

Title: Keep Moving

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*Three.*

The countdown begins in my head. I realize that I'm at the starting line for the first time in my life, and my nervous eyes wander towards my competition. Most of these runners are wearing sleek, aerodynamic uniforms and track spikes, starkly contrasting against my baggy shorts, loose t-shirt, and worn sneakers. Already in a hole...

*Two.*

My heart's racing a million miles an hour and my throat is drying out from my heavy breathing. Why am I here? I'm no athlete. What do I think that I'm going to accomplish, besides embarrassing myself in this stadium? I've never sprinted 800 meters before in my life, why start here and now?

*One- Bang!*

My countdown isn't quite right, and the blast of the gun leaves me dazed. Still, it's too late to quit now. My legs don't know anything better to do, so they move. They're fighting the air, they're fighting my baggy shorts, and they're fighting the legs of others, but they move.

*Keep moving! Keep moving!*

My coach's words ring in my ears. Four hundred meters of this race have passed for me, and I'm beginning my third lap. Halfway there, but I've been in last place since the start. Why am I here? I'm making a fool of myself! Still, there's only one thing that I can do. *Keep moving!*

*Brring! Brring!*

That means that someone has started the final lap. The first ring sounded about one hundred meters before mine does. I'd steadily climbed into fourth place, and I'm in second place by the first bend. Still about sixty meters behind with one hundred and fifty meters to go, one thought creeps into my mind. "It's hopeless! You're way too far behind, you're definitely finished! Why try?" Immediately, I'm consumed with passion. From that point to the finish line, only one word passes through my mind: Move.

*Vroom! Vroom!*

That's the crowd's imitation of a racecar, resounding throughout the stadium. Usually, it happens when someone starts gaining ground by accelerating, or "kicks". This time, that someone is me. My mind is blank, my legs are fighting everything. Fighting the air, fighting my baggy shorts, fighting the burn, and fighting the legs of the runner in front of me.

*Did I beat him?*

That's the first question that I ask after I momentarily muster the strength to ignore my burning legs and gasping lungs. The finish was close, perhaps by several meters. With a grin on his face, my coach tells me that I'd won. That the finish was incredible. That he couldn't believe it.

*So what?*

That's the question I'm asking myself now. It's been two years since I ran in that scrimmage meet, sticking out like a David among Goliaths. Yes, I got cheers, pats on the back, and congratulations. Yes, winning my heat at that track meet made me feel great for a few

minutes. But now? I'm probably the only guy who remembers it. As the wise Teacher says, "Vanity, vanity! All is vanity!" That's all it really is, in the end. When I'm finished with my life, reading the chapters of what I've left behind, a tenth grade scrimmage meet won't even merit a footnote. Yet looking back, I recall another starting gun. I didn't see it as a starting gun then, but as I look back, I can see that there was a quiet bang in my innermost being. More importantly, I can see that I've been running ever since.

*Jesus, I believe that you died for me. Cleanse me, come into my heart.*

That was the first salvation prayer that I prayed. I was about five years old, and that's when the real starting gun of my life went off. There was no mental countdown, no audible bang. Looking back, there probably was a bang. Not in that church sanctuary, but in heaven.

There haven't been any bells ringing out my laps either, but my Coach lets me know where I am. When I stray from my track, my Coach lets me know, through a Bible verse, a friend, or His Spirit. When I think that I've done enough to stop moving, He reminds me that I'm not yet finished, that there is something He wants to tell me, or someone He wants me to help; He has something for me to do. Even when I have no idea where I am, I know one thing: I'm not yet finished.

So far, it's been quite the journey. God has shown me things and taken me places that I couldn't even imagine. He's taken me from that sanctuary twelve years ago, and has been with me every step of the way. Like every Christian, I've been called to change my world, to be a revolutionary planet-shaker for the perfect name of Jesus. Right now, I'm at the crossroads facing every high school senior, unsure of where I'll go; yet I know that my Coach has a plan. It hasn't always been easy; I've had to fight through pain. Sometimes, I'm fighting against the

grain, against the pressure around me. Circumstances that I can't explain or control have landed me flat on my face, but by the grace of God I have gotten back up. Sometimes I'm fighting my own "baggy shorts," my own faults and doubts. Yet even when I'm sure that I'm down, my Coach picks me up and lets me know that I'm not out. I'm not sure what lap I'm on, or whether I'm in the lead. I have no idea when I'll reach my finish, joining the "cloud of witnesses" cheering from the stands, or when I'll know everything not in part, but in full. It's actually quite the paradox; I know where I'm *going* without knowing *where* I'm going. I'm not sure where I'll be twenty years, twenty days, or even twenty minutes from now. All I know is that there is a track in front of me, and I'm not quite finished yet.

I know now that this race won't be over until my gasping body finally collapses, and I look into His eyes and ask if I've won. Sometimes, I can imagine a grin, from ear to ear. Joy radiating from His perfect face. Then His strong yet soft voice lets me know that I have won. That the finish was incredible. "Well done, *my* good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of thy Lord."

Still, once in awhile a thought tries to creep into my head. There are too many people that aren't saved, too much suffering, and I'm just not strong enough. "It's hopeless! You're way too far behind, you're definitely finished! Why try?" Unlike a track meet, I can't win this race with my own passion. Instead, I get on my knees and lift my hands, and that's when I realize: No need to worry. He's put me on this unique track to finish my unique race; He knows when I'm finished. My job? *Keep moving.*