

Trying vs. Training

by Steve Gonzales

TAKE5 is . . .
Your five-minute refresher,
a "quick read" for Network members
focusing on spiritual growth, resources,
and the mission of youth ministry.

Published monthly
via fax, email and on the Web by the
National Network of Youth Ministries.
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Calendar

• See You at the Pole

September 24, 2008

www.syatp.com

See You at the Pole is September 24. The theme for 2008 is "Speak, for your servant is listening!" (1 Samuel 3:10).

Get FREE planning materials at syatp.com, or you can purchase resources affordably from the website or by calling 817-HIS PLAN. The office in Fort Worth, Texas is open Monday-Friday from 9-5 (Central).

Call and get videos or other materials NOW for summer events.

Trying isn't enough! You can try all you want. But if you haven't trained, you can't do this!"

My co-worker, Ric, and I were having a conversation after completing the 2008 San Diego Rock 'n' Roll Marathon. We were talking about the things we learned on this incredible journey. I won't weigh you down with everything that happened to me. But this one point stood out for me in my work with young people and in my personal life.

I can try all I want to be a good minister, but it's not enough. I can try all I want to be a good husband, but it's not enough. I can try to be a good dad, but it's not enough. I can try to be a good friend to my high school friends, but it's not enough. Trying in and of itself will always leave us wanting. Our intentions may be great. Our heart might be in the right place. But sometimes, many times, trying just isn't good enough.

So what am I supposed to do? Be trained. Running the marathon will go down as the hardest physical thing that I have ever done. I had read the stories and listened to others tell their story, but nothing compared to doing it myself.

By the time I reached mile 21 (of 26.2 total miles) there were only two things keeping me on my feet: knowing that I had trained for 22 weeks to do this event, and the commitment I had made to see it through, regardless of the pain involved.

In 1 Corinthians 9:19-27, the apostle Paul speaks to the necessity of training and disciplining ourselves in order to be more effective in ministering to others. This is a choice that we all must face.

I recently read a sermon presented by a very well known pastor, in which he describes two schools of thought in regards to discipline and training. One says that all we have to do is trust God and He will do all the work for us. The other says we trust God and step out and

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do our part in becoming the people that He has created us to be.

I believe that in this portion of Scripture, Paul is sharing his journey in making that choice. He chose to make an effort to relate to those he was ministering to. He trained himself to move past what was probably easier to do and do what was more profitable for the gospel.

My encouragement to you and to myself is to be trained in the things of God. In preparing for the marathon, I remember laying in bed thinking that for 22 weeks, I had listened to a man tell me what to do to prepare for this race. If he told me to run 10 miles, I ran 10 miles. If he told me to rest, I rested. When he told me to run 21 miles, I ran them. And on June 1, 2008 I crossed the finish line in San Diego.

After the race, I remember praying and asking the Lord to help me listen to Him in the same way I had listened to my coach. Jesus has so much more for you and me than a medal that will tarnish someday. He has an abundant life that He wants us to live, and He has laid out a plan for us to complete that race – if we will just allow Him to train us.

The second thing that helped me cross the finish line was the commitment I had made to myself and the people who supported me. They cheered for me, they modeled endurance for me, and helped me believe that I could finish this race.

In Hebrews 12:1, it says that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who are cheering us on. It tells us to lay aside the things that weigh us down and run the race that is before us with patience. If the marathon is anything, it's a whole lot

continued on next page ▶



Trying vs. Training (continued)

of patience. Unless you're a world-class Kenyan athlete, you won't run it like a sprint.

I remember thinking of Robin, one of my co-workers, who once completed a marathon in extreme heat, with a fractured leg. I told myself that if Robin can finish, so can I. During the marathon, I received a call from my son at mile 21; he encouraged me to finish my race. I made a commitment to them and myself to go the distance.

I don't speak as one who has obtained the prize – as Paul says – but as one who has put away the past and focused my eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of my faith. I ask Him to create in me a clean heart and to order my steps, so that I will walk worthy of my calling.

I pray that as you run your own marathon, whether literally or spiritually, you too will seek out the training you need to complete this race, and maybe join me in revisiting our past commitments and make them secure.



We want your feedback on TAKE 5.
Send your comments to take5@youthworkers.net
or fax to (858) 451-6900.

To try is great – but it's not enough. Get the training you need to be a great mom or dad. Get the training you need to be an awesome minister of the gospel. Get the training you need to be an amazing ministry networker in your community.

When it's all said and done, I pray that you will rejoice as you cross the finish line and walk into the arms of the One who loves you more than you could ever imagine. When you hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord," the pain will be forgotten and your joy will be complete.

Hebrews 12:1b says, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Let's train to finish the race with our heads held high. 🏃



Steve Gonzales directs MentorYouth.com for the More Mentors for Youth Campaign. He also leads an outreach ministry working with junior and senior high youth in San Diego County known as Dream Weavers. Steve is a trainer and speaker for many schools and youth programs working with at-risk youth. He has been ministering with inner city youth and families since 1983. He has been married to his high school girlfriend for 30 years and has three adult children.