify God at work again.

Wouldn’t you know it, God smiled on that decision! Now, my runs are slower, but better. The compulsion to train has been replaced by the freedom to participate in what God’s doing here and now. I love what songwriter Rich Mullins wrote: “Love is bound in the things that we have given up, more than in the things that we have kept.” For me, it seems that God is more pleased in this marathon not run.

Today, I hope you will check your own heart regarding training and evaluate if your sport has become your idol. If so, ask God what needs to happen in order for you to get back on His

path—one that is full of surrender, but full of His blessings.

Go

1. Is God more glorified and honored by our success or our attitude regardless of the results?
2. Are you willing to let God determine the outcome of your training? If so, how can you give Him the freedom to determine that outcome, yet still glorify Him?
3. Why do you compete?

Workout

Matthew 16:24-27

Matthew 19:16-30

Luke 9:23-25

Luke 18:18-30

Bible Reference:

Luke 18



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