

## Don't Quit!

Before talking about not quitting, or giving up, maybe the first question should be *what* not to give up. Obviously there are some things it is a very good idea to give up as well as times when the wisest thing to do is to give up something that isn't going well in order to do something else but there are some things we should definitely not give up such as-

**Believing** - "Do not throw away your confidence: it will be richly rewarded." Heb10:35 Giving up believing means throwing away something very, very precious. It could be argued people don't deliberately give up believing it just happens. Times of doubt are a fact of life. If some say they never doubt I suspect they are either very strong, a very new believer, not totally open and honest or have little imagination. The real question is how we deal with doubt and that depends on if there is a serious intellectual question which needs looking into or if its just panic. This panic has a habit of happening at the most inconvenient moments like when my plane tickets arrive for a mission trip. This bothered me but thinking about it, it's not really surprising that these feelings arise when God's help becomes really important. I remember going rock climbing and while I knew the person belaying me was sensible and an experienced climber and had no reason to want to harm me I still found myself saying out of fear "You will hold the rope tight won't you? You do know what you're doing don't you?" even though I knew this would be really annoying for them. Generally the way to deal with panic is to pray - "I believe help my unbelief" and ignore it until the mood passes.

**Waiting for our Lord's return.** (Luke 12:35) Those who keep watching and waiting are blessed and those who don't and do evil instead are punished. Israel brought big trouble on themselves because they didn't keep waiting for Moses to return from Mount Sinai. Their failure to wait cost over 3,000 of them their lives. (Ex32:28) and their history is recorded as an example for us. I found I felt very uncomfortable in the build up to the Millennium, as I had believed Christ would return by the year 2000. As a teenager I'd heard many lectures on the Olivet Prophecy teaching that the fig tree sprouted with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and if a generation is 40yrs that made 1988 a probable year of Christ's return. By 2000AD there would have been 6000 years of mans rule, so there were expectations that the kingdom would have come. Disappointing attempts at setting dates has put some of getting involved in studying prophecy but being ready for Christ's coming is not just about having a file of newspaper cuttings about signs of the times but about how we live in service to God. In Luke 12 the wise servant who is waiting for his master is the one who is faithfully getting on with his work day by day. I don't think we're meant to be watching for Christ's coming in the way children listen for their parent's footsteps on the stairs so they can switch the computer screen from games to homework! Christ will give the crown of righteousness to all those who *long* for his appearing and we should have a real awareness of the presence of God and the Lord Jesus in our lives now. Past expectations have been premature but the Lord will come and 'it will be good for those who are waiting he will come and serve them' (Lk12:37)

**Meeting together** Heb 10:25. It's easy to keep meeting together when our ecclesia is run the way we like and we have good friends there. It's less easy if for whatever reason we feel out of it, when there's an unhappy atmosphere or some contentious issue is constantly discussed. I think the majority of those who 'leave the Truth' don't do so because they have stopped believing the doctrines but because of problems with other people. It is important to be friendly to all our brethren and sisters and help them feel welcome and particularly to help young people have friends in the meetings. In spite of this if we are thinking of leaving because of unfriendliness or lack of people our age in the ecclesia maybe we should spare a thought for those baptised and living the truth in total isolation throughout the world because they believe it's important to do what God wants even when it is not easy.

**Encouraging** - this is what is supposed to happen when we get together. (Heb 10:25) Everyone needs encouragement, particularly in times of difficulty. It's not the size of the big problems that leads to people giving up but feeling alone with these problems. Sometimes it's hard because it can feel very inadequate to offer prayers and hugs and cups of tea in the face of major trauma but it does help. I remember one young sister with a serious problem saying how she hated hearing "I'm sorry for you but there's nothing we can do about it" Her comment was "I want to say 'Why don't you at least say a prayer for me or write me a note or ask me round for coffee?'" I suspect the reason was they didn't think this counted as doing something. I hope people did pray for her but she would have felt less alone if someone told her they did. It is far more helpful to know others are praying for one in times of difficulty than to be told that they worry about us.

**Praying.** In Luke 18 Christ gave the parable of the unjust judge to show we should always pray and so not faint. As the poster says; 'Seven days without prayer make one weak.' Even the miserable don't care man in the parable helped when he was nagged enough. We should have much more trust that God who really does care will do something for His children when they cry out to him even though it may not be what we want him to do.

Now a few reasons Why not to give up:

**'If you give up you don't get anywhere'**

I was watching a TV show - Children of Courage and when one disabled girl was asked why she hadn't given up she replied "If you give up you don't get anywhere" I've always remembered those words of common sense. Giving up may be easier in the short term and may attract some sympathy and help from others but it won't enable me to achieve my objectives. If I really want to get a qualification or pass my driving test or stand on my head (very important when I was 8yrs old) its only going to happen if I stick at it. Giving up is not a good habit to get into and looks bad on one's CV. Giving up in little things that don't actually matter (like headstands) makes it harder to persevere in things that so matter like work, keeping friends etc and of course giving up doesn't do any good doesn't do any good spiritually either. The good ground in the parable of the sower produced a crop by persevering.

**Christ never gave up** through the most extreme troubles. I remember at times thinking of giving up on the truth maybe even on life itself wondering if there was really was any point in trying anymore. Then the thought came “what will I say to Jesus?” Imagining seeing him and setting eyes on his hands and the evidence of what was suffered for me I realised my reasons for thinking of quitting were far too petty. Fixing our eyes on Jesus makes all the difference. Hebrews 12 from The Message- “Strip down, start running and never quit. No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on *Jesus* who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed- that exhilarating finish in and with God- he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame whatever. And now he’s there, in the place of honour, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. *That* will shoot adrenaline into your souls. In this all out match against sin, others have suffered far worse than you, to say nothing of what Jesus went through-all that bloodshed! So don’t feel sorry for yourselves.”

**Because we can have another chance (and another and another) and things can get better.** God is patient and doesn’t say three ‘lives’ then out in the way some computer games do. Sometimes things do suddenly become possible long after we feel it is really rather hopeless. I remember spending a lot of one Marlsford youth camp trying to walk on stilts and never managing it. Then when the stilts were raffled at the end of the week I won a pair. My parents somehow fitted them in the car and took them home but I still didn’t master walking on them and thought I never would. I only stuck at it because the thought of being beaten by them annoyed me too much. Then suddenly one day I finally got the knack. There are other far more important things, which are worth having another go at because it might just work next time.

**Because there is help.** - God’s help. It’s not all about what we can do with our own skill and determination but ‘it is God who works in you to will and act according to his good purpose’. We are promised we are not alone. However we feel God **is** able to get us through.

I wrote in my journal on bad day “but why am talking about giving up- no way am I giving up! Why not? Because of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. As long as he does not give up on us (which he won’t) I’m **not** quitting ”

I pray I can continue to mean this and that this will be true of all of us.

“Staying with it –that’s what God requires. Stay with it to the end. You won’t be sorry, and you’ll be saved.” Matt24 (The Message)

“Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the one who makes me who I am” Philip 4 (The Message)



## “Don’t Quit” Scriptures

You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope, with less of you there is more of God and his rule” Matt5

Straying with it –that’s what God requires. Stay with it to the end. You won’t be sorry, and you’ll be saved. Matt24

What is that to you. You follow me. John21

“My grace is enough; it’s all you need. My strength comes into it’s own in your weakness” Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focussing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ’s strength moving in on my weakness. Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size-abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get the stronger I become.” “Cor 12

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life

Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the one who makes me who I am Philip 4

When the going gets rough take it on the chin with the rest of us the way Jesus did. 2 Tim2

Strip down, start running and never quit. No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on *Jesus* who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed- that exhilarating finish in and with God- he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame whatever. And now he’s there , in the place of honour, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. *That* will shoot adrenaline into your souls. In this all out match against sin, others have suffered far worse than you, to say nothing of what Jesus went through-all that bloodshed! So don’t feel sorry for yourselves.

Heb 12

No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he’ll never let you be pushed past your limit; He’ll always be there to help you come through it. 1Cor 10

Take the old prophets as your mentors. They put up with anything, went through everything and never once quit, all the time honouring God. What a gift life is to those who stay the course. James 5

Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more learn to think like him. Think of your suffering as weaning you from that old sinful; habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannised by what you want.

Friends when life gets really difficult . don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't on the job. Instead be glad that you are in the very thick of what Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner....So if you find life difficult because you're doing what God said, take it in stride. Trust him. He knows what he's doing and he'll keep on doing it. 1 Pet 4

Now that we know what we have- Jesus this great high priest with ready access to God- let's not let it slip through our fingers. We don't have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He's been through weakness and testing, experienced it all- all but the sin. So let's walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help. Heb 4

So what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us- who was raised to life for us!- is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble nor hard times not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats not backstabbing , not even the worst sins listed in scripture:

"They kill us in cold blood because they hate you. We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one"

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I am absolutely convinced that nothing- nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable- absolutely *nothing* can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

Romans 8

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