



# Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

True confession: I missed church yesterday. Just couldn't pull off the "two places at once" phenom; I can be in two places back-to-back, but haven't mastered the concurrent-technology yet.

Erin - Daughter #2, wife to Jason, mother to Max, Cate and Avery - and I were on the starting line of the Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon hours before the first service gang convened at our church, back home in California. It was the 26th running of that 26.2 mile event, and how lucky were we? It was the warmest ever for that race - 76° at the 8:00am start, with 88% humidity, that climbed to a temp of 86° at the finish, with a heat index of 100. Cooler back home in California - at church - but we were there, in Minnesota, on a mission...

Marathon #4 for Erin; it was #20 for me. My first was 29 years ago; her maiden voyage around the 26 mile track was with me, in Northern California, about 10 years ago.

We started together; we ran together; we finished together. It was just the two of us... and 10,498 of our closest friends, joined by an estimated 300,000 along the curbs as the route wound its way through Minneapolis and St. Paul to form what they proudly call the Most Beautiful Urban Marathon in America™. The median age of the entrants was 39.5, putting her a decade in front of the bell curve



peak, and dropping me a smooth 15 years to the backside of the same curve. Everyone wears the requisite bib, safety-pinned to the front of whatever you're wearing on top, but all of the over-40 crowd was supplied with an additional pin-on, to be worn on the back. These gave gender and age division; mine simply said, "M - 50-54." I told Erin that these would double as toe-tags at the morgue if needed, for the senior-set...

As the cloudless skies for the first 20 miles allowed the heat index to climb, we watched as EMTs with gurneys reduced the field, giving overheated competitors a siren-accompanied ride to local hospitals, instead of a shortcut to the finish line and their coveted finisher's medal and shirt. Runners were dropping like flies; lots of younger runners (<40 is *young* for us *M - 50-54 folks*) were slowing to a walk-the-rest-of-the-way concession from Mile 18 on as the weather took its toll. We heard murmurs among the troops of word from the Chicago Marathon (which was

happening at the same time) of the same uncharacteristic heat, and at least one death, causing a mandated course closure at the midway point for the many of the 35,000 entrants who were pounding the pavement of the Windy City, a few hundred miles east...

Every time I repeat the marathon experience, I'm reminded of Paul's use of the runner's event to describe - in metaphor - the serious Christian's pursuit of God's purposes in their life: *"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."* (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

The runner's challenge found its way into the letter to the Hebrews (which I believe was written by Paul, as well) when he said: *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* (Hebrews 12:1-3)

Every finisher in Minneapolis -- and, Chicago -- was a winner. Why? We all knew that a Kenyan would be in the field, heading home with the gold. Everyone else was there to run their race, with their own mission, opposed by everything around them. Sounds like a good metaphor for life - lived on with an eternal horizon - in often unfavorable conditions...

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