

Running the Race

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us” (Heb. 12:1, NLT).

It's important to note that not all Christians are in the same phase in their walk with the Lord. We are “running the race,” as Hebrews explains a race has runners at various stages. We can't look at our positions in the race and ridicule others for not being as far along.

When considering the parallels with a race and our Christian walk, a few things come to mind:

- **Conditioning** – Reading the Bible, exercising your faith, praying, worshipping, etc., are all crucial elements to keep us in spiritual shape. We are in the main event race our entire lives, but there are smaller races I believe we take part in also. These include callings to new ministries or phases of life, struggling with a battle of health or finances and facing rejection.

- **Endurance** – Galatians 6:9 (NIV) states, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” A marathon is tough and grueling, and many just want to quit. Some estimates say that between 10-30% of participants do not finish. Christians are falling away from the faith all around. We are called to ENDURE!

- **Psychological** – A big aspect to running a race is not only physical but mental! Runners can be their own worst enemies if they let their minds control their motivation during the race. You've heard the phrase “mind over matter.” Your willingness to push yourself can cause you to go further than you thought

was physically possible. The same is true in our Christian walk; our doubts and fears can sometimes get the best of us and cause us to want to quit.

– **Encouragement** – Do you see the crowds that cheer runners on the side of the road? They cheer, give high fives and throw water bottles at them as signs of encouragement. You often see many runners as well encouraging each other along the way, sometimes even finishing with another runner hugging onto their shoulders. Runners can have sponsors as well, which is a close analogy to Christian mentors. We have a “crowd of witnesses,” as Hebrews 12:1 reminds us. These are men and women of faith who have gone before us. They endured the race and made it to the end, cheering us on through the example they set before us.

In my discussion with author and pastor Banning Liebscher, he talks about how understanding your calling requires not only discernment but is a joy in the process. The journey and the race we are in should be dedicated to following God’s voice and promptings of the Holy Spirit to ensure we are on the right path to begin with.

Paul knew what he was talking about when he compared our Christian walk to a race! Jesus waits for us to finish, ready to say, “Well done good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21, NIV). Every pain we face, every doubt we overcome, every battle we wage is worth patiently enduring the journey to get to the finish line and see our Savior at last! {eoa}

Tim Ferrara has grown up in the church and held various leadership positions, both in business and in the church, and is currently the executive pastor at LifePoint Church in Arizona. He has a bachelor’s degree in marketing from Arizona State University, along with a MBA from University of Phoenix, and has had a career in business management for over 20 years and been on faculty for two different colleges. Tim started the ministry of Discerning Dad () as a way to write and

encourage Christians to grow in discernment and make better decisions that honor God. He has a book called Everyday Discernment: The Importance of Spirit-Led Decision Making and also multiple YouVersion Bible plans. He hosts a podcast called Everyday Discernment on the Charisma and Edifi podcast networks. Tim lives with his wife Jamie and their two children in Arizona.

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.