

Running in Place vs. Running the Race

I realize that the passing years and a desire for carbs of all kinds have made me look like I know very little about exercise.

However, there have been times in my life when I was in really good shape. In fact, I can remember as a 5th grade student at Christ the King Lutheran School asking my mom and dad for a jump rope so I could get ready for basketball practice.

That was the beginning.

Through high school, it was all about jump ropes, push ups, jumping jacks, lunges, a little weight lifting and running in place. Running in place was kind of the strangest part of my whole routine. Fast, slow, knees high and knees low. Working up a good sweat, I felt pretty good about my exercise. Young and active, I didn't have much of a problem keeping weight down.

Then came college. I discovered weight lifting to the extreme! Lifting with the football team--no I didn't play--was a blast. It took awhile to get accepted by them but once I was they taught me a lot about how to get stronger. Two vital things they made sure I knew about was stretching and running. Building up strength required both of those to be physically healthy. I learned to stretch in ways I never would have thought about, and running the way they wanted required getting on the road.

Farmland in eastern Nebraska is filled with rolling hills. Beautiful throughout the seasons and great for building up endurance and increasing aerobic health. I fell in love with running those hills. Stretching, lifting and two to four miles a day of hill work and I was in great shape. Running those hills was very different from the running in place I did in grade school and high school. The things I would see, the relationships that were built and the benefit to my body was incredible.

Running in place was a moderate exercise that had some benefits beyond the exercise. The best part was that if things got rough, I could always just quit and walk upstairs to take a shower. Running the hills always required finishing the journey.

Running one to two miles straight away from school offered the opportunity to walk back but I always had to get back. However, if I walked back I might miss dinner...and I just didn't want that to happen so I kept running.

There have been times in my life when "running in place" would best describe my walk with the Lord. Many years of just staying the same. Making my Confirmation, I thought I had arrived. Graduating from Lutheran West, Detroit, I thought I knew a lot. Graduating from Concordia as a theology major, I thought I knew it all...The truth is, I knew very little. 26 years later, I know a lot more but still very little. God has so much more to teach me.

Maybe you feel the same way...at least I believe you could. In our spiritual life, God's desire is for us to do "road work" and not to run in place. Salvation comes in an instant--we call that justification--but sanctification or becoming conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) takes a life time and will only be complete when we receive our new bodies in heaven and are completely free from sin.



Let's run the race together. 25 to 35 of us have seen Pastor Jim's special presentations and they have been great! 15 more of us are now familiar with the whole Bible narrative. There are several opportunities to learn more about spiritual matters, in this newsletter, that go beyond Sunday morning. Let's get together and "do road work." It is a beautiful view. It is better for us. There is more of God for us to learn than we can fit into a lifetime, let alone Sunday Sermons...Let's just do it!

See you on the road...

Michael <+