



A MATTER OF FAITH

by Joel Lawler
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I have recently taken up running. I used to force myself to run every now and then to get a good cardio workout in. I am now trying to run 3 to 5 times a week. On the weekends, I have challenged myself with distances that I could have never imagined myself doing. This past weekend, I completed 13 miles. That is by far the furthest I have ever run. It feels good to push the boundaries of what I believe possible for myself.

I have a close friend who runs marathons. My 13 miles is not even half of what he does. It would be easy to get discouraged by this fact. The thing is that I cannot look at what some-

one else does and measure myself by it. His abilities are different than mine.

I have seen the guys who win marathons. They are usually very lean and tall. It is absolutely amazing how far and how fast these guys

The Standard

can run. My friend's ability is not even close to the person who ends up winning the event. It would be discouraging for him to compare himself to these people. He goes into the event wanting to better his time from his last event. He is competing only against

himself.

I was channel surfing when I came across a broadcast that was covering a triathlon. A triathlon is a multi-sport endurance race that consists of swimming, cycling, and running in succession over various distances. The one I was watching was the Hawaiian Ironman Triathlon. It included a 2.4 mile swim, a 112 mile bike ride, and a 26 mile run. The broadcasters did the usual coverage of the women and men who were the favorites to win the race. They then started covering another participant. He had absolutely zero chance of completing all three events faster than the other contestants.

He had prosthetic legs. In technical terms, he could never win. By showing up and completing each course he, to me, was the greatest winner. The challenge was much greater for him. There was no comparison in the effort and determina-

tion that it would take him to get to the finish line.

We have all been given different courses to run. We have also been given different abilities to run the course that is front of us. We all start at different places and none of us know exactly how far we have to run. Our course length is completely up to God.

When Jesus was asked what the standard for winning was, he said "Be Perfect, as Your Father In Heaven is Perfect." If we are going to look for someone to compare ourselves to, Jesus gave us direction. The obvious problem is that the bar is way too high. Each and every one of us is flawed. We have all fallen. We have all made mistakes. We have all rebelled against God. We are not perfect and we have no hope of ever being perfect.

Comparing ourselves to others when the standard is perfection is really absurd. You might be able to jump 30 inches in the air. I might

be able to jump 32. If the standard is 100 feet, my additional 2 inches falls incredibly short of what is called for. I am nowhere close. To boast that I am 2 inches closer while still being 1168 inches short is at

best delusional. My perfection in comparison to God's is far shorter than 1168 inches.

Our race is set by God. He is the only one we need to look to for a gauge as to how we are running it.

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