

Winning by Finishing Well

"For the Win" series- Part 11

Use the next few minutes to connect with and learn about the other members of the group by speaking to the following situation: Can you describe a time when you experienced success and it was due in large part because of intense perseverance on your part?

In every life there can be found a record of setbacks, acts of sin, and poor choices. Despite these episodes, how can one finish life in a manner that is pleasing to God? Let's allow this question and the following introductory remarks to direct our discussion for today's study:

I (Pastor Danny) have found it easy to begin something new. Maybe it's a new diet, a new project around the house, or a new ministry to help others. There is something exciting about creating something new. Yet most of the things we want to accomplish are not done in a 50-yard dash; but a long marathon. In my house, I can find the pieces of a couple of projects that I had begun, but now they lie in a cardboard box waiting for me to complete my project. The goal is not to just begin well, but to finish well.

Based on your own experiences, why do you think it is easy to start something, yet sometimes difficult to finish it?

What is the one thing in life that you most wish you had stuck with until it was completed?

Let's look at the testimony of an apostle, who readily admitted to failures in his life, but who when he was coming to the end of his life, felt that he was finishing well:

Book: 2 Timothy 4:6-8

2Tim. 4:6 As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near.

2Tim. 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.

2Tim. 4:8 And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of His return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to His appearing.

Let's see what Bible truths we can learn from the above passage of Scripture, by using the following questions in a group discussion:

Set the above three verses into the correct time frame of past, present, and future:

- A. Verse 4:6 speaks of Paul's _____.
- B. Verse 4:7 speaks of Paul's _____.
- C. Verse 4:8 speaks of Paul's _____.

What words would you use to describe Paul's present situation?

What does Paul mean when he states that his life is poured out as an offering to God?

In what ways can a person pour out his life in such a way that it pleases God?

In other Bible translations, Paul describes his death in verse 6 as a “departure”. What is implied in his use of the word “departure” to describe his death?

Does the idea of departing to be with Christ cause you more regret or peace? If regret, how can you change this?

In verse 4:7, Paul looks back at his past and states that he has completed 3 goals...what are they?

How can you know that while living the Christian life, you have been involved in a “good fight”?

How will you know that your race (purpose) has been fulfilled?

Where can one find testimony that he has been faithful in his good fight and in running his race?

When do you most feel like dropping out of the race? What encourages you to keep going at those times?

Although his present situation had some dismal prospects, what did Paul look forward to in his future?

Should believers be motivated by the thought of heavenly rewards? How can we keep that motivation pure?

Now let's talk about how we can apply the truths we discussed today:

Paul gave these words of encouragement to Timothy, his “son in the ministry”. Who is your “Timothy”, the one you are pouring yourself into? If the answer is “no one,” ask God to direct you to someone.

What is happening in your present life that is hindering a “winning attitude”?

Where are you in running your race with purpose? Are you behind God's leading? Are there obstacles in your race that need to be dealt with? What's your next step to get in step with God's will and plan for your life?