

LESSONS FOR LONGEVITY

I QUIT! Have those thoughts ever crossed your mind as you have been involved in ministry? Obviously, serving others has its ups and downs. You may often feel defeated, dejected, disheartened, disillusioned, and downright discouraged. You want to quit! But what is it that causes a youth worker to decide to call it quits or determine by God's grace to endure for the long haul? It sure is easy to stick around when everything is going well.

- You are excited.
- Teens are excited.
- Parents are supporting you.
- You feel needed.
- You feel accepted.

But take away a few pieces of the puzzle and how do you respond? That's the true test of commitment.

No one ever accomplished much who quit before the task was completed. If we want to see positive things happen in our youth groups for the glory of God, we must show our young people that we are committed to Christ and that we will be there for them. It is easy to quit, and anybody can do it, but it takes someone with dedication and determination to endure through hardship.

Jeremiah 9:2; 20:9

Getting discouraged in ministry is easily accomplished when we look at our problems, but we must take our eyes off self and focus on others . . . those to whom we minister.

I. Why Does Discouragement Come?

- A. Everyone will have to face discouragement.
- B. What has brought you discouragement in the past?
- C. Discouragement comes because
 1. You have not met a goal you set.
 2. You are not consistent in your own Christian life.
 3. Things do not go the way you wanted, planned, or intended.
 4. You are struggling with parental support.
 5. The teens you work with do not seem to have any spiritual interest.
 6. One of your teens has fallen into sin.
 7. People you witness to reject God.
 8. You feel alone.
 9. Satan seems to be winning all the spiritual battles.
 10. Your teens do not seem to heed your biblical counsel.
 11. Problems arise and you are not sure how to deal with them.
 12. You find out others do not like how you run things.

- D. Even though we will undoubtedly face difficult circumstances in our life, we ought to not “throw in the towel.”

II. Principles About Discouragement

- A. Discouragement often comes after we have seen God do some great work—1 Kings 17-18; 19:1-4.
- B. Discouragement causes us to lose our vision and focus on ourselves—1 Kings 19:5-10, 14.
- C. Discouragement can be used as an opportunity to get closer to God—1 Kings 19:11-14.
- D. Discouragement helps us to see God is not done using us—1 Kings 19:15-21.

How is it that a person stays involved with the same young people over an extended period of time through a variety of circumstances? I believe that it involves several reasons.

III. Keys To Longevity—DETERMINATION

- A. Maintain a positive attitude.
- B. Depend upon God—Philippians 4:13; 2 Corinthians 12:9.
- C. Understand your motivation: Why do you do what you do?—2 Corinthians 5:14.
- D. Understand God’s purposes for you—Romans 8:28.
- E. Draw close to God, for He will carry you through.
- F. Focus on others, not self.
- G. Battle through your discouragement; there is hope.
- H. Reflect on what God has done for you and through you. What has been a blessing to you?
- I. Remind yourself of God’s call on your life.
- J. Endure for the long haul—2 Timothy 2:1-4.

IV. The Necessity of Endurance—Keeping On

- A. Endurance is essential to our faith—2 Corinthians 11:23-31.
 1. *Endure* means to endure hardship; remain firm under suffering or misfortune; suffer trouble; stay under; undergo; bear; to continue in the same space.
 2. There is a great need for faithfulness in the midst of hardship.
 3. Believers who endure will be rewarded.
 - a. 2 Timothy 3:11 “. . . *out of them all the Lord delivered me.*”
 - b. James 1:12 “*Blessed is the man that endureth . . .*”
 - c. Galatians 6:9 “. . . *we shall reap if we faint not.*”
- B. Our endurance will be tried and tested.
 1. We may fail, but failure can breed success.
Illustration of Thomas Edison who saw each failure as a step closer to success
 2. Endurance is essential in facing life’s difficulties—2 Timothy 2:3.

- C. We are to endure all things.
 - 1. Endurance is not a common quality.
 - 2. It is easier to quit than to endure, but we need to follow Christ's example—Hebrew 12:1-2.
- D. How can we endure?
 - 1. Realize you belong to God and that He has a purpose for everything—Romans 8:28.
 - 2. Depend upon God's strength, not your own—Philippians 4:13.
 - 3. Get encouragement from others—1 Thessalonians 5:11.
 - 4. Be armed/prepared to endure—Ephesians 6:11-18; 2 Timothy 2:1-4.

Are you able to endure for the long haul, or do you give in when the going gets tough?

NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP!—Winston Churchill