

RUN TO WIN PART FOUR: HOW TO RUN - HITTING THE ROAD

FOUNDATIONAL VERSES:

“You know that in a race all the runners run but only one wins the prize, don’t you? You must run in such a way that you may be victorious. Everyone who enters an athletic contest practices self-control in everything. They do it to win a wreath that withers away, but we run to win a prize that never fades. That is the way I run, with a clear goal in mind. That is the way I fight, not like someone shadow boxing.”
(1 Corinthians 9:24-26 ISV)

“Therefore, having so vast a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, and throwing off everything that hinders us and especially the sin that so easily entangles us, let us keep running with endurance the race set before us, fixing our attention on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of the faith, who, in view of the joy set before him, endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Think about the one who endured such hostility from sinners, so that you may not become tired and give up.”
(Hebrews 12:1-3 ISV)

Running The Race Of Life: An Overview And Review

Run To Win Part Four will focus on what it means to actually running the race of life. Up to this point, we’ve briefly answered the questions, what is the race, why are we in the race, what’s the purpose of the race, where do we get the power to run, what are the elements of the race and how to prepare to run.

Earlier we learned that we’re all in the race called life. We also learned that the race is both a sprint and a marathon. We all start out in a marathon, with the hope of living a long life. But during different points in our life we have to run like we’re in a sprint. Having the right mindset and being emotionally grounded helps us to know, realistically, what point we are at in our life. Before making your first physical move, you must move mentally and emotionally. And before moving mentally and emotionally, you must move spiritually.

This is essential in running the race. We saw earlier that sprinting is determined by what is happening in our life at that time. Marathon running is determined by the fact that we are in the race when we're born. Our lifetime is the length of our marathon run.

As in all of life, we have to walk before we can run. Walking starts by putting one foot in front of the other. Once that's taken care of, running is simply putting one foot in front of the other at a faster pace.

Regardless of whether you are currently sprinting to a goal toward the prize or just in the marathon aspect of your run toward the prize, be sure to pace yourself. In short, that's all that we have to do in running the race of life.

How Do We Take Our First Steps

Before moving on, remember that there are two aspects of this race of life. There is the natural and the spiritual. We are in the natural race by our physical birth. But, through the Holy Spirit, we choose to be born again and enter the spiritual race.

But, taking those steps will take effort, constant assessing and reassessing of your progress. Using the example of a baby walking to get across the room to get a toy.

When babies start to walk:

1. They see something they want (They've gotten a vision)
2. They decide to get it (They've gotten a purpose)
3. They push themselves up and forward (They've made goals)
4. They move their bodies (They've fought against the urge to stay still)
5. They use their feet, legs and anything around them to balance themselves (They've decided to do whatever they can to avoid falling, using available tools)
6. They use momentum to propel themselves forward (If they're determined. If they fall, stumble, they right themselves, start again, regain momentum and keep moving toward the prize)
7. They finally get their prize

Once we get a vision of a prize and make it our purpose to get it, we use that same sequence throughout our natural and spiritual lives.

Jesus uses two parables to demonstrate the willingness of a person who has a vision to do whatever it takes to get their prize.

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. 46 When he found one priceless[k] pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it." (Matthew 13: 44-45)

Putting one foot in front of the other in life is the act of demonstrating love to God, to yourself and to others. Love is demonstrated by being:

- Patient
- Kind
- Content
- Humble
- Polite
- Giving
- Peaceable
- Self-Satisfied
- Truth-Loving
- Supportive
- Loyal
- Hopeful
- Trusting
- Faithful

(1 Corinthians 13: 4-8)

Create markers, such as post-conversation points, to assess and reassess your progress. For instance, after having a conversation with someone, ask yourself how well did you demonstrate love toward Him, toward yourself and toward the other person. In short, do you feel like love was demonstrated and grew from your encounter with the person?

If we choose to be born again and enter the eternal race and are running to get the eternal prize, we can judge how well we're running by how well the Fruit of the Spirit is both growing and being practically demonstrated. The various Fruit of the Spirit that should be growing and demonstrated are:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Forbearance
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control

(Galatians 5: 22-23)

Again, use markers to assess and reassess your progress. In the case of the Fruit of the Spirit, using patience as an example, when you assess yourself in that area, you may notice that you have a weakness in demonstrating that Fruit. You find that you're

patient with other people regardless of what they do or how they act. You're patient with how and when God fulfills His promises. But, you're not patient with yourself when you see the smallest inadequacy. So, after having a conversation with someone, ask yourself how well you demonstrate patience toward God, toward the other person and toward yourself. Then determine how you can make the step of patience stronger for the next encounter.

Finally, once we're running toward the eternal prize, we can assess our progress by how well we're developing and using our Gifts of the Spirit. Keep in mind that there's a difference between our natural talents and natural gifts and the Gifts of the Spirit.

The elements of the Fruit of the Spirit, which is supernatural and supernaturally given, that should be developing and being used are:

The Gift(s) of the Spirit that you have and should be utilizing are:

- The ability to speak with wisdom
- The ability to speak with knowledge
- The ability to speak to teach
- The ability to speak/talk with confidence
- The ability to speak lead
- The ability to have great faith
- The ability to have the power to heal
- The ability to have perform miracles
- The ability to announce or assert the purposes of God
- The ability to determine what spirits are present and active
- The ability to speak in another/other languages
- The ability to interpret [translate] another/other languages
- The ability to encourage
- The ability to give
- The ability to show mercy with cheerfulness

(Romans 12: 6-8, 1 Corinthians 12: 8-10, 1 Peter 4:10)

Assess whether you've been developing and using your natural gifts and talents, then assess whether you're developing and using the Gifts of the Spirit. Find and engage in ways and opportunities that you can develop and utilize your gifts.

Running toward the eternal prize is just doing whatever needs to be done and doing it in love! Constantly assessing your progress, being open to the Holy Spirit in being a part of the assessment process and working with the power that God gives you through the Holy Spirit is how you put one foot in front of the other. Doing that, day after day, moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day and year by year is how you run the race toward the prize.

Bible Study Questions:

Do you feel that you assess and reassess your demonstration of love enough?

1. All of the time? _____
2. A lot of the time? _____
3. Most of the time? _____
4. Some of the time? _____
5. None of the time? _____

Do you feel that the Fruit of the Spirit is growing and thriving in your life?

1. All of the time? _____
2. A lot of the time? _____
3. Most of the time? _____
4. Some of the time? _____
5. None of the time? _____

Do you feel that you're able to utilize your natural gifts and your Gift(s) of the Spirit?

1. All of the time? _____
2. A lot of the time? _____
3. Most of the time? _____
4. Some of the time? _____
5. None of the time? _____

Why is running the race of life so simple, but so challenging?

What will you use as markers along the path of your race?

Have you moved past just obtaining a natural prize and into obtaining the eternal prize?

(Contact us for more information on taking the first step and obtaining the eternal prize)