

Someone joked that an inventor made a new drink with water and one ingredient. It was called 1up – but it tasted bad. Another additive was put in, and it was called 2up. That was no good. A third flavor was put in, and it was called 3up. Gosh, it tasted bad! So a new ingredient was put into the drink. It was called 4up. It seemed to be getting worse. By the time six things were added and called 6up, the inventor gave up because it just didn't taste right. **IF ONLY HE HAD TRIED ONE MORE INGREDIENT!**

Most worthwhile achievements are seldom accomplished with the first effort. Or the second. Success usually comes only as a result of repeated efforts. Most inventions are useful after trial and error. Inventors will try and fail, and try and keep on trying and fail, but keep on trying – every time getting closer. They try a hundred times. And at the 101st time – "Wow! I did it."

People try jobs and give up before finding a way to do it that is successful and rewarding.

People try diets and give up because they never got to the weight they wanted in 2 weeks

People try a ministry, or reading the bible in a year, or praying for twenty-minute a day, and they give up because it didn't come easy and they feel a failure, and they want to stop because of the guilty feelings.

Today, the writer of Hebrews encourages us, "Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us." Runners properly nourish their body and recover well, and they work hard to build endurance. They endure long runs. They do speed workouts. They lift weights. They stretch. They push through the pain. They have

sore muscles and tired lungs. Likewise, in the Christian life, we run the race of faith, but we don't strive for the crown that only one can receive. We strive to finish strong in our faith. God makes us all winners when we cross the line. We get him! Forever! Thus, we all win God by persevering in faith and getting to the finish line.

How can we finish the race of faith well?

We strain to achieve success, studying and preparing through education so we can earn a living to provide for our family, for life. We seek out a friend who will share our lives, loving us, and standing with us in life. We work hard to advance in the profession so that we can ensure a suitable means of providing for our family. Also, we have our eye fixed on setting aside enough to provide for ourselves during the years of our retirement. And this is just the race to advance ourselves in the world of work.

The writer of Hebrews urges us, "looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." (Hebrews 12:2)

The more vital race is that we keep our eyes on Jesus and grow in our faith. However, advancing in the faith, maturing in Christ the Lord, growing in godliness, is seldom given the attention in our world. Even many professing Christians seem to believe that honoring God and serving Him according to His will are incidental to life. They are consumed with advancing their position in this present world, gathering money and accumulating things that must perish in any case. Service to God becomes a secondary thing that is done if they can find time after focusing on the earthly things.

There is a story of a man who was inviting another man to faith in Jesus. The man asked the Christian, "What is your profession?" or "What is your job?" However, the Christian responded, "I'm a Christian." "Yes, that is all very well," replied the man questioning, "but what do you do? What is your work?" "I am a Christian," the Christian said once again. "I support myself by plumbing."

That was one of the wisest answers any follower of Jesus Christ could give. Our first responsibility as a follower of the Risen Christ is to serve Him. Whenever anyone asks us what we do, our response should be, "I'm a follower of Christ." Whatever we do to support ourself and to provide for the first responsibility is subordinate to our calling to serve the Risen Christ.

If you are a student, and you can earn a "C," work to earn an "A." If you are a mother, don't settle for raising your children to be successful according to the standards of this world; push yourself to raise children to be examples of righteousness. If you are a father, don't just go to work to provide an income for your family, hoping to make a better life for them than you had; drive yourself to be an example of godliness that your family will always remember. Whatever you do, strive to excel, just as we are taught in Colossian 3:17, "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

As a Christian, we are in a race of faith. We have to run to win. We have to do whatever is necessary to complete the race, and in pushing ourselves to finish the race. We have to keep looking to Jesus with the intent of winning.

During the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, the last runner to finish in the marathon was an athlete from Tanzania. He had a difficult race. He'd stumbled at one point

and ended up bruised, bloodied—and with a broken leg! But he didn't quit. Even though everyone else had already finished the race and gone home, he kept at it. Finally, at seven in the evening, he ran into the near-empty stadium. There were still about 7,000 people on hand to witness his finish, and all 7,000 stood, giving this battered athlete a standing ovation as he finished his last lap.

When this dedicated marathoner was asked, "Why didn't you quit?" he responded, "My country did not send me halfway around the world to start the race; they sent me to finish it." We have to admire such dedication. He had every justification for quitting, but he didn't. He kept his eye focused on a higher motive—he would not disgrace his country.

When we became a Christian, we entered into the race of faith, which is life's journey for the Christian. We do best to strengthen our faith to finish the race of faith. We must look to Jesus daily in His word and prayer. Each look at Jesus would strengthen us to endure and finish well. He waits for us on the other side. He is our crown, and we will be with him forever. Every huff, every twinge of pain, and every prolonged day on earth is worth patiently enduring the journey to get to the finish line, to get to Jesus. Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder, and perfecter of our faith."