

# Weekly Lift #22

8<sup>th</sup> September, 2020.

A little extra bible in your week



## Running a marathon

Running a marathon isn't easy. At least that's what I'm told. I've never run a marathon! I've run half a marathon, but I can't boast about that – it nearly killed me! It took SO long to recover. I can't begin to imagine what it takes to run a marathon of 42.2 kilometres. Or an ultra marathon – 50 kilometres, or 100 kilometres, or the big one – 160 kilometres – imagine that! The world record for running a 160 kilometre marathon is about 11 ½ hours. Ouch. I couldn't even walk for that long!

Paul makes some great points for those thinking about running that sort of distance – from 1 Corinthians 9:24-27...

24Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Point 1 – only one gets the prize.

Point 2 – strict training is required.

Point 3 – there is a point to the way you run – it's not aimless.

Of course he's not trying to teach us about running. He's using running to illustrate what faith is like for the Christian. It's a race. A long race. It requires training. Concentration. Planning. Purpose.

Every day our faith needs exercise and training, because we are running a race that lasts our whole life. And we want to win. Thankfully, unlike a competition, there is more than one winner. But Paul says: Run like you want to win! In other words, run your best. Train hard and be intentional with your faith life.

No ordinary person wakes up in the morning and says: "I'm going to run 40 kilometres". If they do, they may find themselves injured for the next 6 months. Because long distance running requires training, thoughtfulness, intention and purpose.

At this time in our lives together, it feels more than ever like a marathon. But it's like a marathon where we can't see the finish line. Every day brings new challenges and we

need to plan ahead. We need to train. We need to go at a good pace. Not too fast. Not too slow.

Of course, as Paul argues in the rest of this chapter, you can be a Christian by committing your life to Jesus and then sit back and do nothing. But you're setting yourself up for failure. You're likely to face greater struggles and you may be more likely to just give up altogether because you're not prepared. The Christian is called on to take their faith seriously and prepare for the marathon of life. We are encouraged to train with God's word and in prayer. We are encouraged to prepare for the hills we will need to climb tomorrow.

An athlete knows that physical fitness doesn't happen by sitting around doing nothing and eating lots of chips. (If only!) As Christians, Paul is encouraging us that being strong in your faith won't happen if we sit on our hands doing nothing. But if we use those hands to pick up the Bible, and we use those hands to pray to our Father in heaven, we will find that we not only gain strength, but also endurance for the challenges ahead.

Paul also makes a 4<sup>th</sup>, and very important, point: There is a prize. But it's not a crown, or a medal or a trophy like an athlete might receive. It's the crown of eternal life. In other words, it is a prize that lasts forever!

And God is our personal trainer. His Holy Spirit is working in us each day to help us read his word and pray. He is helping us to encourage each other at church and in Bible studies. He is present always. He is not on the sideline cheering us on, but He is *in* us, and He is *with* us each moment of our life. He is in the life of every believer, calling us to train, to prepare, and to be thoughtful about our faith, so we can be ready each day to run the marathon of life before us.

This is not a sprint. It is a marathon. What can you do today to prepare your faith for tomorrow? Do you need help? Why not let someone know. Because we are all in this race together.

### **Let's pray.**

Heavenly Father, thank you for being with us each day. Thank you for equipping us with all we need to run this marathon of life. Help us in strengthening our faith each day. Help us to gain strength from your Word, from prayer, and from one another. Remind us each day of the importance of not only looking after our own faith, but caring for the faith of those around us. Amen.

God bless.

Bruce Stanley

[www.stphils.org.au](http://www.stphils.org.au)

## Helpful links for your spiritual marathon:

### **Weekly lifts in Chinese now available:**

<http://sc.stphils.org.au/weeklyblog> (simplified – Mandarin)

<http://tc.stphils.org.au/weeklylift> (Traditional - Cantonese)

### **Nehemiah Bible Studies**

Also, the new Bible study guide for the book of Nehemiah can be found here:

<http://stphils.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Nehemiah-Bible-Study-Guide-2020.pdf>

**Missed Church on Sunday?** Catch up on our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/eastwoodanglican>

### **Join our monthly prayer meeting:**

On site in the main church building

**1<sup>st</sup> Monday night of every month. 7:30pm – 8:30pm.**

Songs and prayer. (There is no need to pray out loud).

Also streamed live to our Facebook and YouTube channels.