

IT'S NOT HOW YOU START, BUT HOW YOU FINISH!

By: Robert J. Tamasy

One of the most popular spectator sports around the globe is auto racing. In the U.S.A., NASCAR has become the fastest-growing spectator sport. In many parts of the world, Formula One racing captivates the attention of millions. The Indianapolis 500, run several weeks ago, has become a major international event with drivers from many nations competing for the right to take the traditional drink of milk in the winner's circle.

Auto racing, however, is more than a sport. It has become big business, even in the lower echelons where drivers are trying to prove worthy of competing at the top levels. In NASCAR, for example, the top teams spend between \$15 million and \$20 million annually, while Formula One racers are backed by even more money to support their technology-driven operations.

Although I do not have a mechanical bone in my body, auto racing has captured my imagination over the past decade or so. One reason for this, I suppose, is that many of the principles that affect success in auto racing also are crucial to successful living, whether we are at work, with our families, or wherever we go. Here are some of the principles from auto racing that apply equally to everyday life. Interestingly, these same principles can be found in the Bible:

It's not how you start, but how you finish. The fastest car at the start of the race is usually not the fastest car at the end. Cars may encounter engine problems, can crash, or get passed by other cars that are running faster later in the race. In the same way, a promising start – at a job, in marriage, or a personal project – does not guarantee a successful finish. People who succeed at any endeavor are those who keep the finish line in focus from the start.

You cannot do it alone. Auto racing is truly a team sport, with crew chiefs, engineers, pit crews, mechanics and many others all contributing to a winning effort. In the same way, there is no such thing as a successful business or professional person who can excel without help. We need the differing strengths, abilities and experience of others to achieve our goals.

You have to persevere despite setbacks and failures. It's easy to proceed when things are going well, but when we face opposition, when well-designed plans go awry, or when we encounter unexpected setbacks, it becomes tempting to give up in frustration. But as the old saying reminds us, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

Life is a road course, not an oval. In NASCAR, most of the racetracks are ovals where drivers continually turn, but two events are staged on road courses, meaning drivers turn both right and left, and the roadway includes hills that take cars up and down, often around tight corners. The same is true in work and life: Because circumstances suddenly and unexpectedly shift; proceeding the same way at the same pace can lead to disaster. Sometimes we need to accelerate, other times we must slow down. But all the while, we must keep the finish line in sight, taking the most direct course possible.