

# Running to Win: Running through the Pain

By Dr. Greg Wiens

One of the big differences between wishes and goals is a plan and a person to help you be accountable. About 15% of people in America will set goals this year, but only about 1.5% will actually have a plan to accomplish them and ask someone else to help them accomplish these goals. This is where pain and discomfort come in.

Another principle of running that has helped me in life is that you can often run through discomfort, but you need help in the pain. In running and in life, there is a big difference between being in sharp pain, and being uncomfortable. I find that you will never grow without being uncomfortable. You must push yourself until it hurts if you are going to accomplish anything great in life. In fact, you need to push yourself to this point every week. However, when you experience sharp piercing pain, it is a sign that something is wrong that needs to be dealt with.

As I mentioned last week, I learned this lesson early in my running life during a half marathon (13.1 miles). At the eight-mile marker, my right knee began to hurt very badly. You see; I had run the first eight miles like I was running a five-mile race. I ran them entirely too fast for a longer distance when I hadn't trained my legs to run that fast. So just after 8 miles, I dropped out. I began hobbling and thought about the next five miles of excruciating pain. I knew I couldn't walk that far with this much pain. I was defeated and discouraged. I knew I was done. All of a sudden, a woman who I had never met stopped running and began to encourage me. She told me how to stretch my knee. Then she put her arm around me and began to get me to run a little. She gradually picked up our pace and before I knew it, I was slowly jogging. The pain was still there, but it was bearable because I knew I had someone else who was pulling for me.

I couldn't believe that this lady would give up her time intentionally to help me a person she had never met to complete my race. I continued to run and got stronger as I ran. Eventually, she could see I was going to make it so she started running at her pace again and left me. As she left, she said that she would be waiting for me at the finish line, so I better not stop. What encouragement! I knew I couldn't let her down. I finished the race in a respectable time (because the first 8 miles were so fast!). When I crossed the finish line, my accountability partner was there cheering me on. I never saw her again. But she is the reason I finished that race.

Accountability is uncomfortable, but it doesn't need to be painful. We are there to help YOU achieve GOD'S goals in your life. Accountability is for encouragement not for imprisonment.

I have needed two types of accountability in my life, personal and ministry. Personal accountability began for me when I got into a small group that committed to meet for two

years and hold each other accountable for the basic disciplines in our lives. It took two years, but in the end I had established a consistent time with God in study, worship, prayer, scripture memory, journaling as well as a consistent effort to reach out to lost people. Every week, we asked how each other was doing and often would share what we found helpful in the process. Through this time there was a lot of times where I was uncomfortable, but I knew these people loved me and were pulling for me. This personal accountability changed my life forever.

I have found ministry accountability is best accomplished through teamwork at Florida Church of God Ministries and with the Board of Elders. Max Strother is often the one on our team who makes me uncomfortable because he pushes me in areas that I need to be pushed. This past December was very difficult for me because Max kept the pressure on me to meet some deadlines that to be honest, I was too tired to meet. However, through his prodding and encouragement, I did keep going until I got done what needed to be done.

Our Elders clearly serve this role in my life. Every year we spend most of a day discussing the goals that I develop with the staff for the coming year. Then for the remainder of the year, they look at these goals as the mechanisms by which they can help me stay focused and productive. They do not tell me HOW to accomplish the goals. However, every meeting (once per quarter) we discuss how I am doing on the goals. They also see themselves as resources to help me when I am in pain (just like the lady in that race). I do not feel that they are putting pressure on me as much as I feel that are keeping me focused and helping me be more productive than I would otherwise be.

So whom do you have in your life that pushes you to that threshold of pain...to the point of being uncomfortable? Who is there to make you better than you would be without them? Who on your team loves you enough to help you through the pain when it becomes unbearable?

In life and ministry we need to learn to run with discomfort, but avoid pain as it can potentially cause long-term damage. Let me encourage you to find a team that can come beside you and intervene when you are in pain, and also provide encouragement (yes, discomfort) to be more effective for the Kingdom of God.