

## LIVESTRONG AND LOVE STRONG



**When we fall down, no defeat is ever final.  
It is only final when we refuse to get back up.  
Do you not know that in a race all the runners run,  
but only one gets the prize?  
Run in such a way as to get the prize. 1 Corinthians 9:24**

*Scripture:*

**1 Corinthians 9: 19-27**

19. For though I am free to respect all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them.
20. To the Jews I became as Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law.
21. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free of God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law.
22. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some.
23. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.
24. Do you know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it.
25. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland, but we an imperishable one.
26. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air;
27. but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.



### **ONCE IS NOT ENOUGH**

The Tour of California arrives in Santa Rosa about 3:30 this afternoon. I thought we already had decided on a winner last year. But apparently, with the passage of time, we have a need to find a NEW winner.

The athletes have aged and changed, the weather will be different. No one is saying one time is enough or three times is enough. We revisit important things in our lives time and again. When we do it frequently, we make our celebrations into holidays.

Do you remember when we reenacted the Stations of the Cross during Lent a few years ago? Among the fifteen Stations of the Cross, three of them are places where Jesus fell. Jesus fell not once, but three times on his way to Galgotha. You'd think we'd get the point that Jesus was weakened and fell the first time we heard it. Apparently not. People don't fall just once, they fall again and again. The second fall reminds us that humans don't just need forgiveness, but need continual forgiveness. The third fall completes a triangle – it makes falling a permanent part of our human journey. Each time we experience it, we learn something new.

## BUT THINGS ARE DIFFERENT THIS YEAR

This year, there are new riders. There are older riders who are coming back. There is likely to be a torrential downpour, and there is the possibility that this race will become prototype for a Tour of America, not just California, that will rival the *Tour de France*. So while it is the same event, it is a different experience of that event. And here we are right in the middle of it.

Oh yes, one more thing, Lance is back, and you know how I feel about that.

### MY TRAINING

I have been training with the Astana Cycling Team from Kazakhstan for the last two weeks. I have been on two training rides with them, and I went to hear their coach John Bruyneel at Copperfield's on Monday. I kept up with the team pretty well at their twenty-five mile per hour pace. Without my motor scooter, however, it would have been more difficult. They told me not to ride beside the riders, but I rode behind the group with another motorcycle, and some cars with mechanics in them.

So this month I clicked off one of the goals of my "bucket list." I rode with Lance and Levi and Alberto Contador.

Also as part of my training, I visited the new Trek Bicycle store on Mendocino Avenue this week to pick up ten of the yellow LIVESTRONG bracelets. I gave my last one away on Friday afternoon to Norma Cooper's daughter Laurie, and I wanted to have a few available to give to you after worship today.

Lance Armstrong and Trek are giving them to cancer survivors and volunteers.

### LIVESTRONG SUNDAY

This is our fourth LIVESTRONG Sunday. But things have changed since the first one. The first LIVESTRONG event at our church happened somewhat by accident a few years ago when I brought a few yellow bracelets to our church, and honored cancer patients and survivors and those who support them. I didn't realize how many there would be. We ran out of bracelets immediately.

Sometimes I have invited people in the congregation to come to the microphone during worship to tell us for whom they need to "LIVESTRONG." You and I know that we have heard some powerful stories about people who have lived through cancer, people who have survived a powerful loss. This year more people are living through cancer, and some will not. I had three cancer surgeries of my own last year. When you first hear that word, no matter what kind or how serious, it gets your attention.

This year, I invite people to come to the front after the service and tell me who you are living strong for, who you are taking care of, or what you, yourself, are living with or living for. I still see people who are wearing the yellow "LIVESTRONG" bracelets..

### THE WORDS THAT CALL US TO LIFE

**You won't find the word "LIVESTRONG" in the Bible, but there is no shortage of inspirational words calling us to live our best life.**

Living your best life is...

- **Living for the Lord: Loving the lord with heart and mind.** The man answered Jesus' question: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself." "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." Luke 10:27-28
- **Living with an open mind that engages in the world, and engages with the spirit:** Jesus answered, "It is written: `Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4
- **Living with charity:** A poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything -- all she had to live on." Mark 12:42-44

- **Living by the truth:** Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." John 3:20-21
- **Living in peace:** Finally, brothers, goodbye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

You can be sure that the sermon today will be short and to the point. Like many of you, I am a fan.

### WHAT IS A FAN?

Much of the life of the early church centered about meals, some of which were symbolic meals. Maundy Thursday, Passover, Easter and other holidays were times of celebration that included elaborate meals that were accompanied by entertainment, and sometimes worship. The *feste* in Anglo-French; the *fiesta* in Spanish, and the *fanum* were forms of celebration in the church derived from the feast days.

*Fane* – which is derived from “feast” – is a word that means temple or church.

Profane – means to treat that which is religious, with disrespect, irreverence or abuse. There is a modern, more secular word that is derived from *fane*. It comes from the Modern Latin *fanaticus*, meaning "insanely but divinely inspired." The word originally pertained to a temple or sacred place. So when the devoutly religious became the extremely zealous, they became the “fanatics.”

Many believe that the word “fan” is merely shortened version of the word *fanatic*. (*Fanatic* itself, introduced into English around 1525, means "insane person.")

*Wikipedia* also distinguishes between the word fan, and rabid fan, in which most of one’s identity is derived from a team or person who is the object of veneration.

So I think today that we have gathered in the fane, and those who have gathered are likely to be fans in the religious sense, joined by fans in the sporting sense, mixed with a few rabid fans, and also with a few fiesta lovers mixed in. Fans are attached to something outside themselves. And sometimes we can’t even explain why.

The population of Santa Rosa is estimated to be about 150,000. Local organizers of the Tour of California estimate that with good weather that number could nearly double for a few hours today because of fan (es).

### SO WELCOME TO THE FANS. Welcome Tour of California, 2009!

The Church of the Roses welcomes the Tour of California back to Santa Rosa for the fourth year. We are grateful for the healthy benefits of exercise, the strength that comes from unity, the power of knowledge, and the importance of a positive attitude in approaching the challenges not only of bicycle racing, but of life itself.

Our prayer for the competitors and visitors is this:

*If we should find reason to rejoice in victory,  
Forbid it Lord, that we should rejoice  
in the adversity of others.  
And if there are others who run faster  
or more surely,  
then let us remember that when we fall down,  
no defeat is ever final.  
It is only final when we refuse to get back up.  
In Christ, we find the model of the One for whom  
even the final defeat was not final. Amen.*

Jesus was a fit guy. He walked when he traveled. He walked hundreds, perhaps thousands of miles. We are in his fane and we are his fanatics.

I am pleased that people of all ages seem to be able to find a sport of some kind to call their own. To that I add that there are those who are fans of the symphony, the Schulz Museum, the birds who live in our area and the flowers and trees that we are blessed with in such abundance.

Much better to be a fan of something than to hang out on the street corner looking for a way to hurt someone, to write your name on a building, or to act out in some other kind of anti-social behavior.

We want kids to play sports. Football, basketball, baseball, soccer, tennis, track and field and golf are part of our culture. Our own church made a generous donation to the *Place to Play* baseball and soccer fields, and we did it for the children.

**Here are a couple of Lance quotations that aren't biblical, but to the people who are living through cancer, they have become scripture:**

- Pain is temporary, but quitting lasts forever.
- To all the cynics I am sorry for you. I'm sorry you can't believe in miracles.

I don't care so much if Lance wins this year. I may feel differently at the *Tour de France* in July however. But I do care that he is in the race again. This year he is racing for free. He is sponsoring an under-twenty-three team. He's made his money and set his mark. But he is a symbol for people living with cancer.



### **MORE FROM LANCE ARMSTRONG**

- Through my illness I learned rejection. I was written off. That was the moment I thought, Okay, game on. No prisoners. Everybody's going down. Lance Armstrong
- If children have the ability to ignore all odds and percentages, then maybe we can all learn from them. When you think about it, what other choice is there but to hope? We have two options, medically and emotionally: give up, or Fight Like Hell. Lance Armstrong
- Pain is temporary. It may last a minute, or an hour, or a day, or a year, but eventually it will subside and something else will take its place. If I quit, however, it lasts forever. Lance Armstrong
- Winning is about heart, not just legs. It's got to be in the right place. Lance Armstrong

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