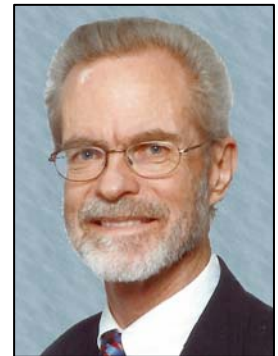


"I Quit!"

The Art of Perseverance

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There comes a time in every leader's life when they just wonder why. "Why am I doing this? Why am I putting up with all this conflict? Why do I keep "hitting my head against this wall? Why did I ever think I was supposed to do this?" Do any of those questions sound familiar to you?

As a Christian leader, do you ever find yourself questioning your call? "Did I really hear God in this? If I did, where is He now? I feel so incredibly alone. This vision has become a ten-ton weight on my head. Nobody else seems to get it."

When self-talk turns to self-abuse, it's time to remind yourself that one of the key characteristics of a successful leader is persistence...or perseverance, i.e., that ability to keep on keeping on. As Franklin Roosevelt is quoted as saying, "When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on." Then there's the story about Winston Churchill's famous (although historically inaccurate) speech, "Never, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, give in. Never give in. Never give in. Never give in." Whether true or not, the sentiment is totally accurate.

The "I quit!" mentality often starts after a major failure... or maybe after the umpteenth major failure. When you're walking through that so-called failure, it's hard to remember that failure is only a form of feedback. It's hard to remember that God's view of failure is usually quite different than our view of failure, e.g., see James 1:2-4.

Where is that God-given persistence that once was so strong that allowed us to learn to walk after hundreds of "failures?" How many times did you fall off a bicycle while learning to ride it? Why is it that our failure threshold seems to go down exponentially as we mature? Whose voice do you suppose we are really listening to?



Failure and Quitting

Remember that failure only comes when you quit. Therefore, the best insurance against failure is perseverance. Of all the characteristics of success that you can name, none rises to the height of perseverance. It trumps them all. Someone once said, in a probable reference to Eccl. 9:11, "The race is not always to the swift, but to those who keep on running."

This article is not meant to trivialize the difficulty associated with perseverance during the heat of the battle. But it is helpful to know that one of the functions of a trained, professional coach is to walk with you through some of those battles and help you view those often

difficult circumstances through a different paradigm, i.e., one who believes in you and in your ability to overcome and persevere to the finish line. Life is intended to be a team sport...don't try to go it alone. Get a coach!

Jerry Graham is a certified coach and coach trainer who helps pastors and ministry leaders become the leaders they were meant to be. Meet Jerry at www.TheCoachingPair.com or www.CoachingPastors.com/Graham.html.