

THE
RUNNER'S
DEVOTIONAL

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INSPIRATION AND MOTIVATION FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY . . .
ON AND OFF THE ROAD

DANA NIESLUCHOWSKI | DAVE VEERMAN



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*The Runner's Devotional: Inspiration and Motivation for Life's Journey . . .
On and Off the Road*

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DEDICATION

To Kara . . .
Loving daughter
Loyal sister
amazing wife and mother
woman of God.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DANA NIESLUCHOWSKI

Dana competed in soccer, swimming, basketball, volleyball, baseball, softball, and more. She loves all sports and is an avid runner, having successfully competed in several races, including a triathlon and a marathon. Dana received her B.S. degree in kinesiology from Wheaton College and her M.A. in exercise physiology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. At the Livingstone Corporation (a company that partners with Christian publishers to produce Bibles, books, Bible studies, curricula, and other resources), Dana managed and contributed to many resources, including the *Legacy Bible*, *Lose It for Life*, and *iStand—the Power of Courageous Choices*. Recently, she and her dad wrote the *Sports Trivia Devotional*. Dana, her husband, Walter, and young son, Edmund, live in Oswego, Illinois.

DAVE VEERMAN

Dave played high school basketball and football and college football. Since then, he has finished six marathons. A graduate of Wheaton College (B.A.) and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (M.Div.), Dave has written sixty-five books, including *Parenting Passages*, *How to Apply the Bible*, *Letting Them Go*, *One Year Through the Bible*, and *If I Knew Then What I Know Now*. He also served as a senior editor of the *Life*

Application Study Bible and *Student's Life Application Study Bible*. The father of two athletic daughters (Dana and Kara) and a founding partner of the Livingstone Corporation, Dave and his wife, Gail, live in Naperville, Illinois.

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INTRODUCTION

Runners begin running for a variety of reasons. Many eventually discover that running can be a spiritual experience: a time to pray, observe God's handiwork, think, and learn. Thus, running can serve as an ideal metaphor for spiritual truths. Fittingly, the New Testament includes several references to faith as a race (1 Corinthians 9:24; Galatians 2:2, 5:7; Philippians 2:16, 3:14; 2 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 12:1).

The purpose of this book is to help anyone, especially runners, deepen their relationship with God. The contents progress from purpose and goals through workouts and then into the race itself—a marathon—with each two weeks highlighting a significant aspect of that journey.

We've written a year's worth of devotionals—fifty-two weeks. And we've divided each week into several sections, all centered on the theme for that week. We've also included a running log for each week. This is a place for you to record time, distance, weather, and notes for five days of runs.

You may want to read one week at one sitting, or you may want to take your time and spend a few days on one devotional. If you would rather keep a daily schedule, here's a suggestion for how to divide each week:

- Monday—Read the narrative at the beginning that introduces the running theme and the Bible passage.

- Tuesday—Read the section titled “The Runner.”
- Wednesday—Read these sections: “The Race” and “The Result.”
- Thursday—Read “My Story.”
- Friday—Answer the questions under “Think It Through.”
- Weekend—Take time to fill in the “Journal” page, reflecting back on the week and what you’ve learned and applied. Read “On Running.”

We pray that through this experience you will run in step with your Savior and finish well.

Dana and Dave

THE STARTING LINE

It is the day of the marathon, and what a fantastic group of people has shown up! I give thanks to God for each one and remember Philippians 4:13—“I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.” I praise God for this glorious opportunity. I have five newbies ready to run 26.2 miles, and they are relying on me to get them to the finish line. I know they really do not need me in order to finish; they just need to be encouraged. I share with them something I always think about, that each runner brings a different story to the starting line and that I have 26.2 miles to learn another runner’s story and make new friends along the way.

We are five minutes from the start. . . .

I say, “In five minutes you are going to ask your body to endure 26.2 miles, and each of you has a personal goal and one common goal, to finish your first marathon. Remember that you have put in an incredible amount of training miles and time. Do not lose sight of how you successfully got to the starting line. Run with pride. You will be a different runner when you finish, stronger and wiser to take on any challenges life brings your way. So congratulations, and know I am incredibly proud of you!” We pray together for a great day, an injury-free run, and a happy finish.

Then off we go!

So fun, such amazing energy, and a journey that holds challenges all the way to the finish line. A very good day.

I pray that they will continue to run happily and reflect fondly on all the goals that were achieved during their marathon and the season of training, too. I pray they will remember that what we bring to the starting line or to others at a race is more important than just running our fastest time. We bring a story, joy, encouragement, and a little hope!

Caroline

DETERMINE YOUR PURPOSE

In order to reach your goal at anything in life, you need to know your purpose. Without a purpose, you will lack focus and are destined to run aimlessly. You can go for a run one day, but without having a reason for running (staying fit, losing weight, etc.), the chances are slim that you will continue for more than a couple of days. Your purpose is what will keep you going.

Paul encourages Timothy, his ministry protégé, to remember his purpose—to glorify God and serve Jesus Christ, and in doing this, to be an example to other believers even as a young pastor. In order for Timothy to develop into a good servant, he must grow spiritually, teach others the truths of the gospel message, and model a life of faith and purity. That would be his race.

Train yourself to be godly. “Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.” This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it. This is why we work hard

*and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God,
who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers.*

(1 TIMOTHY 4:7-10)

The Runner

My doctor's appointment was supposed to be a normal physical exam. I felt great and had no concerns. Sure, I was a little out of shape since my college football days, and my wife had mentioned that I was putting on some weight. But no big deal; I'm just getting old, right?

Then the doctor came in and gave me news that rocked my world and changed my life. "I just did a quick read of your blood results. It shows that you have developed type 2 diabetes," he calmly said.

"What?" I replied. "But I feel great! I'm not tired. . . . Well, I get a little bit winded going up the stairs, but who doesn't? Are you sure?"

"Yep, I'm sure. You are going to have to make some big changes to your lifestyle—starting with exercising, eating better, and losing some weight. Did you know that you have gained twenty pounds since I saw you last year?"

I barely heard the instructions as the nurse told me how to take my blood sugar levels, how to trace them, and what I needed to get started. (Thank goodness she gave me a pamphlet.) I kept thinking, *How can this happen to me? I've always been the athlete and in great shape. What went wrong?* I prayed, *Lord, I don't have to have diabetes, do I? I want to see Darcy and Evan finish high school, graduate from college, get married, and have their own families. And what about Pamela? I need to be there for her. To support her and love her. To help her raise our children.*

I needed to make some changes and fast. So together Pamela and I developed a new eating plan. But the toughest part was starting to exercise. I hadn't tied my laces and stepped out to do any aerobic activity in years. Could I do it? Would I hate it? It didn't matter. I had to get healthy. I knew that running is a good way to lose weight quickly . . . and it is free. I made the decision: I was going to run. The next day

I got up early, put on my shoes, and headed out for my first run since college fifteen years earlier.

The Race

Everyone starts running for a reason. For some it could be a sport that requires them to run a mile at a certain pace. Others receive news from a doctor that underscores their need to exercise. Or maybe a father's new baby girl makes him want to live a healthy life so he can watch her grow up. No matter what your reason, your purpose, at some point you decide to run.

In the same way, as Paul points out, we need to remember our purpose and choose to grow in our faith in God. The message of faith must reach into the heart.

Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

(EPHESIANS 3:17-19)

Just watching others run won't change your fitness level; you have to do it. In the same way, to become spiritually fit, you must make a decision. And in this way you can "be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

The Result

To be a better runner and have more effective workouts, you need to push your body, challenge yourself, and train effectively. But more

important than having a good workout is being healthy spiritually—strengthening your relationship with God and persevering in your faith. Do you spend more time focusing on your running routine than on your spiritual practices? Are you using your God-given abilities to minister to others and help them grow in their faith, or do you spend most of your time *thinking* about Christ instead of *being* Christ to those around you?

Remember your spiritual purpose. As you strengthen your legs, increase your breath capacity and develop a good stride for running. Remember that you are also training for godliness in your spiritual race.

My Story

I'm not saying I was drifting through life, but I definitely wasn't living with purpose. In just about every area, I would do what I thought was best for the situation and for me—relationships, career, personal finances, diet, running, and even my faith. And I thought I was doing okay for a twenty-five-year-old. I had plenty of friends and a good job, and I was in good health. But then one Sunday the sermon got me thinking about my purpose for life, why I was on this earth, what I was living for. The pastor preached on 1 Corinthians 10, and highlighting verse 31, he said that the main purpose for all of God's creations should be to glorify him. Paul wrote, "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

"All for the glory of God"—that includes every aspect of my life. So I asked God to help me do that, and ever since I've tried to remember my purpose. Now at meals, on the job, in the gym, at church, and everywhere else, I consider how I can glorify God through this. I'm not always sure of the answer, but at least I'm asking the right question. Now I live with purpose.

Brian

Think It Through

1. What can someone do to glorify God in a relationship? How about in a marriage and family? What about on the job?
2. How can you, like Timothy, be an “example to all believers”?
3. What’s your ultimate purpose for running?
4. What can you do to run “for the glory of God”?

On Running

What are the differences between aerobic and anaerobic activities?

The biggest difference between aerobic and anaerobic activities is how the body supplies energy for the action. Simply put, aerobic = oxygen, and anaerobic = without oxygen; however, it is much more complex than that. Our muscles have a certain amount of ready-to-use carbohydrates in the blood system. Anaerobic activities (weight lifting, activities that take less than one minute, sprints, etc.) quickly use that stored energy. Aerobic activities are longer and require more than just the quick supply in the muscles. Because the body constantly needs energy, more oxygen is needed to create the energy, thus developing the heart and lungs.

JOURNAL

RUNNING LOG

	TIME	DISTANCE	WEATHER	NOTES
DAY 1				
DAY 2				
DAY 3				
DAY 4				
DAY 5				