

Finishing Your Course

The Christian Race Ann Chastain, one of my former pupils, grew up to run an impressive number of marathons. When I interviewed her on my TV program, Babbie's House, she challenged me to enter Atlanta's upcoming U.S. 10K Classic race, to be held on Labor Day morning.

Reluctantly I said yes. I love to walk, but this race is known as the most difficult 10K because it's mostly uphill along one of Atlanta's thoroughfares.

Ann became my teacher. The first time we trekked up a hill, I noticed that the in-shape runners took it as if it were nothing, but I found every step painfully difficult.

Finally I reached the top, only to hear Ann say, "Let's walk down then back up one more time." It was brutal training, some of the most intense I'd ever put my body through.

Early on, I began seeing the correlation between that course and our Christian walk, a journey on which sometimes the spiritual hills are so steep we cannot scale them by ourselves.

Clearly I saw that I needed to become more disciplined. There was a sense of urgency to step up my fervor for the Lord.

The night before the race I tossed and turned and prayed until 3:30 in the morning. But even with only two hours of sleep I felt refreshed. My biggest challenge would be racing against my body and my mind.

Going north on U.S. Highway 41, we faced our first impossibly steep hill. By the time I reached the top of that difficult climb, I was rejoicing in the Lord. At each mile marker a big band played music to encourage us.

A middle-aged woman near me had entered the race because her husband and his new girlfriend were in it. She was quite discouraged, and I was trying to inspire her to keep going. Amazingly, my encouraging her encouraged me.

Near the end, the best band of all sent powerful music toward us, urging us on to triumph. The people along the way, applauding and spurring us on, reminded me of that great crowd of witnesses we read about in Hebrews 12.

When I crossed the finish line my coach was there to bestow upon me my prizes—a medal and a T-shirt. But I got something more that morning: a new vision of a God who goes the distance with me and with every other struggler.

He stays with us until we complete our course. Then He greets us with joyous music, applause, prizes and praise.

The race taught me again that Philippians 4:13 is true. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (NKJV).