

Finishing Your Race

My first 5K run at 49 years of age! I had no expectation of winning the race; I just wanted to run. I really didn't even think I could run the whole distance; I just wanted to finish. I had trained for about a year pushing my body farther than I had ever pushed it at any other time in my life. I was so nervous. What if I was the last one to cross the finish line—or worse, what if I couldn't finish this race at all?

There were thousands of people there ready to run—people of all ages, sizes, ethnicities and social backgrounds. Everyone took their places and waited for the starter gun to sound. We all began running at the same time, but not everyone could keep the same pace.

There were some seasoned runners that quickly took their place in the lead, and there were some that kept a slow steady pace. (FYI: This is the group I was in.) There were some who would both run a little and walk a little, and there were some who only walked. Regardless of their pace, each one shared the same goal: Cross the finish line.

I had never run a full 3.2 miles during training. In fact, my longest distance before the race was only 2.2 miles. I remember coming to the first mile mark and having someone hand me a drink as I ran past. I thought to myself, *If I can just make it to the next mile marker, I will stop running and walk for a short while, then finish the race running.*

The second mile marker never came. My legs felt so heavy, but I wouldn't stop running 'cause I knew I could run two miles. The next distance marker, I saw was the finish line. It was still far in the distance, but I could see it. There was no way I was going to stop now!

My heart was racing, my chest was pounding—I knew I was going to make it. The street was lined with people I didn't even

know cheering me on. I crossed the finish line! It didn't matter that I wasn't first. It didn't matter that I wasn't the fastest. All that mattered was that I made it across the finish line!

I've been training for another race my whole life. This race also has a finish line that I have been pressing toward. Sometimes I run fast without any struggle. At other times it feels like I am barely crawling, but still I continue to press.

When I fall, I get up and keep moving toward the prize. Paul said in Hebrews 12:1, "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

The future depends on the race that you and I are running today. Just like those who have gone before us and whose legacies now surround us, we must continue to do whatever it takes to run our race. We must lay aside fear of failure and the unknown and press toward the finish line. You don't have to be the strongest or the fastest. You just have to have the endurance to stay in the race. Ladies, on your mark, get set, now let's run the race!

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