



We sing the song, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back," but why is it that so many people do? There seems to be an epidemic of Christians who begin well but finish poorly. Let me share seven crucial characteristics that will help you to finish well.

1. INTIMACY WITH CHRIST

Our highest calling is to grow in our knowledge of Christ and to make Him known to others. Does our desire to know Christ exceed all other aspirations? If not, whatever is taking His place in the center of our affections must yield to Him if we are to know the joy of bearing spiritual fruit.

A key secret of those who finish well is to focus more on loving Jesus than on avoiding sin. The more we love Jesus, the more we will learn to put our confidence in Him alone.

2. FIDELITY IN THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fellowship, study, worship, and submission are not ends in themselves, but means to the end of intimacy with Christ and spiritual formation. When left to itself, however, any one of these disciplines tends to decline and decay.

An infusion of directed intentionality and effort is necessary to sustain order and growth and to bring repeated times of personal renewal.

3. A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE

Part of the purpose of our suffering and trials is to drive us to dependence on God alone. God responds by revealing more of Himself to us. This knowledge increases our faith and our capacity to trust His character and His promises through the times we do not understand His purposes and His ways.

When we view our circumstances in light of God's character instead of God's character in light of our circumstances, we come to see that God is never indifferent to us, and that He uses suffering for our good so we will be more fully united to Christ.

4. A TEACHABLE, RESPONSIVE, HUMBLE, AND OBEDIENT SPIRIT

Those who finish well maintain an ongoing learning posture through the seasons of their lives. Humility and responsive obedience are the keys to maintaining a teachable spirit.

Humility is the disposition in which we displace self through the enthronement of Christ in our lives and realize that all of life is about trust in God. Obedience is the application of biblical faith in that which is not seen, and that which is not yet.

As we mature in Christ, we learn to trust God's character and promises in spite of ambiguity or trials.

5. A CLEAR SENSE OF PERSONAL PURPOSE AND CALLING

God has called each of us to a purposeful journey sustained by faithfulness and growing hope. This calling or vocation transcends our occupations and endures beyond the end of our careers.

As we seek the Lord's guidance in developing a personal vision and clarity of mission, we move beyond the level of tasks and accomplishments to the level of the purpose for which we were created.

6. HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH RESOURCEFUL PEOPLE

Relationships such as spiritual mentoring, servant leadership, and personal and group accountability are valuable resources that encourage, equip, and exhort. People who finish well do not do so without the caring support of other growing members of the body of Christ.

These relationships help us to increase in intimacy with Christ, maintain the needed disciplines, clarify our long-term perspective, sustain a teachable attitude, and develop our purpose and calling.

7. ONGOING MINISTRY INVESTMENT IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS

Spirit-filled living requires us to discover and develop the spiritual gifts we have received and exercise them through the Spirit's power for the edification of others. Believers who finish well are marked by ongoing outreach and sacrificial ministry for the good of other people.

Those who squander the resources, gifts, experiences, and hard-learned insights God has given them by no longer investing them in the lives of others soon wither and withdraw.