

# The Encourager

## LET THE BELLS RING

The citizens of Feldkirch, Austria didn't know what to do. Napoleon's massive army was preparing to attack. Soldiers had been spotted on the heights above the little town, which was situated on the Austrian border. A council of citizens was hastily summoned to decide whether they should try to defend themselves or display the white flag of surrender. It happened to be Easter Sunday, and the people had gathered in the local church. The pastor rose and said, "Friends, we have been counting on our own strength, and apparently that has failed. As this is the day of our Lord's resurrection, let us just ring the bells, have our services as usual, and leave the matter in His hands. We know only our weakness, and not the power of God to defend us." The council accepted his plan, and the church bells rang. The enemy, hearing the sudden peal, concluded that the Austrian army had arrived during the night to defend the town. Before the service ended, the enemy broke camp and left.



June 30, 2021

Volume 19, No. 11 (not count)

## A CHURCH THAT'S ALL IT OUGHT TO BE

I THINK THAT I SHALL NEVER SEE  
A CHURCH THAT'S ALL IT OUGHT TO BE;  
A CHURCH WHOSE MEMBERS NEVER  
STRAY  
BEYOND THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW  
WAY;

A CHURCH  
WHO HAS NO  
EMPTY  
PEWS,  
WHOSE PASTOR NEVER  
HAS THE  
BLUES.  
A CHURCH  
WHOSE  
STEWARDS  
NEVER  
"STEW"

OR SHIRK THE JOB THAT'S THEIRS TO  
DO.

WHERE GOSSIPS NEVER PEDDLE LIES,  
OR MAKE COMPLAINTS OR CRITICIZE;  
SUCH PERFECT CHURCHES THERE MAY  
BE,

BUT NONE OF THEM ARE KNOWN TO  
ME;

BUT STILL, WE'LL WORK AND PRAY  
AND PLAN  
TO MAKE OUR CHURCH THE BEST WE  
CAN.



## TEN COMMANDMENTS OF HUMAN RELATIONS

1. Speak to people. There is nothing as nice as a cheerful word of greeting.
2. Smile at people. It takes seventy-two muscles to frown, only fourteen to smile.
3. Call people by name. Music to anyone's ears is the sound of his/her own name.
4. Be friendly and helpful.
5. Be cordial. Speak and act as if everything you do is genuinely a pleasure, and if it isn't, learn to make it so.
6. Be genuinely interested in people. You can like almost everybody if you try.
7. Be generous with praise, cautious with criticism.
8. Be considerate with the feelings of others. There are usually three sides to a controversy: yours, the other fellow's, and the right one.
9. Be alert to serve. What counts most in life is what we do for others.
10. Add to this a good sense of humor, a big dose of patience, and a dash of humility, and you will be rewarded manifold through life.

# QUOTES

**A MAN IS KNOWN BY THE COMPANY HIS MIND KEEPS.**

Thomas Bailey Aldrich

Forgiveness is not that stripe which says, "I will forgive, but not forget." It is not to bury the hatchet with the handle sticking out of the ground, so you can grasp it the minute you want it.

Dwight Moody

*Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year. He is rich who owns the day, and no one owns the day who allows it to be invaded with fret and anxiety.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

**A MAN IS WHAT HE IS—NOT WHAT HE USED TO BE.**

Jewish proverb

## Rough road ahead

It had been an especially long trip home, and the weary traveler still had many more miles to go. So he winced at a sign warning "Rough Road Ahead — 4 miles."

Rough, indeed. The lanes narrowed, and the shoulder disappeared. Traffic slowed to a crawl as drivers navigated around potholes and moving construction equipment. But sure enough, after exactly four miles, the road became smooth again.

"In this world you will have trouble," Jesus said. "But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NIV). Notice that Jesus didn't say we "might" have trouble. Sooner or later, problems will come. The road will get rough. But Jesus has already defeated everything the world can throw our way. We just have to keep moving, fueled on by hope.

This Is Not a Race

Clovis Chappell, a great preacher of a previous generation, used to tell the story of two paddle-boat steamers. They left Memphis about the same time, traveling down the River to New Orleans. As they traveled side by side, crew members made disparaging remarks about the slowness of the other boat. Words were exchanged. Challenges were made.

And the race began. The competition was keen as the boats roared down the Mississippi. One boat began falling behind. Not enough fuel. There had been plenty of coal for the trip, but not enough for a race. As the boat dropped back, an enterprising crew member took some of the ship's cargo and tossed it into the ovens. Their boat began to catch up, so they made fuel out of more and more cargo. They finally won the race, but in the process they burned their cargo, the very material they had been hired to transport.

Parents, our primary mission is not to win a rat race, but to faithfully care for those persons entrusted to us, especially our children.

Bill Bouknight

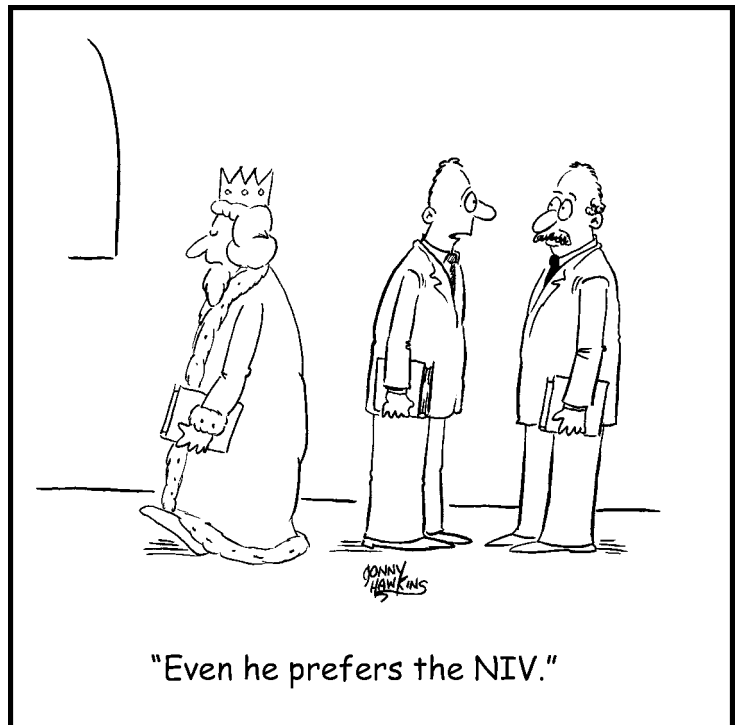
## My purpose

God has created me to do him some definite service...  
I have my mission ... he has not created me for naught.  
I shall do good; I shall do his work...  
I will trust him, whatever I am,  
I can never be thrown away.  
If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him,  
in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him.  
If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him.  
He does nothing in vain ...  
He knows what he is about.

—John Henry Newman

*Oh, summer has clothed the Earth  
In a cloak from the loom of the Sun!  
And a mantle, too, of the skies' soft blue,  
And a belt where the rivers run.*

-Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)





# RUNNING the RACE

## SUMMER Reading Plan

**Life – and exercise – move at different paces for different people.**

Some enjoy leisurely walks, strolls or rolls, while others speed-walk, jog or even sprint. Some people have a 26.2 sticker on their vehicle, indicating they've run a marathon, while others boast of running a half-marathon (13.1) or no marathon (0.0)!

Thankfully, you don't have to be an athlete of any kind to run the Christian "race." The Bible uses running metaphors, however, to encourage followers of Jesus to train, focus, persevere and attain the heavenly prize. Use this Summer Reading Plan to strengthen your faith and your relationship with Jesus. Complete one square each day or every other day, and you'll journey through significant chunks of the New Testament this summer. Feel free to invite a friend or family member to join you as a "running partner"!



### **Mile 1** Read *Philippians 1*

Re-read verse 6 and consider how your faith journey is a work in progress.

### **Mile 3** Read *Philippians 3*

Look back at verses 13 and 14, and brainstorm a list of ways to keep your eyes on the heavenly "prize."

### **Mile 5** Read *Colossians 1*

Re-read verse 11. Name three specific ways God gives you strength and endurance.

### **Mile 7** Read *Colossians 3*

Look back at verses 23 and 24. What keeps you running for God, not for other people or for personal accolades?

### **Mile 9** Read *1 Timothy 1*

Doodle about how God's law keeps you from wandering away from him.

### **Mile 11** Read *1 Timothy 3*

What aspects of staying "above reproach" are most challenging for you as a follower of Jesus?

### **Mile 13** Read *1 Timothy 5*

Anonymously perform a kind deed for someone in your family or community.

### **Mile 15** Read *2 Timothy 1*

Describe specific ways your life reveals a spirit of power, a spirit of love and a spirit of self-discipline.

### **Mile 17** Read *2 Timothy 3*

Add a daily Bible-reading time to your spiritual training regimen.

### **Mile 19** Read *James 1*

Look back at verse 12. Reflect on how God has kept his promises to you. How does that help you during times of trial?

### **Mile 21** Read *James 3*

Re-read verses 17 and 18. Pray for godly wisdom as you continue your faith journey.

### **Mile 23** Read *James 5*

After re-reading verse 19, think of ways to reach out to people who have wandered away from God.

### **Mile 25** Read *John 20:1-18*

Consider how the good news of Jesus' resurrection gives you reasons to run and share the Gospel message.

### ➔ **Mile 2** Read *Philippians 2*

Re-read verse 5 and pray to have the same attitude as Jesus.

### **Mile 4** Read *Philippians 4*

Write verse 13 on a sticky note and place it where you'll see it daily.

### **Mile 6** Read *Colossians 2*

Review verses 6 and 7, make a gratitude list and say a prayer of thanks to God.

### **Mile 8** Read *Colossians 4*

Write a note or letter to someone who needs spiritual encouragement.

### **Mile 10** Read *1 Timothy 2*

Re-read verses 5 and 6. Offer praise to Jesus for being our mediator and ransom — and for running the race perfectly for us.

### **Mile 12** Read *1 Timothy 4*

As you exercise, ponder verse 8 and brainstorm ways to build your spiritual muscles.

### **Mile 14** Read *1 Timothy 6*

Review verses 11 and 12. In what ways might faith be viewed as a fight? To whom have you made bold profession of your faith?

### **Mile 16** Read *2 Timothy 2*

Re-read verse 5. The next time you participate in or watch a sporting event, compare the value of God's "victor's crown" to earthly achievements.

### **Mile 18** Read *2 Timothy 4*

Memorize verse 7. Think about people you know who have already "finished the race." How can their example strengthen you?

### **Mile 20** Read *James 2*

Put your faith into action today by meeting someone's needs.

### **Mile 22** Read *James 4*

Review verse 8. Confess your sins to God and ask him to come near you.

### **Mile 24** Read *Luke 15:11-32*

When have you run away from God? What brought you back? When have you seen proof of God running toward you (see verse 20, as well as James 4:8)?

### ➔ **Mile 26** Read *1 John 1*

Re-read verse 7. Write "Walk in the Light" on a sticky note, and place it by a lamp or light switch.

**Mile 26.2** Read *Revelation 2:10* Praise God aloud: "Come, Lord Jesus!"