



Church of God Ministries  
Spanish Fort, Alabama

**...Ready, ...Set, ...Learn!**

*“Running has taught me, perhaps more than anything else, that there’s no reason to fear starting lines... or other new beginnings.” --Amby Burfoot*

It was a bitter cold spring day in Wisconsin when I arrived at our track meet. We had to dress in cold weather uniforms due to the weather, in addition to our normal mesh body suits and short pants. I added two layers of sweat jackets and pants, as well as a stocking cap and gloves, but I would have to eventually wear just the short pants and body suit for my race. Because of the cold temperatures, I was not looking forward to that.

The last event of the track meet came—the 4x 400 Relay. In order to stay warm longer, I waited, fully clothed, on the track behind the lead runner. When she was halfway around the track, I would quickly take off my sweat suits, and have just enough time to be ready for the baton exchange.

**Get ready...**

When I saw my teammate hit the halfway mark, I slipped off both of my jackets and my sweat pants. I tossed them to the side of the track, and then caught the eye of the next runner on my team to signal that I was ready. She responded with a horrified face. What was wrong? Oh, my hat! I whipped the hat off my head and threw it to the side; I was ready now. But no! My teammate was running towards me, still looking shocked. What could be wrong now? When Beth was finally close enough, she said, “Gayle, you took off your short pants!”

I was horrified. How embarrassing! I would never live this down. I would be the talk of the school. How could I ever face my teammates again? I quickly found my short pants, pulled them on, and ran my leg of the race.

We returned to the locker room. No one said anything. I thought that everyone had seen me with my short pants off, but obviously they were preoccupied watching the other runners. I kept waiting for someone to make a snide or sarcastic comment about my mistake, but they never did. I learned that day that even my most uncomfortable and embarrassing mistakes will usually go unnoticed by other people. I learned that when you fumble or blunder, you should always keep moving forward, not stop to worry about what others think. Just change and move on!

## Get set...

Each year at the beginning of track season, I informed my coaches that I could not run in meets on Friday night and Saturday, but that I could run on all other nights. They were disappointed that I would not be available for the big meets, yet happy to have me run on the meets that I could. Later in the track season there was one invitational—a track meet with 10 teams on a Friday night—that I could run in because with the time change, my races would be over before sunset.

This was the first time I would have the opportunity to run at a major track meet. I was very excited! I participated in my events, and then shortly before sundown, I returned to the bus to wait for the final events to finish up. I did not want to show that I was participating in the track meet on the Sabbath. While I waited alone on the bus, I had time to reflect. I was not participating or doing my own pleasure on the Sabbath, yet I didn't feel like I was honoring God either. My thoughts went to my family, who were together having a nice Sabbath dinner. I realized that I would rather be there with them, rejoicing in the beginning of the Sabbath, than sitting on the bus alone, trying *not* to do my own pleasure. I don't remember whether I won any of my races that day, but I did learn that the pleasures of this world do not stack up to the rewards of obeying God.

The day before another track meet, my coach announced that he was going to change things up from the normal schedule. He was going to put some people in races that they normally did not run to see how they performed. I had been running the 400 Meter dash for two and a half years, and that was my race. I ran it in every track meet, but this time, coach wanted me to run the 800. What? I was not a long distance runner. I hadn't trained for that race. I was sure I couldn't do that. But I had no choice in the matter; the schedule was set.

I had no idea how to pace myself for this race, so I decided to keep pace with Nancy, who normally ran the 800. The starter fired the gun and we were off. I fell in behind Nancy. It seemed like a comfortable pace, until I got to the 200 meter mark. Suddenly it felt too slow! I decided to pick up the pace, and I passed Nancy. I finished the race in first place, about 20 seconds faster than Nancy.

I was shocked and surprised. I could hardly believe my success! The coach had been trying to get me to run that race for the whole year, and I'd refused to try it. I learned a valuable lesson that day; never be afraid to try something new just because you haven't done it before. You might find that instead of being mediocre at something you already know how to do, you could be great at something you haven't yet tried. You might even discover something that you enjoy doing *more* than what you're doing now!

## Learn

Though these lessons were learned years ago, I still run today. I am still learning lessons while running. I find that my morning run is a great time to commune with God. There are no interruptions—no Facebook, no Netflix, no texts or phone calls, no e-mails or family members asking me to do things, and no “to-do list” staring me in the face. I am alone with God. I can pray; I can meditate; I can thank God for the beautiful sunrise and the tweeting of birds. I find that running helps me to think clearly. I have solved many problems while running. The lack of pressures and stresses causes clear answers to come into my mind. I find that running is also a great time to “write” articles. While running, the creative side of my brain functions more easily.

Maybe running isn't for you, but whatever you enjoy doing, you can always use it to learn lessons that will help you to be a better person. Take time to reflect on what you are doing, and consider what you can learn from the things that you face in your daily life. David often meditated on his circumstances. In Psalm 32:8 he expressed what God had taught him, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.” God is always guiding us, and He can help us to learn lessons from our most basic daily activities.

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