

OCTOBER 30, 2016

PART 2

Staying The Course

FINISHING STRONG SERIES

The greatest thing you can leave behind is the example of a life well lived. If you leave that to your kids, then you've left them EVERYTHING. I like the way apostle Paul put it. He said this in the last half of his life's journey.

Philippians 3:12-14 - "12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (NIV)

In *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven Covey discusses the importance of having a personal mission statement. A mission statement is a document a person writes that sums up his or her personal philosophy. It should articulate the values that represent the person.

We all know for a fact that none of us is perfect. All of us fall short every day as spouse, parent, or as a child. What I have in mind is that at least to avoid major screw ups in life. Why is it that I don't want to screw up big time? People who screw up willfully remove themselves from the protection and power of Jesus.

Most of us think it is impossible to finish strong as a Christian especially in this evil world. But Peter said otherwise. 2 Peter 1:3 - "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. (NIV)." We've been given everything we need for life and godliness.

So what's the lesson that we can learn here? Christians often don't finish strong because we leave the devil a NAIL (called SIN) so he can hang garbage on it. You may own the entire home, but if you give the enemy access to just one nail in your life, it definitely puts you in the high risk bracket.

STAY IN

The first absolute requirement for finishing strong is to stay in the Word of God. Joshua 1:8-9 - "8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go (NIV)."

Joshua didn't sit around all day thinking about every detail of God's law. He had 2 million people to manage. He had to figure out a way to feed them, protect them, and mobilize them for battle. Joshua was a busy guy. I believe he's more busy than you and me. As you go through the day, make it a point to always read the Word of God. It's just like what the Psalmist mentioned in Psalm 119:11, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (NIV)

STAY CLOSE

Stay close to a friend you can't deceive. Stay close to a friend who loves you enough to tell you when you're screwing up. Stay close to a friend who will never violate your confidence. That's the kind of friend we all need. Christian circles call this ACCOUNTABILITY. Accountability is a good thing when it is experienced within biblical parameters.

One of the primary ways that the enemy keeps a guy from finishing strong is ISOLATION. Instead of being close to anyone, some people become distant to people who rebuke them. Instead of being honest, you begin to hide the truth. Instead of following Christ, you begin to act like you are following Christ.

Dr. James Houston observed, "Sin always tends to make us blind to our own faults. We need a friend to stop us from deceiving ourselves that what we are doing is not so bad after all. We need a friend to help us overcome our low self-image, inflated self-importance, selfishness, pride, our deceitful nature, our dangerous fantasies and so much else."

Hebrews 3:12-13 - "12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness (NIV)."

Depression is one of the most subtle ambush of the enemy. One of the ways you get through a depression and come out stronger on the other side is by having a true friend. The enemy loves to isolate us. He loves to get us alone.

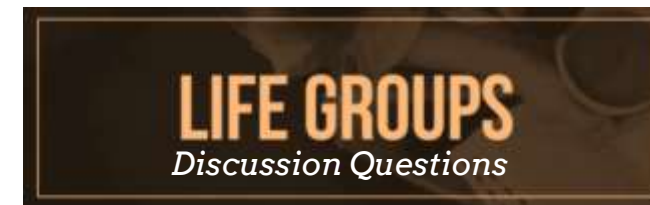
The truth is that you and I desperately need a few good friends. Friends with whom we can share failure as well as success. Friends who will encourage us when we're down and bring us down when we are becoming arrogant. Friends who will celebrate with us when we're doing great as a Christian and rebuke/correct us when we're straying away from God. If you've got a friend like that, your chances of finishing strong will go up a thousand percent! If you can't find a friend like that now, start with your spouse, start with your parents. If you don't maintain any other friendship, maintain that one.

STAY AWAY

I'm not saying that you become rude to other people. I'm not saying that you gain a reputation for being discourteous, disrespectful, cold, or aloof. What I am saying is that we keep an appropriate distance in our relationships with opposite sex with whom we work and associate. You don't need to act weird or strange. You don't need to make anyone feel uncomfortable to be around you. But the opposite sex that you work with and your spouse should intuitively know by your behavior and actions that here's a person who is clean and pure in relationship with others.

STAY ALERT

You must stay alert to the schemes of the enemy. Whether you're conscious or not, we are at war daily. To warn you, the devil is smarter and wiser than we are. This is what David Roper said about the devil: "Satan is a gentleman...A charming fellow with immense power, subtlety, and thousands of years of experience. His chief aim, of course, is to injure the God against whom he once rebelled. To accomplish this, Satan misrepresents the Creator to his creatures, always attempting to frustrate his good purposes for them and hopefully - in the process - break the heart of God."



1. **How was your bible reading and relationship with God lately?**
2. **Describe your walk with the Lord, can you say that you are still in the course? Share.**
3. **Are there relationships in your life right now that you think you should keep/ discard, why?**