



FAMILY MATTERS

Virtual 5K gets Disciples moving together

by Olivia Bryan Updegrove

“Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese,” reports Letsmove.gov. But as sobering as this reality is, as I write this article, my young daughter is watching television as a “babysitter.” Like most kids, she will spend a lot of time (the daily average is 7.5 hours) in front of some sort of screen today. She will snack on cereal, goldfish crackers, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Meanwhile, I work from the kitchen where I also will be sitting in front of a screen (and snacking).

Before you conclude that I am a terrible parent, or that technology is all bad, let me assure you that I don’t believe either of those things. It is oversimplification to blame parents, technology, or even fast food restaurants for the increase in obesity in the U.S. when there are so many complex elements to this serious physical, emotional, and mental struggle for kids, adults, and families.

STEWARDS OF OUR HEALTH

Despite these complexities, our faith calls us to be stewards in many ways, including finding a faithful balance in our lives that celebrates our bodies, our minds, and our connections with God. This is not an easy balance. We may put our physical health “on hold” as we face the more immediate concerns of our hectic days. But to be faithful stewards of all that we have been given includes

balancing our spiritual, mental, and physical health.

As a way of supporting this balance, Disciples Home Missions recently sponsored a Disciples Virtual 5K Race in order to help people “get outside and move,” to increase their physical health – and support the Disciples Mission Fund. Family and Children’s Ministries and the General Youth Council co-sponsored this event, along with another partner – technology and social media. Using these tools to connect, 550 people joined together to walk, run, and push strollers at many different times and places this spring and summer. Virtual connections helped this group “go together” through social media updates and celebrations. For more on the race, visit www.facebook.com/disciples5k/.

A RUNNING START

Over the past two years I have begun to make a statement I never thought would exit my mouth: “I am a runner.” (Still makes me laugh.) When I started running, I never realized that it would become a spiritual and mental journey.

For example, when I was training for my first half marathon, I had the lofty idea that I would pray for something each mile. I quickly learned, as I do with lots of my spiritual practices, that my big idea was not realistic. By mile eight I was humbled to God and my only prayer was, “Let me finish and live.”

My experience has shown me that when we “get outside and move,” it creates connections with other people in our families and faith communities. I got started running due to my sister-in-law and her work with Girlsontherun.org, a transformational running and life skills program for girls in grades 3-8. I also discovered the app, Charitymiles.org, which donates money to a non-profit each time I run. Soon my children started to watch and notice my running and wanted to join in. They did their first run in 2015 at the ages of 2 and 4. My son recently did his second run (a whole mile) where he ran with his dad the whole way. As he ran, we could hear him telling others, “Only ten more miles to go!”

So, while my children are still snacking and watching a screen as I write this, they also have times when they participate with their family, friends, and community in steps that are life-changing. Whether you and your family run, bike, walk, camp, or go to the park, these activities can lead to “more fit” relationships with ourselves, each other, and God. And those screens that connect us can even help us encourage others to get moving together.



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