

withU: In the Age of Running, Where Are We Running To?

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Over the past few years, a running boom has swept across Korea. From early morning until late at night, parks and riversides are crowded with runners. Some enjoy the time alone, while others join running crews to break a sweat together. Many begin with light exercise, and a steadily growing number go beyond 5K and 10K runs to take on half and full marathons.

Why are people so enthusiastic about running today?

We live in an age when artificial intelligence writes and draws, taking over what were once human domains. With a few taps of a finger, we can instantly get the results we want. Yet paradoxically, the faster and more convenient the world becomes, the more people find a truly human happiness in moving their own bodies.

There are no shortcuts in running. Even the most advanced AI cannot run for me, gasping for breath in my place. Taking each step from the starting line to the finish line is mine alone to do. When we push through the moment our breath is at its limit and cross the finish line, we finally realize that we are alive and discover what we are capable of.

The Japanese author Haruki Murakami has been a runner for many years. In his book *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*, he describes running not as mere exercise but as a process of disciplining himself and maintaining the rhythm of his life. It is not about competing with others, but about facing one's limits in pursuit of goals one has set for oneself. For him, running was a pure journey of keeping the promises he had made to himself.

The precious meaning we discover in running today is something True Parents emphasized in their words long ago. As they walked the path of the providence, they spoke on many occasions of running and the marathon as metaphors for our attitude toward life, our determination to reach our goals, and a heart that fulfills its responsibility to the very end.

"Are a hundred-meter dash and a marathon the same? In a marathon, you have to run a long distance, staking your life. You set your life as the limit - will you collapse, or will you remain standing? That is the question."

- True Parents' message, Cheon Jeong Gung, January 20, 2007

"When runners in the hundred-meter dash stand at the starting line, they think, 'I am not running a thousand meters; I have to run a hundred meters.' The concept of a thousand meters is unnecessary. That is why they must pour all their energy into running those hundred meters. If body and mind go their separate ways, no one can become a hundred-meter champion. That is why a decision is needed. When you leave the starting line, you need to decide what applies to you: 'I am running three hundred meters,' 'I am running five hundred meters,' or 'I am a marathon runner.'"

- True Parents' message, Headquarters Church, April 1, 1984

In running, what matters is knowing exactly how far you must go before you start. A sprinter in the 100-meter dash who paces himself like a marathon runner cannot set a good record, and a marathon runner who sprints at full speed from the start will never finish the race.



The same is true of our lives and our providential course. We must clearly know where we are running and for what purpose. At times we must pour all our strength into the task in front of us; at other times we must endure a long stretch and quietly keep walking. We need to set the right course and focus, with mind and body united as one.

"Have you ever run a hundred-meter dash on a sports field? The people waiting at the starting line for the signal are dead serious. Do you understand? Until they hear the 'bang,' they are so tense they can barely breathe. Anyone who has run knows this. But someone who is already panting has lost before the race begins. Mind and body, everything - your life, your actions, your determination, and every standard - must be focused entirely on this moment. One second is what matters. Isn't that so? One second is what matters."

- True Parents' message, Central Training Center, June 5, 1972



For an athlete at the starting line, only one goal remains. Every sense, honed through long preparation, is focused on a single instant. The attitude True Parents emphasized is this same resolute decision and total investment - a life that does not remain in the realm of ideas but is carried out in action.

Looking back, True Parents' providential course itself was a continuous run of this kind. They offered their utmost jeongseong (devotions and service) to every task before them, and never stopped for even a moment on their way toward the great goal of One Human Family. At times they gave everything like a 100-meter sprinter; at other times, like a marathon runner, they overcame countless obstacles and finished the course to the very end.

Some of us may be standing at a new starting line, some entering the final stretch with the goal in sight, and others passing through the middle of a long journey. Every runner meets moments when breathing becomes labored and each step grows heavy. At such times, what we need is the original resolve we had when we first stood at the starting line: "Why did I choose this path?" "Where am I going?" The small steps and devotion we offer each day come together to build the future we hope for. What matters is not how fast we run, but whether we know the right path to run and are giving it our whole heart.

Today, with what heart are we standing at the starting line?