

# South Africa: Running the race

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God is full of wisdom, and I'm impressed how he knows every heart and mind. Recently, I was involved in a six-kilometer obstacle race that involved five of us from the orphanage where I am serving. God used that obstacle race to teach me about his unconditional love and grace.



Andres Pecero and friends in South Africa. In addition to Brianna Dusek (another other Go Now student missionary from the University of Texas at Austin) and myself, there were two boys, ages 9 and 11, and a 14-year-old girl who participated. I'll call her Molly.

One of the best things to do in these types of races is to run as a team and support each other. When the race started, the two boys decided to run ahead of us to finish the race faster. Brianna and I ran with Molly, realizing it would take her longer, since she is a little overweight.

By the time we got to the first obstacle, which was a little lake, Molly already was tired. We had to cross it walking, and the smell of the muddy water was disgusting. Molly didn't want to run anymore. Brianna and I

encouraged her, telling her that she could do it and finish the race with us.

Molly was being so negative, and all the words coming out of her mouth were not helping at all. She started to call herself fat. She said this was the first and the last time she was doing this type of race.

Every obstacle during the race was difficult to accomplish, and it seemed that we were not going to be able to do it. Every moment we stopped at each station Molly wanted to give up. Brianna and I kept pushing her and telling her that she was strong and that she could do this and much more.



Andres Pecero is serving with Go Now Missions in South Africa, working with children at an orphanage. I was getting impatient, but I knew we had to keep trying, so Molly could finish the race. There were moments where she did want to run, and we even grabbed her hand so she could see we were not going to leave her behind. I told her I was going to be with her until the end of the race, and that I would never leave her alone.

Other teams passed us, but we had to go slower so Molly could finish. She wanted to quit, and she was scared of what she was doing. But in those moments, we remained positive and encouraged her to continue. Each obstacle we faced became more difficult. There was a wooden wall that we

had to climb. I do not like heights, but I knew I had to do it and set the example for Molly. I was scared, but at the same time I kept reminding myself t I was strong and that I was not alone, because God was with me.

Like we stayed with Molly throughout the race, God is always with us in life. He put me in this situation so I could feel how God is so patient and loving with us. I had to be really patient to show Molly she was strong enough to finish a six-kilometer race. In life, there are times when we think we cannot continue anymore, but there's always One who overcomes our problems or difficult situations, and he is God.

I had to put myself in the situation Molly was going through, and I realized how God stays with us until the end. Molly's actions throughout the race are a lot like how we react with God. Sometimes we say negative things or we do not want any help at all. But after we calm down and work through our feelings, God is always there to restore us and remind us who we are in this world. There are times when we get mad at God, and we ask, "Why did you allow all this to happen?" Sometimes we think that we are not good enough to continue. The answer to this is Jesus Christ. He can heal and show us how to love ourselves and change the way we see life.

It does not matter how angry or how disappointed we think we are with God. God always will show us unconditional love.

We need to run the race of our lives, realizing God will be there no matter how scary, dangerous or hard life looks. Whenever I am hungry, desperate, sad or scared, God always will comfort my heart. Brianna, Molly, the two boys, and I finished the race with great joy.

Molly finished one race, but she is still running a race where God is the only One who can help her. The race we face every day would never be easy without our Savior, Jesus Christ.

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