



## ~ Witnessing the Race ~

***“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” – 1 Thessalonians 5:11***

Have you ever witnessed or participated in a marathon? You have the runners and those who witness the race. The witnesses are separated into three types of people:

1. The marathon staff who make sure the runners have what they need to sustain their efforts
2. The witness in the stands who cheers the runner on
3. The bystander who just observes without really getting into the race – they have no loyalties to the race or runners

A top runner will tell you that it takes much perseverance and preparation to run a race to the finish. Fatigue and weariness set in and a runner must be mentally prepared for the determination needed to finish to the end. It is hard work and never easy. Many times during the race, the cheer of the crowd, an encouraging word by a staff handing out water can be just enough to buoy the strength for the next stretch.

Life is just like that. Our goal is heaven and our prize is eternal life. Along the way, there are the same 3 types of witnesses. Jesus was the best “runner” there ever was. Not only did he face fierce conditions, but the people in the stand were NOT cheering him on. When he got tired and worn out – wondering if he should just quit – there were no cheers in the stands and on the sidelines to encourage his spirit. Instead, they laughed and mocked him. Can you imagine a runner in a grueling marathon today receiving taunts and mockery from people watching? How do you think they would fair in the race? Would they be motivated to finish if they knew that no one would appreciate it or acknowledge their achievement?

Yet, how often do we do that to those around us – especially those in ministry? How often are we that 3rd witness – the bystander who watches but never engages. We “mock and scoff” with our words and our actions to those who are in the race – in the midst of the battlefield of life. We stay disengaged and are content to “let someone else do it.” James 2:19 says “Do I hear you professing to believe in the one and only God, but then observe you complacently sitting back as if you had done something wonderful? That's just great. Demons do that, but what good does it do them?” (Message) And again in James 5 he says “Don't bad-mouth each other, friends. It's God's Word, his Message, his Royal Rule that takes a beating in that kind of talk. You're supposed to be honoring the Message, not writing graffiti all over it.” (Message)

Many times in our day to day lives, we are too focused on our own needs to willingly encourage and minister to those who are in the heat of the race – maybe it’s a minister or a teacher, an elder or someone in full-time ministry. These people need our encouragement and our support regardless if we always agree with them or not. Our “witness” to them can be for their gain or for their loss. The choice is yours. Today, look for a way to minister to someone who ministers to you. You will find a greater blessing will await you if you do.

**Kimberly Mills**

**Elijah Road Ministries Devotionals**

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