

BREATHING EASIER WITH THE GOSPEL

When I started long-distance running, I had no idea how it would bless my life.

By Alex Masterson

I still remember sitting in the doctor's office the first time I got an inhaler. I'd just taken a puff when the doctor warned, "Make sure you hold your breath to keep the medicine in longer."

So I just sat there, mouth bloated like a puffer fish.

I looked at the inhaler. "I better get used to you," I thought, "cause you and I are gonna be together for a very long time."

I was in elementary school when the doctor told me I had seasonal asthma. It meant that for eight months out of the year—the warmer months in Texas, USA—I could run just as much as any other



kid. But the second it got cold, I would start to wheeze so bad that it became hard to breathe. And while my asthma could be managed, the doctor really didn't have any good advice for how or if I could ever get rid of it. So as the years went by, I did the only thing I could do. I got used to it.

Once I started middle school, it came time to choose a sport. It seemed like everyone was a part of at least one team, but since I was so scrawny, it didn't really feel like there was much to choose from. In the end, I

settled on running track mostly because the meets were during the warmer months. *And* because it didn't require any upper body strength.

We had to choose an event in track, so my first thoughts were short-distance events. Less pain, I thought. I was all about that.

First, I tried out the 100-meter. I was always last.

Then, I tried the 200. Last. 400. . . . Last.

Hurdles . . . well, that's about when the coaches suggested long distance. Unfortunately for me, that was anything but easier—the very name

made that pretty clear. But it was all that was left.

With the help and motivation of my team and our hard-core coach and with a lot of work, I actually started improving. I even started placing at track meets, getting third and even

second in events like the mile and 1,800-meter run.

The more I ran and the harder I worked, the more I liked it. So I stuck with track. Then when I got to high school, I started cross-country.

The runs got longer and the competition got faster, so I had to step it up too. All the while, I began to notice a change. Running wasn't just a chore to do because of school. It made me feel amazing!

I hardly ever got sick, and whenever I did, I was never down for long.

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Being a runner also made me more conscious of what I put in my body. Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs were never remotely an option, because they would ruin years of hard work and because they were against the Word of Wisdom. I even cut back on soda because drinking it seemed to make it harder for me to push myself during workouts.

Long runs stopped being hard, and they became times to think and just enjoy exploring different neighborhoods. I especially loved long-distance runs during warm Texas rainstorms. Those runs made me feel like I could do anything.

During my junior year, I went to an allergist for a checkup. When I said I had asthma too, the allergist's team asked if they could test me to see how

bad it was. When I said they could, they administered the test and then looked at me in surprise.

"It doesn't seem like you have asthma at all," the doctor said.

"What are you talking about? I've always had seasonal asthma."

"OK, when was the last time you used your inhaler?" he asked.

"Well . . . it was . . ." I pored over years of memories. "I don't know," I said.

I finally began to understand the power of the Word of Wisdom.

Heavenly Father had been blessing me all along.

I can't say that long-distance running is a cure-all for everything, and I know that not everyone with seasonal asthma will have my same experience. But I do know that as I exercised regularly and ate wisely, my body and my mind grew stronger. Heavenly Father even took away a weakness I thought I would have my whole life. Now I know that as we do our best to make healthy decisions, the Lord has the power to make us stronger, no matter the odds. **NE**

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