

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

42. The Truth About Staying in Your Own Lane

You are listening to episode 42 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled, "The Truth About Staying in Your Own Lane." I'm glad you're here, friend. Welcome back to the podcast! So, what does it mean to "stay in your own lane"? Have you heard this term before? What do you think... is it a positive thing or something negative? Well, we are covering these questions and a couple more as we discuss the subject of running the race before us, a spin-off subject of last week's episode. Hang with me here for the next 15 minutes or so, and together we'll find some encouragement, help, and hope for our real lives. Ready? Let's go.

I played all the sports I could in high school, and in the spring season I ran track. I was particularly fond of the hurdles and short sprints. Long distance was not my gig, but I could run a 100m or 200m race with the best of them. And our relay teams, which I was a part of, earned many a medal back then. And actually, I still have the hardware to prove it.

But one thing I learned quickly, no matter if I was running hurdles or a short sprint, staying in my own lane was vital, both for winning and staying safe. Because back then, and maybe it's still the same today, a runner could get disqualified from the race for leaving her lane. And who wants to get disqualified? Not this girl. But more importantly, it was unsafe to cross the lines of my lane. Unsafe for me and for my neighbor running next to me.

But even so, staying in my own lane wasn't so easy if I took my focus off of where I was going. My focus was key. As I've heard Lysa TerKeurst say, "We steer where we stare." If I focused on what was going on around me, or who was in the stands, or what was flying above me, well, I could easily lose sight of my lane. But focusing straight ahead to the finish line was crucial for not only finishing the race, but possibly winning it.

Little did I know back then how my track experience of staying in my lane would impact me later in life.

I had no idea the same tools for staying in my own lane back then, would help me stay in my own lane now. Even though I now run on a different track, the track of life instead of a track at a high school meet, it's still important to stay right where God has me. In my own lane.

Last week's episode, episode 41, *What Happens When We Compare?*, got me thinking a little deeper on the subject of comparison. And it reminded me of my old track days.

To give you a little background, I guess you could call me a competitive person. God wired me that way, because I've had the drive to compete for as long as I can remember. Growing up with three brothers likely helped that drive. I believe competition is good, until it's not good. Until one competes in all areas of life with everyone around her. Then it becomes ridiculous. You can guess how I know this so well.

But I have this burning desire within me to win. I always have. So, winning the race or game or prize has always been my goal. Nothing feels as good as being called the winner!

Sadly, one big obstacle has prevented me from winning throughout all my competitions.

That one thing is comparison.

Because when we compare ourselves with someone else, our focus shifts from where we're going to the woman or women next to us. We are no longer focused on the finish line, but instead on someone else. And when we're focused on someone else, well we just lost the ability to win.

What do I mean?

When we compare ourselves to someone else, whether in a race or in life, we no longer see the finish line. Instead we fixate on the person we're comparing ourselves to. And remember that saying from Lysa TerKeurst, "We steer where we stare"? Wherever we're looking, that's where we're going. Looking at anything other than the finish line, well, we've just taken ourselves out of the race. We will soon be off-track and out of our own lane.

To win in life, you and I must stay in our own lane.

And by win, I mean to finish our races strong. I mean to run the race before us in life, crossing the finish line in victory.

This reminds me of 2 Timothy 4:7 GNT, "I have done my best in the race, I have run the full distance, and I have kept the faith." That's how we win in life.

But we can't do that well when our focus is elsewhere, when our focus is on comparing.

I picture each of us in our own lane. Our own lane God designed for us to journey through this life in. God has purposes and plans for us as we travel in our lanes. He's gifted each of us with certain talents and gifts to use to bless others and to glorify Him in these lanes. Our lanes might widen at times or become very narrow. Our lanes might get rocky and difficult to maneuver at other times. Yet, our lanes can also be simple and easy to wander down at other times. But no matter what we experience in our lanes, God is always right there with us. There's no better place to be than in the center of His will, in the center of His lane for each of us.

But when we shift our focus to someone else in another lane, we lose all sense of direction. We begin to do what that person is doing, we begin to want what she has, and we end up following her and we stop following God. Oh sure, God is still there and we know He will be, but just for this short while, we'll stay fixated on comparing, competing, and connecting with this one right here.

We stop living when we start comparing.

Because instead of focusing on living our best lives right now, we're choosing to focus on someone else living hers.

Keep *your head up*, your eyes straight ahead, and your focus fixed on what is in front of you. Take care you don't stray from the straight path, *the way of truth*, and you will safely reach the end of your road.

Do not veer *off course* to the right or the left; step away from evil, *and leave it behind*. Proverbs 4:25-27
VOICE

It's kind of like our friend who is a race car driver. Racing at our local track, he often wins because he's got experience behind the wheel of a race car. Speeding around the asphalt track, he knows the value of staying in his lane, until it comes time to pass the car ahead of him. I remember one race in particular a few years ago how he stayed in his lane cutting between two cars to pass both of them at the same time. Yikes!

The thing is, his success is also in part to his spotter, who is someone in his crew, who is strategically placed high up in the stands, able to see all that's happening on the track. His spotter guides him on every turn and in every straightaway through his earpiece.

If our friend's focus wandered to his left or to his right out there on the track, well, that would be disaster. He has no time to compare him or his racing to anyone else around him. He's too focused on racing well enough to win the race! He remains focused on what's ahead of him, on the finish line, as his spotter guides him across it to receive the winning checkered flag.

Goodness, we can glean so many life analogies here!

One could be, just like our friend, may we be so consumed running our race that we have no time to look to the left or to the right to compare what we're doing with what anyone else is doing. May we be focused on living our best lives for God's glory!

And just like our friend's spotter, we have a spotter, so to speak, too. God is the one who is guiding us home safely across the finish line. If we continue to listen to Him and follow His lead, we will arrive safely to our destination in the lane He has for each of us.

We are surrounded by a great cloud of people whose lives tell us what faith means. So let us run the race that is before us and never give up. We should remove from our lives anything that would get in the way and the sin that so easily holds us back. Let us look only to Jesus, the One who began our faith and who makes it perfect. He suffered death on the cross. But he accepted the shame as if it were nothing because of the joy that God put before him. And now he is sitting at the right side of God's throne. Hebrews 12:1-2 NCV

No matter how tempting it may be, you and I have no business comparing ourselves to another when we're completely sold out on who God created us to be (we talked about this last week) and on God's amazing plans for our lives. May you and I be about doing all we can to follow and fulfill those plans, even if we're not 100% sure what those plans are at this point. We can trust God's plans for our lives are good.

And as we run the race marked out before us, staying in our own lane, we find hope and encouragement in one final verse today. When people's steps follow the Lord, God is pleased with their ways. If they stumble, they will not fall, because the Lord holds their hand. Psalm 37:23-24 NCV

God is holding our hands, friend. He's got us. Let's stay right where He has us, you in your lane and me in mine. He will safely lead us to the finish line. I'm cheering you on, friend!

To spur us on this week and to further encourage our hearts, I created four different lock screens with this theme of staying in our lanes in mind. These free gifts are waiting for you in my free Resources on my site. Stop by for a moment and grab yours. The link is in the show notes.

We are continuing this discussion over in our Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. If you haven't checked out this encouraging space yet, I invite you to do so. You'll find it an uplifting, hope-giving place! The link is also in the show notes.

Thank you for subscribing to, rating and/or reviewing this podcast if you found encouragement in it. Others will find this encouragement because of you. Thank you.

I appreciate you tuning in today. I'm thankful we are in this race of life together. God bless you!

Julie Lefebvre