

France

Story of the week . . .

Running on empty

From Rob Reeve, Lille, France

"I'm not going to stop", I said to myself as I approached the 20km mark of the half marathon. The sun had been beating down all day and it was now at full strength. I leaned over to take a last splash of water from a trough to prepare for the last kilometre – and then oblivion. The next hours were a hellish kaleidoscope of pain and confusion. I felt dislocated from reality – plunged into some alien world of nausea and humiliation. "What's happening to me? Where am I? Will this ever end?" As the hours passed, I began to conclude that perhaps this was madness and that I had been somehow detached from my previous life. "Would I ever get back?"

Suddenly I saw a familiar face – yet distant, still on the other side as it were. Then more comforting words slowly being decoded back into meaning. I recognised my wife Sylviane – I was back. I remembered that I had been running and realised that I had passed out and been brought to the emergency ward at our local hospital. Apparently I had been unconscious for about 15 minutes and in and out of a delirious coma for two and three quarter hours. My temperature has risen to over 40°C and my heart beat went off the scale.

"It is a shame that I passed out just before the end," I said to Sylviane. When I got home the next day I was looking at the race results and to my surprise I found my name on the list of finishers. I had in fact run the last kilometer in oblivion and running on empty! I passed out after the finish and was picked up by the emergency services.

This has obviously been quite a major event in my life and one that is also an invitation to reflection and rest. I wondered whether the physical reality of running on empty has mirrored something of my personal life and ministry over these last few years. I've been giving myself to more and more responsibilities and international commitments without a corresponding growth in my support platform. (Pastoral, personnel, financial etc) I've carried on as I've lived for the "race" and the passion and privilege of serving the Lord. On the physical level I have been advised to stop running for 3 months. They also want to run tests on my heart and brain just to make sure that I do not have damage.

I feel that it is probably wise to do the same kind of thing on a personal level and to take some time out to rest and reflect about how I should re-position my life and ministry for the next few years. If you can, I would appreciate your prayers over this.

Robert Reeve.

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