

MONDAY MANNA  
Apr 22, 2024

**TO WIN LIFE'S RELAY RACE, DON'T DROP THE BATON**  
**By Robert J. Tamasy**

It is often said that life is not a sprint, but a marathon. Unlike a sprint – a race that ends almost as quickly as it starts – a marathon is a long, grueling race requiring persistence, perseverance, pain, and patience. However, recently I have realized a truly successful life might more closely resemble a relay race.

In a relay race, four teammates each run part of the event, passing a baton to the next runner until all four have completed their segments. The idea is to successfully make the baton exchanges and finish ahead of the other competing teams. But it makes no difference how fast you run if the baton is not passed.

The upcoming Summer Olympic Games in Paris, France underscores the importance of passing the baton. During the 2008 Summer Olympics, both the U.S. men's and women's 4x100-meter relay teams were to win. However, during the semifinals, runners on both teams dropped their batons, disqualifying them.

Interesting anecdote, but how does that relate to those of us earning our daily livelihoods in the global marketplace? Simply this – whether we realize it or not, we all are carrying “batons” that we eventually must pass to someone else.

As an author, I have written books about three multi-generation family companies. Two of these defied the odds by not only surviving but also thriving into their fourth generation of family leadership. For perspective, less than 33 percent of family companies survive to the second generation; less than 15 percent make it to the third generation, and only about 4 percent reach the fourth generation with family members at the helm. Those who succeed have effectively “passed the baton,” preserving their original vision, mission, and values.

Even if you are not part of a family company, you still have a baton to pass. You might be hoping to earn a promotion within your organization; thinking about taking another job when the opportunity arises, or even contemplating retirement. Who will take over your job when you leave? If you are in leadership, ideally, they will carry on your work as well – or better. This is typically called “succession planning.” We could also call it “passing the baton.”

Consider your family. If you have children, do you want them to learn and emulate your personal values, perpetuate family traditions, and if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, embrace the same faith and principles you have lived by? How are you going to “pass the baton” in your home?

In the Bible we find many examples of “passing the baton.” For example, Moses and Joshua leading the Israelites. Elijah and Elisha serving as prophets of God. Jesus Christ and His disciples. One of my favorites is Paul and Timothy. Paul's exhortation to young Timothy is a perfect verbal description of a real-life relay race and passing the baton: “and the things you

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have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (Timothy 2:2).

Jesus had the same idea when He commanded His followers to “make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). He was about to leave them and knew His mission would succeed only if they would pass the baton to future generations of believers.

© 2024. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A. Stoddard.

### Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever watched a relay race, during the Summer Olympics or some other track and field event? What are some of the challenges that victorious teams must overcome?
2. In some respects, everyday life and work is indeed like a marathon. But can you see that in other ways, it also can seem like a relay race? In what ways?
3. Why do you think it is so difficult for a family business to succeed in passing the baton to the next generation?
4. What do you think of the idea of “passing the baton” of values, principles, traditions, and faith within your own family? Or in the workplace?

### Challenge For This Week

This week take some time to consider how well you are running in your own “relay race” and whether, when the time comes, if you will be prepared to “pass the baton.”

Think about the individuals who may succeed you in leadership. Are you grooming anyone? Do you have a succession plan? What about the person who would be taking over your job if you were to leave – would he or she be properly prepared to assume your responsibilities? And most important, what are you doing to pass along your beliefs and values not only to your children, but hopefully, also to future generations?

Consider meeting with a trusted friend to discuss this – and to provide mutual encouragement.

#### NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:  
Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 33:44-47; 1 Timothy 1:18-19; 2 Timothy 1:13, 3:10,14

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