

Running To Win #7

It Takes The Right Equipment

By Dr. Greg Wiens

The shoes I run in cost more than \$100 and they usually last a little over three months. Now I know that truly sounds ridiculous to most of you. You must be thinking that I make too much money and you should cut back your giving to the state...but hold on. I run about 1500 miles a year in my shoes, and I have run that for 20 years. That means I have run about 30,000 miles so far and I don't have bad knees, ankles or a bad back. Why? At least one reason is that I always buy appropriate shoes. By "appropriate", I mean shoes that are designed for my weight, my form, and the distance I run and the type of running I do.

I could run barefoot or in an old pair of Converse gym shoes. But, if you are going to be serious about running, you must buy shoes that are uniquely designed for you. In addition to shoes, you need running shorts, sunglasses, technical t-shirts for the very hot weather, hats, sweats for cold, sweats for the rain, compression shirts to keep from chafing and the list goes on.

The Bible has a lot to say about the right equipment. A familiar passage is Ephesians 6.10-18, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."

There is an enemy in our Christian life. He is not happy when we seek to grow and will do all he can to keep us from maturing. He does not want us to read the Bible, or pray, or fast, or meditate or even run if it helps us grow. He will do all that he can do to stop us. And we really are helpless without the right equipment. If I tried to run without at least the minimal equipment, I wouldn't last very long. Shoes and shorts are essential! Truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, prayer, the Word and the Spirit of God are all essential for living the vibrant and fulfilling life God intends for us.

Just like my expensive shoes, this equipment comes at a great cost. Some of this equipment is free to you, but came at a great cost to others and some of it will come at a great cost to you. Our salvation was purchased by the life of Jesus dying on the cross for us. The Word of God has cost many people all they had so we could freely have it today. So we need to pursue righteousness (which is what these series of newsletters are all about) and speak the truth in love, which comes at a great cost to us.

So if you don't have the right equipment, don't even try to win the race; the right equipment makes the difference between winning and losing. I used to assume leaders know this, but the more I work with younger men and women in ministry, the more I am convinced that they really don't have a grasp on the Word. The scriptures tell us that a leader must be able to teach and will be held accountable for

their ability to do so (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 2:1, 15, James 3:1). Too many leaders today are sharpening their leadership skills without the essential skills of the armor of God.

So what other equipment does it take to be a **leader** in Christianity today? I would suggest that if you are going to be a great leader; that is, one whose heart and passion is expressed through leading a missionally oriented body that is changing the community through transforming lives within that community you need additional equipment beyond just knowing the Word and the other equipment given in Ephesians.

Just as if you are an advanced runner, as a leader you will need additional equipment. Paul knew there was additional equipment needed to lead and he never stopped using it. In the last letter he wrote to his friend or protégé, Timothy he wrote, “When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the **parchments.**” (2 Timothy 4:13 NIV) Even though he was close to death, he was still reading and growing.

As Paul suggests some of the equipment of leaders are the books you read. Leaders are readers! If you don't like to read, then download the books and listen to them on your iPod. There is no excuse to not digesting the wisdom of others. I hope you see your books as part of the equipment that allows you to win your race. And yes, this equipment will be expensive. How can we be smart as serpents and innocent as doves (Matthew 10.16) if we are not feeding our brains the knowledge to be smart with? We should never stop reading.

As leaders we need to handle the Word of God well. We need to handle knowledge well, and we need to handle people well (because we lead PEOPLE!). I have noticed over the years that people tend toward extremes in these three areas. Some leaders know the Word very well, but simply don't do well on the other two. Or leaders may know a lot about business leadership, but not be grounded in the Word. Or leaders may have great people skills but seriously lack in one or the other two. All three of these areas entail essential equipment we need to run the race to win.

Sure there are lots of other equipment that you can get. As with running, there are the essentials and then there are the accessories. Most runners can see the “wanna bees” are dressed and decked out in expensive equipment, but that is all they have. You only need the equipment for the level of runner you are. The same goes for a leader. You need the right equipment for the race you are in, no more and no less. That is why we believe in coaching... to help you know the equipment you need. And that is what we will talk about next week.