

Endurance: God's plan to help us keep going when it's seems impossible.

Introduction:

Psalm 119:81-88

81 My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word. 82 My eyes fail, looking for your promise; I say, "When will you comfort me?" 83 Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget your decrees. 84 How long must your servant wait? When will you punish my persecutors? 85 The arrogant dig pitfalls for me, contrary to your law. 86 All your commands are trustworthy; help me, for men persecute me without cause. 87 They almost wiped me from the earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts. 88 Preserve my life according to your love, and I will obey the statutes of your mouth.

This is a prayer for perseverance, for endurance. Do you ever feel like this...?

God just put this word, endurance, on my heart this week and so today I wanted to share with you some thoughts about enduring, running the race, LIFE, with perseverance. How do we do it, how do we not give up when it seems that the odds are so stacked against us?

I. To help us with some ideas and thoughts about endurance let's look at the meaning of endurance or perseverance depending on your translation:

A. To last, remain; "everlasting"

B. To tolerate, suffer; "bear patiently"

C. Endurance is gained by learning how to crash through quitting points... I heard a coach say recently to an athlete, "If you feel like you have nothing left to give, then you did your best, you left it all on the field." The opposite of endurance is giving up, quitting, and we live in a world of quitters and people who just give up, people who live without hope...

II. Cultivating Endurance:

A. Hope is the backbone of endurance, Godly endurance is rooted in the confidence we have in the Lord. There is a direct correlation between our belief in God and our endurance. Consider Hebrews chapter 11, the “By Faith” chapter..., note also the connection between faith-endurance-and accomplishment, it’s HUGE...

B. Endurance is often produced through suffering, by and through the sustaining power of our Lord. It often takes suffering in order for us to realize that we can’t do it on our own and that we do have to rely on God:

I am often finding in the professional reading I do that people are discovering ideas, or think they are discovering new ideas, and publishing books about them when in fact God has already revealed it in His word. I think this creates a great opportunity to share the word of God. If you read books like this, or know people who do, show them, tell them, where God had the idea first and how it works in His Church...

Another one of those books speaks to the topic of endurance as it addresses the topic of survival.

Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why (2003,) by Laurence Gonzales, was the first scientific book on survival. It set the bar and started the trend that spawned a spate of imitations. Since its publication, this best-seller has been embraced by everyone from the head of training for the Navy SEALs to the Sloan School of Management at MIT. Its appeal has been so broad and deep because the principles in *Deep Survival* apply to any challenge that life poses, from coping with a financial crisis to battling a life threatening illness or dealing with addiction and recovery. And psychologists, oncologists, business executives, and clergy have brought the principles of *Deep Survival* to their clients to help them face adversity, to manage risk, and to enhance decision making in every form.

B. continued, Surviving as a Christian matches the 12 rules of survival gathered from Gonzalez's book. I want to share those 12 points with you right now and let's note how God has revealed this formula for survival, endurance, long ago.

1. Perceive and Believe (think Vision): Matthew 10:22 "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."

Survivors admit the reality of their situation, "count the cost, we are fellow partakers in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus." Denial will never help you move forward or work through your challenges in life...

2. Stay calm, focus your pain and anger (think Courage): Acts 14:19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. 20 But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe."

3. Think, Analyze, and Plan: I Timothy 4:16 "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."

Survivors quickly organize, set up routines, and institute discipline in the face of grave danger; reason gives direction and emotion provides the power source. Consider the developing story of the Chileans trapped in the mine... Isn't this what God's commands, His word is all about, it gives us direction, a plan, a way to live that is meaningful as well as purposeful...

4. Take correct, decisive action: Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross **daily** and follow me."

Survivors break down large jobs into small manageable tasks. They are meticulous about doing those tasks well. They handle what is within their power to deal with from moment to moment, hour to hour,

and day to day.

5. Celebrate your success: Hebrews 10:32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. 35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. 36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. 37 For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay."

Survivors take great joy from even their smallest successes.

6. Be a rescuer, not a victim: II Timothy 2:10 "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

People cannot survive for themselves alone; there must be a higher motive.

7. Enjoy the survival journey: Romans 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."

Sometimes for me it is like the chore, the task, of doing my workout... I am really pleased with myself after I do it...

8. See the beauty: James 1:12 "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." James 5:11 "As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

Look to the spiritual reward...

9. Believe that you will succeed: I Corinthians 10:13 “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

The survivor’s will to live becomes firmly fixed. Fear of dying falls away and a new strength fills them with the power to go on.

10. Surrender: I Corinthians 1:9 “Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.”

Resignation without surrender; yes, you might die, in fact, you will die, don’t let it worry you. To be a child of God we must die and as Luke stated in 9:23 we must make the decision, to die, daily. But, for us as Christians there is great reward secured in death... How do you put God first in your life, I think that is the question that sums up this lesson today, How do you put God first in your life? That’s what surrendering is all about.

11. Do what ever is necessary: I Corinthians 4:11 “To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. 12 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13 when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.”

Remember the Alive story...eating the flesh of those who didn’t survive...

What we have to do is stand up to Satan and let him know that Christ is the King in our lives. Satan will bully us and we have to stand up to him. “Take a stand, lend a hand...”

12. Never give up: Hebrews 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.”

If you are alive, there is always one more thing that you can do. Survivors are not easily discouraged by setbacks. Survivors always have a clear reason for going on. They see opportunity in adversity.

Conclusion:

The reality is that as God’s children the odds aren’t stacked against us, they are actually in our favor, we have an unfair advantage over EVIL, Romans 8:28 & 37-39:

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Invitation:

How do you put God first in your life?