

In 2010 I participated in a 12-person relay called “Ragnar: Great River”. It was a 193-mile race from Winona, MN to a park in one of the northern suburbs of Minneapolis, running along the banks of the mighty Mississippi. It was beautiful. There were thirty-six legs in this race and each team member ran three legs. It was quite an experience as it took our team twenty-eight hours to complete the race, as it did most other teams. The event culminated in a giant pizza party in the park.

Now, I could spend many more paragraphs describing other details and sharing my adventures, but I will only share this one story. It took place near the end of the race. A team member, Jennifer, was running her section and we were waiting for her at her finish line so she could hand the baton off to the next runner. We waited and waited. We watched other runners come through and waited some more, but no Jennifer. As we continued to wait, we began to worry about her. Finally, we decided something was wrong, so we loaded the van and drove the route to look for her. After a couple of miles, we found her. As it turned out she took a wrong turn out of a roundabout and headed about three miles in the wrong direction. When she realized her mistake, she had to stop and turn around. She was devastated and felt that she had let the team down. Of course, she had not let us down. We were just happy she was alright. And so instead of letting her run those final couple miles alone, a couple team members got out of the van and ran with her, encouraging her along the way.

Turning around, repenting, is never easy, but it only truly happens when you realize that you are going in the wrong direction. Jennifer had a sneaky suspicion for a while that something was not right, but she had to come to that final realization and then make that intentional move to head in the other direction. In essence, she had to repent (leave it to a pastor to make a theological point out of a story like that). But as she got back on track, we were there to help and encourage her.

As a follower of Jesus, we are called to repentance. Sin is “running in the wrong direction” but repentance is getting back on track. Do you feel that something is not quite right in your life? Maybe you are continuing on your “wrong turn” because you feel that people have been let down. Well, let me tell you, there are brothers and sisters in Christ ready to receive you. And not only that, “run” with you and encourage you along the way. But even more than that, Jesus will never

turn his back on you. And even if no one “runs” with you, Jesus is always there to carry you. Turn to God, in the name of Jesus. He is there for you. Amen.