Use it or lose it.

• We all know that if we don’t exercise, then our muscles will atrophy.
  To keep healthy and fit, we must exercise our muscles or we will lose
  them. And that spend an extended amount of time in space
  must exercise to keep from getting very feeble and lose a lot of bone
  mass. You must exercise, then, ‘one small step for man and
  one giant leap for mankind’ when they land on Mars would result in a
  spacewalk.

• The same is true with spiritual gifts. If we don’t use our spiritual
  gifts, then we will lose them. As a child I never quite understood the
  parable of the talents. The person with one talent had his talent
  taken away and given to the person with 10 talents. It never seemed
  quite fair. But I now saw that it was said with others with 5, 2, and
  we don’t exercise our spiritual gifts like faith, love, and trust, and then
  we will lose them.

• “He who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I
  knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and
gain where you scattered no seed; so I was afraid, and
went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’
But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You
know that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered
no seed! Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers,
and at my coming I should have received what was my own with
interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the
talent. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have
an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be
taken away” (Matthew 25:24-29).

2. Help and encourage each other.
   • At a marathon thousands of spectators shout encouragement to the
     runners: “Good job,” “Black toenails are sexy.” “You’re almost
     there,” “You can do it.” “Plan is temporary, a fast time is forever.”
   • Change the subject like this: “This man encourages others to run
     life’s way.”
   • “Catch other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of
     Christ” (Galatians 6:2).
   • “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just
     as you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
   • “Let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the
     Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

3. Don’t be overwhelmed by the size of the whole task.
   Get started in simple ways.

   • Running a marathon may seem impossible now. But it will seem
     impossible later if you start running for half-marathons.
   • When the Israelis crossed the Jordan River, the water didn’t
     part until the priests went in. “Selah” was the sign that people broke
     through and the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant
     went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during
     harvest. Yet as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan
     and their feet touched the water’s edge, the water from upstream
     stopped flowing” (Joshua 3:14-16).

4. Eat before you’re hungry. Drink before you’re thirsty.
   • If you wait until you’re hungry or thirsty in a marathon, then it’s too
     late. You will bonk! You should hydrate and take a gel every three
     miles or so. Don’t wait until at the start you don’t think you’ll need
     it.
   • We will have a much better spiritual life if we pray and study daily,
     or four miles even at the start when you don’t think you need it.
   • “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the
     house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mark 1:35).

5. Don’t worry about tomorrow, Focus on what needs to be done today.
   • Don’t worry about all of the runs and miles necessary to be ready
     on race day. Just do the run in your plan for today.
   • “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry
     about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34).

6. We are capable of much more than we think—physically, mentally,
   and spiritually.
   • “In the day one ago I could only run three miles. Anything more seemed
     impossible. Now I have run each of the six major marathons in
     under four hours.
   • “You go through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).
   • “The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the
     earth. He will not grow tired or weary…He gives strength to the
     weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow
     tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who
     hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings
     as eagles; they will run and not grow weary they will walk and
     not be fatigued” (Isaiah 40:28-31).

7. When you’re going, go back to the basics.
   • During the last part of a marathon when you can see your pace
     slowing down focus on your gait: don’t over stride, make sure
     footprint is directly beneath you, you’re your cadence of 180
     footfalls land directly beneath you, you’re your cadence of 180
     steps per minute, have a high knee lift and long follow through.
     What you do these things I can see my pace increase or at least
     not decrease any more.

   • When your spiritual life is not doing well, then go back to the basics
     of God’s word. Remember others how God has helped you.
   • “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in
     contemplation of the life of Christ” (Desire of Ages, p. 83).

8. Persevere.
   • “The marathon isn’t over until you cross the finish line. In 2010 when I ran
     the New York City Marathon, my wife took a picture of a runner who
     had crossed the finish line with a broken leg.
   • “He who has received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I
     knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and
     gain where you scattered no seed; so I was afraid, and
     went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’
     But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You
     know that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered
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