

Step by Step

Week 4 (5)

You have to step to run too.

We are going to look at some fast stepping. We often forget when we talk about following and stepping that sometimes it needs to be done at speed. Following is not always a slow amble or a peaceful meander with discussion and morning tea afterwards.

Following is sometimes fast and furious, hard work and under pressure.

When we look at running as a concept it is more than quick walking. It does stuff to us. Sure, we get places quicker, but stepping quickly has consequences. It raises our heart rate, makes us sweat, takes more oxygen from our body and afterward, sometimes we get sore or dehydrated or even exhausted.

Years ago I coached triathletes and runners. I coached an old bloke who had retired and wanted something to do with his spare time, yeh he took up triathlons. He shuffled more than ran. He used to say "Running at this age is more a state of mind than a fact!!" He raced in races up to ½ ironman 2 k swim, 90 k bike ride and 21k run. His other spare time thing was golf. He was 75 when I coached him.

What has that got to do with us following Jesus?

Well running makes its presence felt in the bible and we will look at a few verses today. Here's the first one.

1. Psa 119:32 I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!

I love this verse. "I will run in the way of your commandments"

That means if we look at the running concept. We go quickly after God's commandments. What just the 10, no when the old testament says commandments it refers to the full council of God as they knew it. So to run after God's commandments is to run after all His will.

Taking the concept a bit further. That has physical consequences. We get fitter the more we chase after God. Spiritually fitter, that means we can do more for Him. One thing that isn't often mentioned in the following Jesus concepts are that God prepares us for what is next in our lives. We will be talking more about this over the next six weeks when we are talking about Discipleship.

Question: Are we running after God, are we putting ourselves under pressure to follow Him quickly?

Look at this next one:

2. Pro 4:11 I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.

Pro 4:12 When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.

Pro 4:13 Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

Notice that these verses in proverbs are all linked. The proverbial statements are not just one line. Too often when we read proverbs we take each verse in isolation and don't see the continuity. But here we have proverbs supporting each other.

Again it is about gleaning God's knowledge and wisdom but notice v 12

Pro 4:12 When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.

It is about walking and running. While sometimes following Jesus is a run or maybe a jog, other times it is an amble. Following Jesus has different speeds. Following Jesus has seasons. Seasons of development, seasons of maintenance, seasons of evangelism. Sometimes the hard thing is to work out what season we are in. It's like Bathurst weather at the moment. What season is it?

Maybe that's the thing about following, Follow at the speed Jesus is going. If he picks up the speed, do the same, if He runs, follow that speed. It is following His direction AND speed.

One more passage.

3. 1Co 9:23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

1Co 9:24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.

1Co 9:25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

1Co 9:26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.

1Co 9:27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

A couple of things here.

a. 1Co 9:23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

When you run, it is for the sake of the good news about Jesus. That is what the running is all about.

b. So run that you may obtain it.

So often we as churches are in maintenance mode. We don't think about winning, we think about surviving. This is biblical – run to win!! Follow Jesus in a way that

has impact, that see's results, that spreads His story. With the whole virus thing at the moment we are really in a holding pattern. We need to stop that – we need to be using the whole experience to further Jesus, grow the kingdom and develop people. So let's stop maintaining and start going. After all the great commission doesn't say "Maintain the church until things get better" It says "Go and do it." Stop feeling sorry for ourselves, stop complaining about our rights, stop whining and do what God calls us to. Share Jesus. Notice the next bit.

c. 1Co 9:25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

What's our aim? Do we aim to win but aim to win the unseen. By that I mean do we aim to win the spiritual side of things rather than the success or visible stuff? You know what I mean by that? Sometimes we think that we have to be seen to be good Christians or a good church when really the important stuff is the not seen stuff – the eternal stuff. More about that in a few weeks.

d. 1Co 9:26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.

1Co 9:27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

This is interesting isn't it. I don't run aimlessly or box or train or learn or help or whatever we do for the kingdom of God. I do things deliberately, with process, with strategy. Notice it says I discipline my body and keep it under control.

There is a real sense of deliberateness. A real sense of purpose. Yep. Is that our story, is that our life? If not, well it's time to go into training – training for the good news of Jesus.

The last part of that verse is tricky.

lest after preaching to others I myself should be

disqualified.

It is interesting and the question arises: Can I lose my faith? Well, be careful making that assumption from this passage, as I don't think that it is about that. That is a whole sermon or two of its own so we'll leave that where it is. It is a metaphor and is about winning and losing. Or finishing in an appropriate way. Sometimes our effort gets disqualified because it hasn't been much of an effort. Sometimes our efforts don't come up to scratch - this passage is about effort integrity.

It is about preparing ourselves for the best possible results for the kingdom.

To be practical here; How do we prepare ourselves, How do we run? How do we get fit enough to minister?

Hey, in reality, we know most of the answers here. Read Scripture, not just read but devote ourselves to understanding it. THEN apply it to our lives. If we can't work out how that works - spend time evaluating and thinking it through.

I like the analogy of being fit for ministry, Being reading to race or ready to run. Prepare ourselves to do God's ministry.

So, we need to identify what do I need to be ready for? What am I involved in? What should I be involved in? How can I get better at it?

Then run at it. Prepare with gusto. Remember::::::

1Co 9:23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

This is not about getting better at things for my benefit but for the benefit of the sharing of the Jesus message to people.

Ok there is some food for thought. We'll look further into Discipleship starting next week.