

Strength for Your Race, One Day at a Time

Everyone has a race to run. That just means we all have a life to live. The apostle Paul says in Hebrews 12:1 (NIV) "Therefore ... 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."

Part of what that means is to keep going even in the midst of the difficulties in life. Hard times happen to us all, but it's how we handle them that matters most. And when the time comes, I want to be able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

Keep moving. Much of life is just ordinary, everyday living, yet a lot of what happens comes in the form of difficult situations, from little annoyances to serious burdens.

I once kept a record of the difficulties that happened to me over a period of time. They were things like a back injury, leaving some luggage on a plane and a water leak in my humidifier. I hurt my arm doing stretches for my injured back, twisted my wrist, spilled a red drink on a white couch ... and lost my pants at a spa! Some were small irritations; others were more serious.

But what I learned from these experiences was simple: "Stuff" happens in life, but we don't have to let what happens keep us from fulfilling our purpose of serving God with our whole heart. It's a waste of time getting upset over petty things. And at the very least, if you don't know what to do in a situation, just do what you do know to do and keep moving forward.

One way to keep going when difficult times come is to get your

mind off yourself and help someone else. The truth is, we are happier and more content when we're helping others than when we're focusing on ourselves.

Refuse to get stuck in an attitude of self-pity, selfishness or self-centeredness. We all have problems, but our problems don't have to have us! Our victory will come as we remain determined just to keep moving, doing what God puts in our hearts to do.

Rest. One major part of running your race is learning to rest. That may sound like an oxymoron, but here's what I mean. Resting isn't about doing nothing; it's about being in a place of peace and complete trust in God. From a position of rest, we can do whatever we need to do because our faith is not in ourselves but in the one who gives us the strength and ability to do it.

God did the work of creation in six days, and on the seventh day, He rested from His work. Jesus died for our sins and then sat down at the right hand of God—a place of rest from His work.

In the Old Testament, maintaining a covenant relationship with God was all about work. The high priest went into the holy place to offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people. There was no place to sit in the holy place because he was there to work. But when Jesus came, His sacrifice paid it all, and He sat down because His work was finished.

Learning to rest may be one of the most important things we ever do. A lot of times, people get stressed out about their circumstances, but it's not really the circumstances that cause their stress—it's the way they handle them.

Resting in God is like a vacation for your soul. In rest, you are not concerned with what others think of you or how everything is going to work out as you fulfill God's plan for your life, because your faith is in Christ.

You can be steadfast in the midst of trials because you know that God is in control, and He will see you through anything you face. When you work from a place of rest, you do what you need to do in peace, having complete faith in God's grace to accomplish the task before you.

Run. Everyone has a race to run, a goal to accomplish, a life to live, and we all have to start somewhere. My encouragement to you is to start from a place of rest. Learn how to trust the Holy Spirit's leading. He will guide you and help you when it's time to sit, to stand, to walk—and to run your race to win!