



January 7, 2026

MESSENGER

Happy New Year

Quote of the Week

"LAST SUNDAY'S ANNIVERSARY OF THE EATON FIRE DISASTER

"Lord We Have Questions"

ABCers who lost homes in the Fire Disaster reflect on their difficult recovery

INFO

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Contact Information:

Due to the fires, our mail has been forwarded. Please send mail to PO Box 91055, Pasadena, CA 91109. You may still call the church phone at 626-797-8970;

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THE ALTADENA (Seems Like) FOREVER RUN

I've always been fascinated with 10K races and other long-distance running events. Not fascinated as in *I want to do it, but fascinated as in trying to figure out why anyone wants to do it --- the kind of fascination I have with exotic animal species. When this year's annual race was announced as the "ALTADENA FOREVER 10K RUN" my mind translated it into the "Altadena (Seems Like) Forever Run"!*

Actually, 3,100 people signed up for last Sunday morning's event, including at least four from our ABC family: Mike O'Neal-Petterson, Sheryl Ryan, Miles Kealing¹ and Loren Roberts. I asked a couple of them what it was that motivated them. First, they pointed out that this was not a casual spur-of-the-moment decision; their preparation began months ago, even years before, when they chose to include conditioning in their lifestyle. Beyond that, they spoke of the satisfaction of completing a hard task, the self-control and pacing required to finish the course and just "feeling good, physically and emotionally, afterwards." They also mentioned the sense of comraderie among fellow racers.

What about **competition**? Who's going to *win this race*? Well, *in the biggest races which are open to the public, there are always a few "serious" runners, usually professionals, who are strategizing from the opening gunshot, determined to reach the finish line FIRST. Often these pros are from other nations, such as Kenya or Ethiopia, where the altitude, geography and culture consistently seem to produce the best distance runners.*

But most of the 3,100 Altadena Forever runners were NOT competing against each other. If they were competing at all, it was against a lazy, self-indulgent version of themselves, struggling to overcome the fear and weakness that keep people like me from signing up at all. The number one challenge is to FINISH the race. Some are also interested in ending the race in a "Personal Best" time --- again, an individual competing against him/herself. It's interesting that the event was advertised as a "Run/Walk Race," opening the door to families with children and less-than-athletic participants. One of the walkers on Sunday was ABCer Eileen Pino, who found the whole experience very inspiring.

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If the Apostle Paul had a TV, he would probably have been a sports addict. He uses analogies from several athletic events popular in his day, including boxing and wrestling. But his most common illustrations are from running races:

Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air, but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:25-27)

I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7: see also 1 Timothy 6:11-12)

This last passage was most likely not written by Paul, but by another early Church leader using his style of encouragement:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

I think that phrase in the center of the last quote, "**looking unto Jesus,**" is critical to fully experiencing the race of life. Why? Because it's not about *speed, or endurance, or toughness.* It's about **CHARACTER!** That won't come from looking at the runner next to you, or even from looking inside yourself. The greatest motivational challenge will come from **LOOKING UNTO JESUS.**

Brenda Curl Mitchell responded to Loren

Roberts' Facebook post about his experience: "You crushed the 10k run!" That's what I'd like hear the Lord to say to every one of you at the end of 2026: **YOU CRUSHED IT!**

Pastor George Van

Alstine

¹ No, his first name, Miles, was not given because his parents received a prophetic vision about running.