

# Perseverance

Sometimes we feel like giving up the struggle. We try to do what's right, only to fall once again. We feel condemned, and we fear that even God may give up on us. At times there are so many issues to work on or difficulties to face, that we begin to feel as if we are going crazy. There are times when we grow weary and want to throw in the towel. We experience pain, fear, and a host of other emotions. We win some battles but lose others. We may get discouraged at times when we can't see any progress, even though we have been working hard.

God acknowledges the difficulties we face, but He also promises us victory in the end. ***"Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Death can't and life can't ... our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away ... nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord ... and ... I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.*** (Romans 8, Philippians 1)

In the Bible, Paul uses three illustrations to teach about perseverance: ***Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus .... Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone***

***competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead.*** (2 Timothy 2)

Like a soldier, we are in a war that we can win only if we fight to the end. Like an athlete, we must train for a new way of life and follow the steps to the finish line. Like a farmer, we must do our work in every season and then wait patiently until we see growth. If we stop

working our program before reaching the goal, we may lose everything we have fought, trained, and worked hard for.

When we feel as if we are going crazy and don't think we can handle life, God is there. He is determined not to give up on us. We can rely on his persistent love as we work to develop commitment and perseverance in healthy living. There will still be tough times, but with God's

help, we can handle them, one day at a time.

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What gets me down? When do I feel like throwing in the towel?
2. How do I help myself hold onto the truth that God is working victory for me when I can't see it?
3. How do each of the examples - soldier, athlete, or farmer give us encouragement when times are tough?
4. In what area(s) do I need to persevere this week, trusting that God is making all things right in my life as I faithfully do my part?

***God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with you forever in the next. Amen.***