

# Running To Win # 15

## Run With A Purpose

By Dr. Gregory Wiens

Over the 45 years that I have been running; I have seen a lot of people start running and many more quit after some time. For me, one of the clarifying reasons why this happens is that people who quit early usually don't have a good enough reason to run. They might have been trying to impress someone, wanted to lose a few pounds or get in better shape. But, if there isn't a compelling mission in their mind, more than likely running will be a passing fad.

An interesting story in the Old Testament concerns running with a purpose. Joab was the general in a confrontation against David's son, Absalom, who had rebelled against his father David. After Joab's army won the battle, Joab killed Absalom. At this point, it was important to tell King David what had taken place. Joab then called a young man (a Cushite) who had witnessed everything and told him to run back to the city and give King David a full report. After the Cushite starts running, another young man named Ahimaaz comes up to Joab and pleads that he be allowed to run to the city and tell King David the news.

Joab tells him no because he didn't have all of the information needed to tell the King (as Ahimaaz wasn't aware of Absalom's death). Joab tells him further that if he is patient, he will be able to run another day when he has what he needs. But, Ahimaaz asks and begs and finally says, "*Come what may, I want to run.*" So Joab said, "*Run!*" Then, Ahimaaz *ran* by way of the plain (That is, the plain of the Jordan) and outran the Cushite." 2 Samuel 18:23 (NIV).

Ahimaaz was obviously a faster runner. A watchman sees Ahimaaz running toward the city and calls to David that a runner is approaching the city and his form looks like that of Ahimaaz. Sure enough, David waits as Ahimaaz comes up to tell him that Joab won the battle. David quickly asks about his son, Absalom, but Ahimaaz has no clue. King David tells him to stand aside; as the Cushite arrives to tell King David the news he was most interested in.

How would you like to win a race, but then be told to step aside because you were in the WRONG race? If Ahimaaz had listened to others, he would have ran another day in a way that would have been honoring to everyone. But instead, he had no idea why he was running except to win; and in the end, he lost in spite of winning.

Ask yourself the following questions, and consider whether you have a compelling reason to be doing what you are doing:

- Why are you in ministry?
- Do you have a clear call on your life?
- Are you passionate about the vision before you?
- What excites you about your ministry today?
- Do you really know why you are alive?
- What is your mission in life or in your ministry?
- If you were to disappear tomorrow, what wouldn't get done in the world?
- What can only God do in ministry through you?

In life and ministry it is easy to simply run because we run well (like Ahimaaz), but not really know why we are running. We live our lives and go through our days without much awareness of an

ultimate reason for our existence. This approach especially becomes a problem when there is a problem or a challenge; like midlife, marriage struggles, or a significant failure in ministry.

The reason I continue to run after over 45 years is because I know I must run. I run because it changed my life; it gave me discipline in all areas of my life to become the person that God wanted me to become. It wasn't to lose weight, but by running, I found the discipline to say yes to eat well, to sleeping well and most importantly, to spending time with my Lord on a regular basis. So running for me became part of my identity. I AM A runner. Running has allowed me to experience the blessings and grace of God. Through the good runs and the painful runs I am reminded of who God made me to be.

My observation is that people who fold under pressure and give up in ministry and life, do so because they lack a compelling purpose. They are living to survive. They really don't know the answers to these questions in a way that gives them meaning and significance beyond their immediate circumstances. However, when we are very clear about why we live and are in ministry, we can experience God's blessing and grace through the good times and the bad times.

I believe we grow into our purpose rather than just writing it out on paper through inspiration. It comes through living life through God's eyes and then reflecting on it. It develops as others who know us are able to speak into our lives. My prayer is that we all keep living (and running) till we come home to Jesus.