

## **Perseverance in Evangelism**

*By: Mike Porter  
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Have you been active in evangelism and struggling with endurance, wondering whether to give up hitting the streets, or to tone it way back? We all go through these struggles of the heart at times. A few years ago there was a stretch of about 6 weeks where I wasn't going out on the streets. In that instance, it was division between myself and other brothers and sisters who were evangelizing that led to quitting for a while. The six weeks were a time of sorrow and struggle. My goal in this writing is to prepare you for the struggles that can arise when we're out sharing the gospel week after week and encourage you to find ways in Christ to seek the Lord's counsel and persevere. Each second two people die and go to one of two places- the stakes are eternal. He's called us to be fishers of men (*Matt 4:18-22*). The fish don't usually come to you, you go to them. Each of us should have our favorite fishing spot or two to catch souls. We're called to self-denial and to take up our cross daily and follow Him (*Matt 16:24-27*)- evangelism is definitely an area where self-denial is critical.

Satan wants to do all he can to derail you from witnessing, and the Lord is prompting you to stay the course and to find a way to do it that is a long-term plan, consistent and run like a marathon runner who plans his course to start and finish the race well. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls." (*Hebrews 12:1-3*)

The writer of Hebrews encouraged and warned the Jewish believers to stay the course in their faith, including their evangelism. The struggles they had parallel the struggles we have in evangelism. What can cause us to wane in our passion for evangelism?

### **Not Prayerfully Counting the Cost**

At the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayerfully prepared Himself for the cross. So many times before that He told His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to the cross. It can be easy to get all excited about evangelism after reading a scripture, going to a conference or seeing someone get saved- but we have to count the cost. When we share our faith, there will be war in the heavenlies- count on it, "In fact, every one who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (*2 Tim 3:12*) Satan will persecute you- he's got many different ways of doing it- it may not even be out on the streets. You may also get persecuted by others in the church or family who don't understand your time commitments to evangelism. Go to the Lord in prayer and seek His counsel how often you should be out fishing for the souls of men that properly balances your life, and when you get an answer, doubt nothing. The Lord is sovereign over all these things. "Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday." (*Psalms*

37:5-6) The trials, tribulations and persecutions are all guided by a divine hand- trust Him and give it over to Him- He will produce pure gold out of them in your life in due season.

### **Patterns of Unrepentant Sin**

The author of Hebrews issued strong warnings about this (*Heb 10:26-31*). Our attitude toward sin must be drastic- as Ray Comfort illustrates, what would you do if you thought you were playing with a sparkler on the 4th of July and then found out it was a stick of dynamite? You'd throw it and run the opposite way. Do you examine your life before the Lord in prayer and ask Him about what areas in your life that you're tempted in? Are there areas you are falling in and repeating it? Read *Hebrews 10:26-31* and repent, and remind yourself of the gravity of sin before a Holy God. Continuing in willful, rebellious sin is like standing before Jesus Christ while He's on the cross and spitting in His face. Ask the Lord to create in you a clean heart (*Psalms 51*) and an abhorrence for sin (*Rom 12:9*) and repent. Run to the cross of Christ to boldly come to the throne of grace where Jesus Christ will give you mercy and you will find grace in your time of need (*Heb 4:14-16*).

### **Division With Others on the Team**

I speak from both personal experience and from watching others on our teams over the years- we must be unified. Any kingdom divided will not stand. We must go out of our way to humble ourselves before our brothers and sisters and "pursue peace with all people...lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (*Hebrews 12:14-15*) (The word "pursue" is a hunting term- imagine the intensity of a hunter pursuing his game! Division affects the whole group, not just the two individuals fighting. Imagine two sheep butting heads. All the attention of the other sheep is on those two sheep, instead of focusing on their Shepherd. What a disaster! "I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life." (*Phil 4:2-3*) You know- we'll see Euodia and Syntyche in heaven- their names are written in the book of life. I wonder what Euodia will say to me if I get a chance to ask her about her name written in the book of Philippians? I'll bet that she would say something like, "Paul was right- I'm so glad we repented of our division. Before Syntyche and I were so close- ministry partners, then we let a little division, a difference of opinion, get in-between us. Looking now from a heavenly perspective, it really stunk up the whole church. But we repented and became even closer than before, praise the Lord!"

### **Laziness**

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. "God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." (*Hebrews 6:10-12*) Are you tired? It's Friday night, and you know there are people out there that need the Lord, but a

quiet night in front of the T.V. and then sleep sounds oh so good. Or better yet, instead of T.V., fellowship with other saints at a Christian concert, or reading the Bible- anything but all-out intense one on one evangelism on the streets- your flesh just wants a little break. “He who gathers in summer is a wise son; he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame.” (*Proverbs 10:5*) It’s summertime, where are you? “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest- and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.” (*Proverbs 6:10-11*) “He who wins souls is wise” (*Proverbs 11:30*) Spiritual poverty is the result of not winning souls- you can bet on it.

### **Lusts of the Flesh**

What an agony it has been to see lusts take hold between team members. A few years ago I repented of lusts of the heart towards another on the team. I’ve seen others out evangelizing get destroyed by lusts, even affecting the witness of our team. Evangelism is intense. It is war- and in war, you develop very strong, kindred spirits- it is so important to keep these in check both in the heart and on the outside- we are to be above reproach and flee the first hints of lust and immorality (*1 Tim 5:2, 1 Thess 4:1-8, Eph 5:1-14*).

Helpful solutions to persevere till the end in evangelism:

### **Fix on Jesus**

In prayer and in the word, fix on Jesus- be encouraged that He knows our weaknesses, and cry out to Him for help. “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (*Hebrews 4:14-16*)

### **Fix Your Heart on the Heartbeat of God**

Evangelism is all about the Lord Jesus Christ- He is doing a work, and He’s rejoicing as He sees our obedience to His call and join Him in His work. When Joshua asked the Commander of the Army of the Lord if He was for us or for our adversaries, He said, “No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord, I have now come.” (*Joshua 5:14*) Joshua’s response was to align himself with his Commander, “And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped.” The Lord has a plan for evangelism, and it includes you. Bow before Him in worship, and join His forces- do what He has called you to do with all your heart. “For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost...it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” (*Matt 18:11-14*)

### **Fix on the 2nd Coming**

He’s coming back and His reward is with Him. Every time you go outside, look up at the clouds- they’re a reminder of His return. Let us live our lives as though He will return today, Amen! “But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you

endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated... Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: “ *For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him...* But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” (*Hebrews 10:32-39*)

### **Remember the Lord’s Sovereignty over Tribulations**

He’s looking out for your best interests in the midst of these difficult trials, temptations and tribulations. Flee temptations, stand firm in persecutions and tribulations, and watch the Lord work it all out for His glory and for your spiritual growth- He’s taking that which is lame and healing it- we’re all walking around with these wounds- and Jesus is healing them through trials as we’re trained by trials, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be *dislocated*, but rather be healed.” (*Hebrews 12:11-13*)

### **Get New Glasses**

Don’t look at evangelism through physical eyes. God has made you many promises- you plant the seed, and the Lord will grow it- it doesn’t matter how hardened the response is that you get from sharing your faith- He has taken many a stony heart and converted it! “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” (*Mark 4:26-29*) God is interceding, bringing sinners to Himself- He can save the hardest of hearts, “He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” (*Hebrews 7:25*)

### **Keep Pressing Forward**

Faith must always be active in pursuit of what the Lord has for us- this is so true in evangelism- we need to keep stretching our faith. Consider the Canaanite woman who cried out for Jesus to heal her demon possessed daughter (*Matt 15:21-28*). Jesus didn’t immediately give in to her request, but tested her faith, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.” Too often, when tested a little, we shrink back in evangelism. We need to be like this woman- she wouldn’t take ‘no’ for an answer and she learned something valuable about faith in Jesus- He loves it when we press forward in faith, and she got her request- her daughter was healed. Shortly after that, Jesus tested the disciples again to teach them about invisible faith, asking them to feed the multitude with a few fish and a few loaves of bread. Our resources are so limited in evangelism- will you step out in faith repeatedly, persevering and trusting that the Lord will lead you and take your limited resources, your “beautiful feet” that bring

good news (*Romans 10:15*), and breathe His Spirit to bring conviction (*John 16:8*),  
repentance and conversion to lost souls?

In Christ's Love,

Mike Porter