



### **Finish Strong!**

By Mark Taylor, College/University Representative

Years ago, I ran in a road race in Wheeling, West Virginia. It was the Elby's Distance Race. The race was a 20K distance (12.4 miles). There were a lot of acclaimed runners who entered the race. This would include past Olympians and other world-renown runners. I thought it would be fun to say I competed with incredible runners like this. The racecourse had the rank of one of the toughest courses of its length in the country due to the varied and very steep hills.

I had to set some reasonable goals for this race. It was not realistic to expect me to win or run an average mile of about 4.5 minutes for the race. I decided to make my goal to finish the race. I would submit my application for entrance in the race, and then the training would begin.

#### **Preparation**

It took days and weeks to prepare. I had to keep at the training and preparation. (We used this race as a part of our school's running club's race goals. Running clubs are a good sports activity for small schools.) There was a hill toward the beginning of this race, nicknamed "gut break." It was very steep and long, and it seemed to never end. Many novice runners would end up walking part of the way. I did not look forward to this hill. It takes a lot out of you physically early in the race. I quoted Isaiah 40:31 to myself, and even to others, while running that hill: *"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint"* (NIV).

Toward the end of this race, there is another hill that is very steep. You are at about the 11.5-mile point of the race when you reach this hill. It is a grueling task to complete, but you want to finish. I would attack the hill with the goal of finishing the race. Once you get to the top of the hill, you run another half mile and then you see the finish line about half mile away. I would try to sprint as fast as I could to the

finish line in order to finish strong. It was so rewarding to cross that line and know what you accomplished. *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”* (2 Timothy 4:7, NIV).

Not everyone is going to run in a race. However, everyone needs to finish strong whether it be for courses you are taking in college, your degree, students you are teaching, or other experiences in your personal life. Of course, you want to continue to grow in your Christian faith and finish strong as a servant of the Lord. Following are some scriptures and quotes to encourage you.

### **Scriptures**

*“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run as to get the prize. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we are imperishable. So, I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified”* (1 Corinthians 9:24-27, ESV).

*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ* (Philippians 1:6, ESV).

*“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up”* (Galatians 6:9, ESV).

*“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained”* (Philippians 3:12-16, ESV).

*“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him”* (James 1:12, ESV).

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted”* (Hebrews 12:1-3, ESV).

*“I can do all things through him who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13, ESV).

### **Leadership Quotations**

*“Starting strong is good. Finishing strong is epic.”* – Robin Sharma

*“It’s not where you start – It’s where you finish that counts.”* (“60 Finish Strong Quotes to Help You Go the Distance (2022)”) – Zig Ziglar

“My grandmother always told me how you start is how you finish.” – Bernie Mac

“If you’re brave enough to start, you’re strong enough to finish.” –Gary Ryan Blair

“The perfect ending to any day, race or project is to FINISH STRONG.” – Gary Ryan Blair

“Everything ends; you just have to figure out a way to push to the finish line.” – Jesse Itzler

“Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending.” – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

“What kind of competitor sees the finish line and slows down...always finish strong!” – Gary Ryan Blair

“In soloing – as in other activities – it is far easier to start something than it is to finish it.” – Amelia Earhart

“You didn’t come this far to only come this far. Dig deep, finish strong and make yourself proud!” – Gary Ryan Blair

“You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.” – C.S. Lewis

“Start strong, stay strong, and finish strong by remembering why you started in the first place.” – Ralph Marston

“It’s one thing to have the faith to get started, but it’s another thing to have the fortitude to finish strong.” – Kami Dempsey

“Stopping at third adds no more to the score than striking out. It doesn’t matter how well you start if you fail to finish.” – Billy Sunday

“My schedule is always tight. But I like to have the pressure of having to finish doing something; it gives me an added edge.” – Wynton Marsalis

“Whenever you have taken up work in hand, you must see it to the finish. That is the ultimate secret of success. Never, never, never give up!” – Dada Vaswani

“No one has a problem with the first mile of a journey. Even an infant could do fine for a while. But it isn’t the start that matters. It’s the finish line.” – Julien Smith

“When you have a great and difficult task, something perhaps almost impossible, if you only work a little at a time, every day a little, suddenly the work will finish itself.” – Karen Blixen

“One way or the other you’re going to finish...so why not finish strong and make yourself immensely proud of your performance rather than embarrassed by your lack of it” – Gary Ryan Blair

“If I fail, I try again, and again, and again. If YOU fail, are you going to try again? The human spirit can handle much worse than we realize. It matters HOW you are going to FINISH. Are you going to finish strong?” – Nick Vujicic

“Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.” – Calvin Coolidge

“My legacy doesn’t matter. It isn’t important that I be remembered. It’s important that when I stand before the Lord, He says, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ I want to finish strong.” – James Dobson

As you approach the end of a school year, I trust I have encouraged you to continue working hard and finish strong!

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Sources:

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