

The Amazing Power of Faithfulness (Amazing Race #3)

Sermon by Todd Lester

February 28, 2016

Hebrews 12:1 And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.

2 Corinthians 4:1-18

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. (NIV) Paul was p_____, p_____, p_____, and p_____ but he didn't give up – he was p_____!

1. I MUST REMEMBER THAT _____

2 Corinthians 4:1, 1 Corinthians 15:10

2. I MUST MAINTAIN _____

2 Corinthians 4:2, Proverbs 10:9, 1 Timothy 1:19

3. I MUST HAVE THE _____

2 Corinthians 4:5, 2 Corinthians 4:11, Colossians 3:23

4. I MUST ACCEPT MY _____

2 Corinthians 4:7

5. I MUST _____

2 Corinthians 4:15

6. I MUST TAKE TIME TO _____

2 Corinthians 4:16

D_____ daily, w_____ weekly, a_____ annually

7. I MUST KEEP MY _____

2 Corinthians 4:17, 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, 2 Corinthians 4:18

P_____ are God's p_____ -p_____ p_____, and the key is p_____.

Run the Race

What kind of runner are you in this race of life? (remember: it's a marathon). Choose one type from the list below and share why it fits for you.



Sprinter

With the right training and pacing this race is a cinch!



Dancer

It's not a race, it's a party (look at all the other people!)



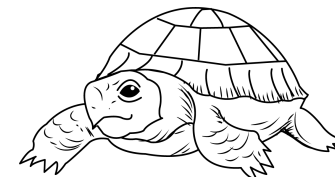
Yo-yo

I go hard and fast, but then need to slow to a crawl to re-energize



Stumbler

I really try, but seem to hit every pothole along the way



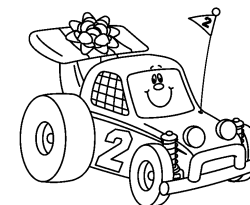
Plodder

I'm slow and steady but I don't quit and get there eventually



Tourist

It's really more about enjoying the journey, appreciating the scenery



Speedster

Train hard, run hard, finish as quickly as possible



Drifter

Highly motivated but can't stay on track. Need help to find the way

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Icebreaker/Introduction

The 'Run the Race' activity connects to Todd's statements about accepting our limitations. He mentioned that we are not all race horses and it got me thinking about the different ways people run in races. Use this activity as a light-hearted way to discuss our personal approaches to life and the marathon of faith.

Ask if there was anything from this week's message that stood out – either a point that was made which really resonated with them, or perhaps a question or difficulty that came up for them.

Todd talked about the importance of persistence and not giving up. He asked us to look back on our lives and ask ourselves 'what do you wish you'd never given up on?' Does something come to mind to share (Todd suggested: diet, music lessons, career path, school, learning a language, a relationship, marriage, ministry)

Todd said that everyone gets discouraged, disappointed or defeated. Would you be willing to share with the group an experience you've had with one of these feelings?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-18 – Does your example from the last question fit into this idea that Todd pointed out about faith - they were not afraid to trust God completely?

Paul was pressured perplexed persecuted and put down but he didn't give up – he was persistent!

Todd said that he could preach a full year on how to grow in faith but was focusing on 4 ways in this message. Before considering this week's points discuss ways that Christians can grow in their faith. Try to be practical.

1. I MUST REMEMBER THAT GOD LOVES ME

Focuses on 2 Corinthians 4:1, 1 Corinthians 15:10

Todd shared that sometimes when he is feeling not quite right before the service he will sing 'Jesus Loves Me.' Do you have specific ways that help you to remember that God loves you? If not, can you think of one?

Todd said, 'If I can feel love, then I can speak love.' Have you found this to be true? Have you found the opposite to be true (that is, if I speak love I will then feel love)?

2. I MUST MAINTAIN A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

Focuses on 2 Corinthians 4:2, Proverbs 10:9, 1 Timothy 1:19

Discuss Todd's statement that when you are open and honest there is more power in your life.

What are some examples of times when people have 'distorted the word of God'?

Are there limits to being completely transparent?

Todd mentioned Billy Graham as an example of someone who has lived a life beyond reproach. Do you agree? Can you give other examples?

3. I MUST HAVE THE RIGHT MOTIVATION

Focuses on 2 Corinthians 4:5, 2 Corinthians 4:11, Colossians 3:23

Do you think much about what motivates you? Does it make sense to you to apply this idea of working for Jesus' sake in your own job?

Todd said that the common phrase "I owe it to myself" is just plain old selfishness. Do you agree? (ex. do you sometimes use this after a job well done?)

Todd pointed out that it's not wise to count on people for motivation as they will eventually disappoint you. How important is it to you what people might think or say about you?

4. I MUST ACCEPT MY LIMITATIONS

Focuses on 2 Corinthians 4:7

Have you come to grips with your personal limitations?

Do you agree with Todd's assertion that 'strength and stability come over time'?

Todd mentioned that some of our limitations involve schedules (we can only do so much with the time we have) or pressures (how much can we handle). What other kinds of limitations can you think of?

5. I MUST LOVE OTHER PEOPLE

Focuses on 2 Corinthians 4:15

Who has persisted in loving you over your life?

Share a story about how you have been persistent in loving someone.

Discuss Todd's statement that 'God works in your life according to your faith.'

6. I MUST TAKE TIME TO RECHARGE

Focuses on 2 Corinthians 4:16

Divert daily, withdraw weekly, abandon annually

What are some of your strategies for recharging? Consider discussing this with each of the 3 categories Todd used: physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

What is something you would like to add in to your life that would help you recharge in some way?

7. I MUST KEEP MY EYE ON THE GOAL

Focuses on 2 Corinthians 4:17, 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, 2 Corinthians 4:18

Problems are God's persistence-producing program and the key is perspective.

What are some problems you have faced (so far) in your life, which you know have helped you to develop persistence?

How encouraging do you find Todd's statement that 'the most meaningless statistic in your life is the half-time score'?

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The Bible compares the Christian life to a race, a marathon. It's not a sprint but a marathon. Endurance is required to finish the race. God gives us amazing tools to run the race of life. Without these tools, you cannot run the race well, and you might not even finish the race.

Hebrews 12:1 And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.

2 Corinthians 4:1-18

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. (NIV)

Paul was pressured perplexed persecuted and put down but he didn't give up – he was persistent!

1. I MUST REMEMBER THAT GOD LOVES ME

2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore, since God in his mercy has given us this new way, we never give up.

1 Corinthians 15:10 For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace.

2. I MUST MAINTAIN A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

2 Corinthians 4:2 We reject all shameful deeds and underhanded methods. We don't try to trick anyone or distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know this.

Proverbs 10:9 People with integrity walk safely, but those who follow crooked paths will be exposed.

1 Timothy 1:19 ...keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked.

3. I MUST HAVE THE RIGHT MOTIVATION

2 Corinthians 4:5 You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake.

2 Corinthians 4:11 Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies.

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. (NIV)

4. I MUST ACCEPT MY LIMITATIONS

2 Corinthians 4:7 ...we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

5. I MUST LOVE OTHER PEOPLE

2 Corinthians 4:15 All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.

6. I MUST TAKE TIME TO RECHARGE

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. (NIV)

Divert daily, withdraw weekly, abandon annually

7. I MUST KEEP MY EYE ON THE GOAL

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our present troubles are small and won't last very long.

Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. 2 Corinthians 4:18 So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

Problems are God's persistence-producing program and the key is perspective.