

ONWARD & UPWARD

Begin by dwelling with this quote for a moment, and read it twice through, slowly. How does it feel to you? Do you agree with it?

The spiritual journey is not a career or a success story. It is a series of humiliations of the false self that become more and more profound. (Thomas Keating, The Human Condition, p38)

Warning you are about to read a gushy, proud dad story (no judgement)...

On the 20th of June at French Weir we had the North Town Primary School Sports Day. Edie (aged 5) lined up ready for her 200m (ish) circuit race. The shout to go went up and to my dismay, I had that sudden realisation that I hadn't trained her for such a race. She took off in the outside lane and didn't feed into the inside lane for a long time. Her first bend put her near the back of the pack and I was left shouting 'Get to the inside lane!' amongst all the other parental cheers. She soon found her way copying those in front of her and halfway around started to pass the other racers by, one, then two, then more. Having mentally prepared myself for a last-place finish suddenly I was surprised to see her round the final bend in the lead. My competitive parental nature was unleashed as I shouted wild encouragement! This was awesome and unexpected.

They had all been following a year 6 girl, who was showing them where to run. The girl then stopped at the finish line and looked back. Edie seeing the girl stop, also stopped. The crowd stared in disbelief, or at least I did for a few seconds before an almighty shout went out from people supporting the racers including myself and Donna. 'Run Edie Run! Keep going! Get to the finish line!'

She then raced the last 10 meters to the line just before the other runners caught up, winning her first race ever. We erupted! This race has now become family folklore, retold by her and us many times. It was epic.

Read Philippians 3: 12-21

It is easy to forget reading this joyous passage that Paul is in prison or at least under house guard awaiting his trial. Paul's one aim: 'to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what's ahead.' Is there something you need to leave behind today that is pulling you back? Have you been discouraged in your race?

Look how Paul defines maturity - to know that you haven't arrived, you are not the finished article who can slacken off and if you think differently then God will reveal this to you. How might we slacken off? Are we like Edie thinking she has finished when in fact she still has some way to go? Who is cheering you on? Is there someone you can ask to be your supporter and ask you how things are going in your spiritual journey?

What do you think Paul is referring to as the goal? Look at verse 14, what does it mean? (Hint: I don't think Paul means 'going up to heaven' as look at what verses 20-21 say)

Prayer: Jesus help us to hear and feel your presence, interceding and cheering us on. Lift us out of discouragement and into hope. When we feel like we are losing, help us to trust in you. May your kingdom come here on earth.