

It's Time to Finish Well

Instead of focusing on big-picture things that might happen someday, prepare yourself now to receive what's coming

How many times have you heard someone say, "I wish I had what they have"?

It's easy to feel this way, not taking into account the hard work and self-sacrifice it took for those people to get what they have—a successful business, a slim figure, early retirement, you name it.

Too often we want to skip the hard work and go directly to the results. I believe many times people are looking for some magic formula to transport them right to the finish line. They're hoping for an easier way to get what they want.

We've all been there. Wouldn't it be nice to lose weight without having to cut calories or exercise? I'm sure a lot of students would love to get their diplomas without having to study or take tests. Wouldn't it be great to have a lot of new furniture and nice things without having to save up the money to buy them?

Nobody wants to suffer or sacrifice. But the fact is you and I will never have the things we want to have in life if we aren't willing to practice the discipline and self-control it takes to have them. To put it bluntly, if you want to have the perks, you have to put in the work!

Proverbs 25:28 compares a person without self-control to a city with broken-down walls—full of rubble and chaos. I can tell you from experience that building discipline and self-control into your personal habits will not only help you achieve your goals, but it will also help you gain real peace of mind. Why? Because you feel better when you start putting things in order.

Where to Begin

Taking inventory is a great place to start. Are you surrounded by a mess? Looking around your house, are there chores you've started but never finished—simple household repairs, stacks of unpaid bills, unmade beds or dishes in the sink that never get washed?

You may think, *These little things really don't matter—it's the big stuff that trips me up.* But getting organized in the normal routines of life and finishing little projects you've started are important steps toward realizing larger goals. If you can't get a handle on the small things, how will you ever get it together to focus on the big things?

Decide today you are going to be a great “finisher.” I believe we can get a lot of inspiration from some of the great finishers in the Bible.

Moses led the Israelites around the desert for 40 years before they finally reached the Promised Land. Lesson: You may have been stuck in the same mess for a long time, but it's never too late to have a great finish!

Job, though tested beyond normal human endurance, finished strong with a steadfast faith. The outcome? Job 42:10 says, “The Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before” (NIV). Lesson: Your tests, trials and failures haven't disqualified you from something great. Hang in there and keep pressing, because there's a reward at the end!

Paul, who suffered tremendous persecution for his faith, was able to write, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful” (2 Tim. 4:7, NLT). Because Paul didn't give up, he wrote more than two-thirds of the New Testament and is still impacting believers today. Lesson: The choices you make affect more lives than your own. Your decision to go to the next level and finish strong can leave a legacy that impacts many others.

You Are Equipped!

Here's the best news of all: These men were just people like you and me, and if they can do it, so can we! Yes, it's going to require effort, and some things will be hard at first. But God has equipped you to handle difficult things. In fact, He has already planted the seeds of discipline and self-control inside you. You just have to water those seeds with His Word to make them grow!

You have what it takes to be a great finisher. So make up your mind today to clean up the messes—big and small—dragging you down. Then say, “God, I am nothing without You. I can't do anything on my own.” When you do this, you can trust Him to give you the grace and strength you need to do what you need to do. As you take these steps in the right direction, you'll be amazed by your progress—and just how close you are to the finish line.

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