

Faced with the decision to stop and enjoy the awesome view of the peaceful lake and people enjoying the beginning of their summer weekend, or pushing myself to run the second half of this 5k, I recalled an article I read in a fitness magazine. The featured person was an age 60 plus marathon runner. Her point was simple: she was successful because she worried about only one thing, keeping her own pace. She was never distracted by the slower or faster runners, she just kept going at her pace. So, I thought, I can and should keep going, and I can do this, if I keep this pace.

Off I went, leaving the scenery behind, and heading on the return half of the trip, thinking "pace, pace, pace." Now, you need to know, my pace is nothing you will see featured on the Fitness Channel. My ideal pace is somewhere between 11-12 minutes per mile, which is quite slow in the world of joggers. As I soon realized! This was a holiday for lots of people, so I was not alone on this road. I was going along pretty well when this woman came buzzing past me. Now my ego was challenged! Who does she think she is, trying to show me up? I was tempted to push my pace and catch her, but I resisted. A few tenths of a mile later she turned around, so I felt justified. My pace was slower, but my distance would be better! Being quite proud of myself, I kept going and going. And then, out of nowhere, ZOOM! Another woman, younger than I, came past in a flash...her ponytail bobbing past and then ahead of me. She looked back over her left shoulder at me, smiling...what was that smile...sarcastic? Pity? Was she laughing? At me? And ZOOM, ZOOM, the ponytail bobbed off into the distance. "Pace, Bill, keep your pace." "Only a half mile to go now, don't try to show you can run like a 30 year old now, you won't finish", my smart half said. "But, I can't let her think this is as fast as I can run. I can't let her show me up like that!", my ego-side replied. Speed or pace? What should I do?

As you enter into your spiritual journey this next week, think about your own pace. Think about your own position in the "race" to find God's deeper presence. Some of you reading this are already far along in your journey, experienced "runners" who can keep a pretty good pace. Some of you reading this are fairly new to the idea of journeying with God as your companion on the way. And some of you are right in the middle of the pack. Know where you are, and keep your own pace. Don't worry that someone else might be a more spiritually mature person...we all, and this includes me, have a long way to go. We all have so much to learn about what it means to follow Jesus Christ from the Cross and into the Community. I encourage you to find a companion along the way. Find a small group, or if you don't have a church home, start looking for one. Find a community of pilgrims who will help you keep your pace, so that you will be able to stay the course, reach your destination, and receive the prize.

This Sabbath Day, think: Pace, pace, pace.

Shalom,

Bill Te Winkle