

There I was, coming down the hill at a pretty good clip, for me anyway. Feeling pretty much like this could in fact be the day that I make that first 5k run of the season. And since I had decided that "today is the day" it wasn't really all that hard to decide which path to follow. I glanced right toward the shorter, daily route, but then concluded, "I can do this" and I went through the intersection heading north, set now to run the full course. I was feeling pretty good about myself. I made a decision to do something; I got through the first big "turning back" point, and I was on the way...until. Boy, there is always an "until" or a "but" or an "on the other hand". You see, about 200 yards after the intersection comes a hill. Not a steep hill, but a long sloped grade. And it is a sneaky hill. You think you see the top of it, but then when you get there, you see you have another whole section to go. The only way I can do a hill like that is to slow down. Way down. If you saw me climb a hill like that you would ask yourself, "what is the matter with that man that he runs so oddly?" But being on the hill is yet another decision point...stop, walk...or keep on running, as best I can.

I was talking to a friend about running. She told me that she had a simple rule that made her runs much easier: "I don't do hills. I will run down a hill, but never up a hill. That's when I walk." I have been thinking about that remark since my July 3 run. Maybe there is much wisdom in that approach. She gets to the end of her course. It just takes a little more time. And if running up a hill would cause her to stop altogether, well then it certainly is better to walk, to just keep on walking.

Where are you in your spiritual journey this Sabbath day? Have you made a decision to set out on a path to change...saying this is the day...and are you now heading down the path to make that decision a reality? You will come to a hill. The path to change is full of them. Sometimes the hill is steep (as we will find out in a later part of this story) and sometimes the hill before you is long. Sneaky long. It seems you have three choices: 1. stop, turn around and go back; 2. keep on running, even if you slow down; 3. start walking until you get to the top. I encourage you to choose options 2 or 3. Here's the thing: we are all different. Some of us are wired so that we are compelled to keep on running, even if it hardly looks like a run at all. Some of us have the wisdom to just start walking up the hills. Either option gets you to the top.

Being a disciple of Jesus is not an easy calling. The journey to be more like Jesus every day has lots of hills along the way. Our human nature is to stop walking the path. The attractions the world offers off the spiritual path look mighty good. It is very easy to ask ourselves, why am I doing this? What difference does it make if I am a disciple of Jesus, if I seek to be faithful to the call of God upon my life? As you prepare for a new week in your journey, I encourage you to prepare your mind and heart to keep moving forward, to stay on the path to becoming a disciple of Christ. To be a disciple means to practice "discipline" in living. So, this week, discipline yourself to "keep on keeping on" as you journey toward your spiritual goals. Keep on running (or walking) up that long hill.... As we will see next week, discipline has its rewards!

Shalom,
Bill TeWinkle