

## **Stick with It**

n/a

### **Ready:**

“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” -Romans 5:3-4 (NIV)

**Set** This morning when I stepped outside my door for my daily run, I was greeted by the crazy heat and humidity of a Midwest July morning. Usually the heat doesn't affect my running as much because I run during the coolest part of the day right before sunrise. But today, it was like someone forgot to turn on the air conditioner. It was over 80 degrees and, boy, was it humid. Since I am coming back from a recent injury, the heat didn't affect my mood as much. I was just grateful to be running at all! But it did make me think. As I ran, I pondered what my next race should be—a full marathon in the fall or a half; which full marathon to do in the spring. Once I started evaluating options, I started to ask myself in what kind of weather I'd most want to train for a marathon. You spend a lot of time on the road, and you really have to weigh whether you want to spend it layered up in cold-weather gear, or tough out your miles at 5:00 a.m. with bottles of water strapped to every part of your body. Either way, there are challenges to each. But the payoff is always huge when you step to the starting line in perfect conditions. One of the things about marathons is that many of them are scheduled for the time of year in which the weather is best for running. They are put on the calendar in the spring and fall so that you are more likely to have those perfect 50-degree starts. But, in order to get to those perfect days, you have to train through the most extreme weather periods. Want to run a fall marathon? You have to train in the summer. Want to run a spring marathon? You have to train in the winter. No matter what you do, if you want the best race, you have to endure tough conditions to get there. Isn't that just like life? If we want the best, there's always a tough training period leading up to it. If we want to be able to hit 90 percent of our free throws during the games of the upcoming season, we have to take a lot of practice shots in the offseason to get to that level. If we want to reach our 50th wedding anniversary with our spouse, we have to weather some tough years and conflicts to get there. If we want to get to heaven and finally meet Jesus, we have to persevere through the faith challenges on earth first. There are a ton of verses in the Bible about perseverance. God knew how hard life would be, so He made sure to give us plenty of encouragement on the subject. The theme seems to be that if we just stick with it—stick with Him—we will be rewarded. The verse above and those listed below offer proof. Jesus Himself offered proof by enduring the painful cross in order to conquer sin and death on our behalf. Thank God for His perseverance! Today, whatever you're working through—be it the start of a training program for a fall marathon or just the typical challenges leading up to any goal—stick with it. There's going to be hard times, but anything worth achieving comes with a price tag. And it is most likely those tough moments along the way that God will use to sharpen and develop your faith the most. Hang in there. According to His Word, the blessing is coming if you will only persevere.

**Go** 1. Do you find yourself always looking for easier ways to achieve a goal? Have you considered that the hard way might be the best way? 2. How does perseverance make us stronger in our faith? 3. Is God asking you to remain faithful to a task? How tempted are you

to abandon it? 4. What does His Word say about perseverance and how does it apply to your situation?

**Workout** Romans 5:1-5 Hebrews 12:1-3 James 1:2-4; 12

**Bible Reference:**

James 1



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