

God's Grace Provides Endurance to Run Life's Marathons

Had anyone told me six months ago that I would be a half-marathon runner, I'd have said, "You must have me mistaken with someone else."

I'm a writer who, prior to this, enjoyed a sedentary lifestyle. I was never athletic as a kid. I never ran more than two miles in my life. But it happened. After roughly 10 weeks of training, many mornings getting up before dawn, and a few well-earned scars, I ran 13.1 miles. I pushed. I sweat. I burned. I finished strong, and I'm pretty sure I'll never be the same.

I never before understood why people ran, but now I know. Running, or really anything that pushes you physically, can teach you so much about yourself and even more about God.

Let me take you back weeks before my race. I was crying to a friend, lamenting areas in my life where I didn't see God working. I felt like my prayers were dissipating into a void. I know you've been there, because everybody has. It's frustrating and heartbreaking.

After my race, I revisited that night in my mind. It almost felt as though God and I were both saying, "Move!" At the same time that I was begging Him to do something, He was asking me to do the same. Sometimes, God requires you to make the first move. He wants you to develop some discipline and put in the legwork.

I would never have been in this race if I hadn't signed up. I certainly wouldn't have finished if I hadn't trained and ran all those miles and dreadful hill sprints. And lastly, none of

this was even possible if I hadn't said "yes" when a friend asked me to run with her. In a nutshell, I had to go first in order for God move.

Sometimes the first step is just being willing. I think about Isaiah. When God asks, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" Isaiah steps up and says, "Here I am. Send me" (Isaiah 6:9). That is a perfect example. After that, God had something to work with, and now Isaiah is considered one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament.

Now, God makes something out of nothing all the time. Yes, He could just wave His hand and change a situation with little to no effort on our parts. However, I'd venture to say that most of the dreams in your heart are not things that will develop overnight. They will take preparation. They will require some, if not, a lot of, hard work on your part. Don't be afraid of pain. Sometimes, it's here to help.

Like I said, I learned a lot from my half marathon. I discovered what God could do by pushing the limits of what I could do. I learned that there's no such thing as, "I have nothing left," because there's always something left ... and God will use it to get you to where He wants you to go.

I also learned that nobody gets anywhere by themselves. Much of this is thanks to one friend who said, "You should come run with us." That turned into encouraging me to run regularly, which quickly led to training for a race. Running with a group made the time fly by. It was a shining example of how we all need each other.

So what's next? I, who once thought channel surfing counted as exercise, am looking forward to my first full marathon. That's 26.2 miles. Just goes to show, you never can tell how a story turns out.

I want to add one last thing. When I told people I was training for a half marathon, I can't tell you how many times

their first response was, “Good for you. I could never do that.”

Don't limit yourself by what you think you can or cannot do. We serve a “God of Wonders” who created you to be full of surprises. If you're willing to set your mind on success, put in the hard work and believe God when He promises you strength for today, there really is nothing you can't do.

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