



*"It's elevating and humbling at the same time. Running along a beach at sunrise with no other footprints in the sand, you realise the vastness of creation, your own insignificant space in the plan, how tiny you really are, your own creatureliness and how much you owe to the supreme body, the God that brought all this beauty and harmony into being."*

*Sister Marion Irvine, Roman Catholic Nun and, at 54 years of age, the oldest person to ever qualify for the US Olympic trials.*

Life is fast and full of pressure.

We all of us live in a world full of deadlines, noise, demands, interruptions, appointments, activities, messages. There's always something to do, somewhere to be, someone to deal with. Our lives rush by at break-neck pace. No time to stop. No time for stillness.

We have more labour-saving devices than any other generation before us; yet somehow we work longer hours. We have access to more information than any generation in history; yet less time to contemplate any of it, much less understand it. We're constantly connected, constantly in touch, constantly receiving; yet our society has never been more fragmented, more shallow, more shrill.

Ironic, isn't it?

Well, here's another irony that's a little sweeter to swallow. Sometimes the best way to find stillness is to run. Sometimes the best way to stop is to go.

Running affords us a special gift: a chance to reflect, to contemplate, to meditate; a space to go deep, to connect with ourselves, our world, and the God that made them both.

Questions is, are we willing to embrace that gift?

Use the following exercises to develop the practice of meditation. Read the **Training Notes** for inspiration, then set about the **Activities for Running** and the **Applications for Life**.

**Training Notes:** Psalm 8

*God, brilliant Lord, yours is a household name.*

*Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you; toddlers shout the songs that drown out enemy talk, and silence atheist babble.*

*I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous, your handmade sky-jewellery, moon and stars mounted in their settings.*

*Then I look at my micro-self and wonder, Why do you bother with us? Why take a second look our way?*

*Yet we've so narrowly missed being gods, bright with Eden's dawn light. You put us in charge of your handcrafted world, repeated to us your Genesis-charge, made us lords of sheep and cattle, even animals out in the wild, birds flying and fish swimming, whales singing in the ocean deeps.*

*God, brilliant Lord, your name echoes around the world.*

*King David, The Message Translation*

**Activities for Running.** Things to do while you're on the road.

The poem we've just read was all about appreciating, and thus finding God in, the micro and the macro. The inner world and the outer world.

## INNER WORLD

Focus inwards. Heighten your senses. Concentrate on your breathing – your lungs • taking in air, the steady rhythm of inhalation and exhalation. Breathe deeply. Concentrate on your motion – your legs and arms moving, your muscles contracting, feet hitting the ground, bones absorbing the shock. Become conscious of your heart beating, blood pumping through your veins, the beads of sweat forming on your skin.

Begin to appreciate what a piece of work you are. You're amazing. Consider how your • joints move, how you balance, your ability to see your surroundings in such detail, the way you compensate for rough and smooth, up and down. It's incredible.

If you believe there's a God out there, take time to thank Him for this gift of life, • movement and potential. Silently offer a prayer of thanks for each gift and ability as you become aware of it. Express your gratitude to your creator. As your sense of gratitude for what you've got grows, so too will your sense of trust and faith for what you still need.

If you're not sure about God, then perhaps just marvel at the incredible complexity, • beauty and design of your own body. Take time to contemplate the questions. How did this happen? Who should I thank?

## OUTER WORLD

Focus outwards. Consider the birds of the air, the grass, the sounds. Become aware of • the wind blowing on your face, the ground beneath your feet, the gravity that keeps you anchored. Open your eyes. What do you see? Take a good look at the trees, the soil, the road, the horizon. Try to notice something new. Close your eyes for a few beats. Listen. Smell. Sense. This world is amazing.

Focus further out. See yourself in global perspective, running on a planet spinning, a • tiny jewel surrounded by billions of stars, the unimaginable vastness of space. Consider the heavens and marvel. You're part of a miracle. Running in space.

Develop a sense of awe at the world you're in. God's name echoes around it, His • autograph is all over creation. As you run, thank God for the environment He's given you, the world that sustains you, all that you see and sense. It's awe and wonder at the eternal that helps us deal better with the issues and concerns of the here and now.

Run without headphones and music. Cherish the silence.

Run with headphones and music. Enjoy it afresh. •

Memorise Psalm 8 a bit at a time and recite it to yourself as you run, chewing over the • words and meditating on the meaning.

**Applications for Life.** Things to do when you're off road.

Consider writing a journal to keep track of your inner life – thoughts, doubts, questions, • prayers, triumphs. It might just be a few lines each week.

Write a list of things that you ordinarily take for granted in life – food, clothes, senses, • friendships, weather, gravity – and thank God for them.

Practise Biblical meditation each day. Start with the book of Psalms, right in the middle • of the Bible. Pick a Psalm and read it slowly, a verse at a time. Repeat the verse out loud, pause, and think about it. Do it again, but with a different emphasis this time. Keep reading, pausing, thinking. Don't feel you have to rush on to the next verse. Personalise it, pick it apart, ask questions, pray.

Some good ones to try – Psalms 1, 8, 18, 19, 23, 24, 27, 34, 51, 63, 84, 91, 118, 139, 150.

PS. The answer to that big question Psalm 8 asks in the Training Notes? It's love, actually.

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