

FLIPPED.

DEVOTIONAL

The Flipside of Ritual | Matthew 6:1-18

By Keith Smith, Executive Pastor

I have a confession to make. I am no longer a runner! I used to be. I've logged hundreds of miles, worn out jogging shoes and even have a t-shirt I received for competing in a half-marathon. Unfortunately, one day the comfort of the sofa and the enjoyment a bowl of ice cream became a bigger priority.

I want people to think I am a runner. There's a feeling of pride knowing people might be impressed with my athletic fortitude! Truth is, I enjoy impressing people more than I do actually running. So I have learned a trick. Every few days I dress myself in my Adidas shorts, Under Armour shirt and Nike running shoes [the expensive kind that clearly tells everyone I am a serious runner] and I hang out at jogging trails. I do this, hoping others are convinced that I am something that I want to be!

Too many times we live our lives trying to convince others how spiritual we wished we were. We dress ourselves in the rituals of religion – eloquent prayers, regular church attendance, Christian t-shirts and the car radio tuned in to KLTY. We work hard to convince ourselves and impress others.

In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus reminds us that religious ritual is empty and useless. Our heavenly Father has always been more impressed with substance over style. King David understood this in Psalm 51:16-17, *"Going through the motions doesn't please you. A flawless performance is nothing to you. I learned God-worship when my pride was shattered. Heart-shattered lives ready for love don't for a moment escape God's notice"* [The Message].

I don't want to give up being a runner. I simply need to reprioritize. I need to focus more on *why* I run more than *who* I run to impress. Likewise, don't forsake the rituals of religion. Take the flipside and give God a humble heart filled with an overflow of worship.

Keith Smith, a Dallas-Ft. Worth native, graduated Magna Cum Laude from Texas Tech University and earned a Masters degree in Religious Education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served full-time in both student ministry and children's ministry since 1988, including at Sagemont Church in Houston. Keith brings to PBC his heart and vision for ministry to families, especially those with children birth through sixth grade, and his passion for doing ministry in a Connecting Church. He is a member of our senior leadership team serving as Executive Pastor. Keith and his wife Denise were married in 1992. They have two children, Jordan (1994) and Alex (1995).