

KEEP MOVING! KEEP WINNING!!!

Lessons from my 5K Run

On Saturday, November 6, I joined the IC School “Running with the Angels” 5K Fun Run. It was a wonderful, heavenly and angelic run with our “angels.” When I was in Nigeria, I would often do a 30-minute run at least thrice in a week, especially early in the morning. It would get me tuned-up and ready to face the tasks of the day. However, since my arrival in the US, I haven’t had the opportunity to run due to some circumstances. Therefore, the 5K run was a refreshing experience for me. During and after the run, I had cause to reflect on the activity and draw up some lessons which may be worth sharing. Enjoy!

1. **Life is like a race.** There are some similarities with daily life experience and our 5K run. Equally, our Christian experience is comparable to running a race, a race to meet God and a race to heaven. The Bible speaks of this when St Paul said; “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7). During the 5K run some were fast, some were slow and others were in between. But the connecting line is that all participants were moving. This is so with life. Some are flying, some are running, some are walking and even some are crawling. Whether you fly, run, walk or crawl, just keep moving. There are no losers. Life is not a competition. As long as you are moving, you are winning.
2. **Don’t compare yourself with others.** Move at your own pace. Someone once said that “imitation is limitation.” At some point during the 5K Run, when someone zoomed past me I was tempted to increase my pace. At other times, when I passed a person or a group of people, I was equally drawn to reduce my pace. But the key is not to fall victim to comparison. Most of life situations can be avoided when we understand that each and everyone of us is unique. Therefore, do not compare yourself to others. Move at your own pace. It is better to fail while being original than to succeed while copying another person. “No one ever became great by imitation. Imitation is limitation. Do not be a copy of something. Make your own impression.”
3. **Don’t give up. Don’t quit.** At some point in the 5K Run, I met some kids along the way who told me that they were tired and wanted to turn back. However, I encouraged them to continue. Life sometimes presents numerous challenges and most often, we want to take the easy way out: quit. But that should not be our attitude to life; when life gets tough, you too should get tougher. As Schuller said: “Tough times don’t last but tough people do.” And

what did Jesus say about perseverance? “But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matt. 24:13). Therefore don’t give up, don’t quit. Hang in there!

4. **Take some rest.** During the 5K, there were water breaks on the road. This reminds us of the need to have some rest in the journey of life. In the Gospel of Mark 6: 28 – 30, when the disciples came back from preaching and the work of evangelization, Jesus welcomed them and instructed as follows: “Come aside to a quiet place by yourself and rest.” Rest is very important in our daily life. It helps us to grow spiritually, mentally, psychologically and otherwise. When we rest, we are able to seek amendments for where we made errors, ask for pardon when we derail, renew strength when we are tired, and think of new strategies towards our work and our life. And what other way is best to rest except to go to him who invites when he said: “Come to me all you who labor and are overburdened and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). Remember, “those who wait in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

5. **The ‘Nasty’, the ‘Nice’.** On the route of the 5K, I took notice of the attitude of some people we had ‘encounters’ with, particularly drivers. I will categorize them into ‘The Nice’ and ‘The Nasty’ (not too nice). Some of the drivers would slow down and give us the right of way. Some would even go further to offer some encouraging gestures, like a hi or a thumbs up. However, there were a few who didn’t give a damn! They simply zoomed past our route and didn’t bother to slow down or stop, much less encourage the runners. Well, some people we encounter in life will give us the broadest smile while others don’t even grin at us. Whatever the reactions of people we encounter, it is not about us – it is about them. We meet with all kinds of stuff in life but remember, it is not what happens to you that matters but how you react to it. As someone says, “it is not the water around the ship that sinks it, it the water that get into the ship”. While you may not be able to control all that happens to you, the actions of people, etc, you can control how you react to them.

6. **Never too old, never too young.** Among the participants were different age groups ranging from the very young to well, the, ‘a bit old.’ The mix of different age groups was a reminder that it is never too late to try something. Don’t let anything stop you. And by the way, remember that God told Joshua when he was thinking of retirement; “You are growing old, and much land remains to be conquered” (Joshua 13:1). This is a very important point to

consider, and especially as we are being called upon to offer our Time, Talent and Treasure to God, the service of the church and the good of our neighbor.

7. **Don't limit yourself.** You never know what you can do until you start trying. Rings a bell about time, talent and treasure! At the beginning, I was doubtful if I could run the miles because it's been a long time since I have done so. But guess what? I did. You too can do it. Just begin!
8. **Our roads are safe.** Something I kept pondering about during the course of the 5K is the relative safety and security we enjoy in this country. It is something we should be thankful to God about and not take it for granted. Our kids could participate in the Run without much fear of being attacked or harmed due to insecurity. That made me think about kids in some parts of the world unable to go school or to run on the streets because of fear for their safety. As Christians, we are obliged to remember such people. As we pray for them let us equally work for a safer world. No one is safe until all are safe.
9. **Take others along.** The sight of a nursing mum carrying her baby along in a trolley was the highlight of the day for me. It makes us question how often we take others along. Going with others may delay our movement but the delay will be compensated by the great joy we experience when others are happy because of us. The Christian journey is a journey with the other. Let us devise means to encourage others when they feel weak, lonely and abandoned. Remember that a candle does not lose its light by lighting others. And Jesus said: "Even so, let your light shine before others; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16).

In conclusion, the 5K was a great experience for me. Did I feel tired after the race? Sure I did. I equally felt sore for a day or two but I will gladly participate in another one. Or even in a marathon, who knows? After all, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). As we participate in earthly races, let us not forget the heavenly which is the ultimate goal of every Christian. As the theme for the '5K Running with the Angels' says: "Let us with perseverance keep running the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1)