

“Hang in There”: Steadfastness in Ministry Ministry Community 4-13-04

Ministry has its joys but ministry also has its times when you want to throw in the towel.

- Discouragement will come
- What good is this really doing?
- Feeling that no one appreciates me
- The attacks of Satan are greater upon someone with leadership responsibility
- The flesh gets weary, which is why the bible says “do not grow weary in doing good...”
- Sometimes we all feel like: ‘I would rather do about anything right now”

Quo Swindoll says $\frac{3}{4}$ of the ministry is just showing up and doing the mundane.

Perhaps the fact that discouragement and weariness is such a common thing that God put so much in His Word about this. Consider these verses:

Key Verses:

1 Cor 15:58

58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you.

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Rom 5:3-5

3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 **perseverance**, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Gal 6:9-10

9 Let us **not become weary** in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Heb 12:1-3

12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, **and let us run with perseverance** the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will **not grow weary and lose heart.**

2 Tim 4:7-8

7 I have fought the good fight, I have **finished the race**, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

If we are going to live out these passages, then there are some important things we need know and heed. I ask us this question:

What is it that *should* keep us going in ministry (not in our walk with God, but in ministry/leadership)?

1. A sense of the calling of God. 2 Peter 1:10

There should be a sense that what I am going is what God wants me to do. Called as a follower of Jesus to serve or lead, and maybe even a sense of God's calling into a particular area (ex. Scott Finn with children's ministry)

2. The enormous importance of what we are doing. 1 Cor. 15:58

We are serving God. We are seeking to expand His kingdom. We are investing in eternity. And this is what 1 Cor. 15 addresses.

3. The stewarding of the gifts He has given us. 1 Peter 5:10; Eph. 2:10

We have all been entrusted with certain gifts and we are to steward these gifts faithfully. To whom much is given, much is expected. Not in some legalistic way, but as followers of Jesus, we should have a sense of "I don't want to be unfaithful in what I do with what God has entrusted to me." Billy Graham could say, "Well, I don't want my name on the ministry and kind of

back away, and in so doing he might be being unfaithful with the incredible gifts God has given him.

4. A desire to further the kingdom of God. 1 Cor. 15:58

Out of love for God and appreciation for all He has done for us, I think there should be (though it may not always be felt) a sense of wanting to further God's kingdom, wanting to see people saved and disciplined and that this is a proper motivation for hanging in there.

**5. Not wanting to negatively influence those who are "watching."
Lu. 17:2**

This one may seem strange but there should be a proper fear of what would happen to others if I were unfaithful or quit or threw in the towel. I remember a thing Chuck Swindoll published once called "The Effects of a Moral Fall" – in which he talked about those that would be damaged if a pastor fell into sexual immorality... put the fear in you! This is kind of like that. Who is watching me, that if I give up, might also give up???

6. Not wanting to give the enemy a cause for rejoicing. 1 Peter 5:8

Satan would certainly like us to bail. And if we did, he would love it. I don't want that.

7. The promise of rewards for faithfulness. Jas. 1:12

You might think this is an improper motivation, but I don't. Randy Alcorn ... says God has put in us this desire/need to be rewarded (that's why our kids do things better if there is a reward) and wanting to receive eternal rewards is not necessarily a selfish or prideful thing. It can be.

Quo p. 161 of Alcorn There should be other motivations as well.

TS So, these are things that should keep us going, now let me offer some practical points for us all. Believe me. I need these.

When times are tough and I want to give up:

1. Be sure to stay in the Word and prayer. Lu. 10:38-42

We all know how important this is. Even if time with God is dry, don't neglect it.

2. Take time to be thankful and reflect on the fruit of your life. Ps. 103

Dede's advice to me once
My depression bag

3. Be aware this could be a test. Jas. 1:2-4

A test from God to see if you will pass it and if you do, greater blessings or joy. This could be a stepping stone that you have to get past in order to be a part of the next thing God has for you.

TS similar to the last one:

4. Be aware this could be about character development. Rom. 5:3-4

It is for sure about this in some way, but it might be a time sent by God to refine you.

5. Don't be ignorant of the enemy's devices. 2 Cor. 2:11

Satan may be behind this and be sure to cover the spiritual warfare base.

6. Be aware that something very significant might be around the corner.

Often right before something big, the enemy will attack or God may be preparing you.

7. Be willing to make adjustments along the way.

At the same time, the difficult time might be to have you make some adjustments. God might be leading you to a new place or to have you tweak some things.

8. Be willing to accept a "thorn." 2 Cor. 12:9

I don't even like mentioning this one, but Paul got a thorn to keep him humble and dependent.

9. Depend on the power of the Spirit. Eph. 5:18; 2 Cor. 12

This tough time is a great reminder to not live in the flesh but in the Spirit.

10. Get adequate rest and proper breaks. Ex. 20

You might be weary and discouraged and ready to give up because you need a break.

11. Be connected with supportive people. Hebr. 10:24-25; Mt. 26:38

We need Garden Friends for these times. God wants His body to help hold your arms up.

12. Read material that motivates you.

Perhaps read a good biography of a great saint in the Lord.

13. Lean on God's sovereignty. 1 Cor. 3:6

Knowing that God is in control and sovereign is a great comfort. He is the Lord of the harvest, not me. He is the one who causes the growth. Not me. He is the Head of the church. Not me.

Hand in there. And hand on to God. And keep an eternal perspective.

Illustrations?

Any feedback or anything to add?