

WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE QUITTING, DON'T!

POWER QUOTE: “Your opponent, in the end, is never really the player on the other side of the net, or the swimmer in the next lane, or the team on the other side of the field, or even the bar you must high jump. Your opponent is yourself, your negative internal voices, and your level of determination.” Grace Lichtenstein

Pursued by the powerful Egyptian army, the children of Israel come face-to-face with the mammoth Red Sea. Many murmured, "Let's go back even if it's to bondage." A ridiculous choice, of course. Moses proclaimed, "Stand still and wait on the Lord." This seems like a noble pronouncement of courage and faith until you remember God's instruction in response: "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward!" "Forward by faith" became the cry of the children of Israel as they took courageous steps into the deep waters. And then it happened – the Red Sea miraculously opened and allowed them to cross on dry land.

These same choices await every man and woman with a dream. Standing on the threshold of your "Promised Land," you face three options: give up (go back); procrastinate facing the challenge (stand still); or go forward by faith.

I remember my move from Florida to South Carolina, where I enrolled in Charleston Southern University. Leaving behind family, friends, and a secure career was a difficult decision, but the excitement of new opportunities ahead bolstered my courage.

Making my way to the first day on a job, the joy of anticipation quickly faded into despair. The coveted position I was counting to teach and train had already been given to a young man with more education and experience. My dream was dismissed with a simple "I'm sorry no one told you before you came."

My wife, Diane, and I struggled for several months as we searched for housing and employment—each time coming up empty-handed. Discouragement began to overwhelm me, and I wondered what would happen to our dream and future? About that time, I was invited to return to Florida in the same position but at a better salary. Family and friends encouraged me to return, and at times, I felt it was just too difficult to stay and wait for the unknown. My wife and I struggled with the decision to go back or move forward in spite of the adverse circumstances.

I know how it feels to want to quit or to take the easier road of life. In my case, there was nothing wrong with the easier road. It was a good road – a thriving situation, a steady paycheck, and an opportunity to stay true to my call. Aah, but it wasn't the best road because for it would cause me to “stand still” instead of move forward by faith. What separates good from best? It is the willingness to risk. Instead, Diane and I sat down and made a list of our needs. Every night we prayed over it together, and Diane kept it under her pillow. As we continued to walk forward in the new journey, we had so much fun crossing off each answered need.

The winner's circle is full of great people, but practically void of those who made it without a struggle. The strenuous climb to the top of the goal is what makes the win a joyous one. When

you've done all you can, you're tired, embarrassed, discouraged, and ready to quit, there are four things you must do.

1. **DON'T QUIT!** Endure, persevere, and stay strong. As Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, "When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on!" Make the decision, once and for all, to continue ahead. As long as any doubt remains in your heart, the determination to go forward cannot overcome the discouragement.

2. **EXAMINE THE WORK YOU HAVE ALREADY DONE.** Former distance runner and Olympic gold medalist Frank Shorter reviewed the grueling hours of training and concluded, "I didn't want to quit and say for the rest of my life, 'Well, maybe I could have . . .'"

Have you come this far only to give up now? NO, NO, of course not! Because we "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14

3. **COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS:** The Puritans lived by this creed: "Before making a request to God, first pay rent by offering to Him thanksgiving for His previous blessings." Simply put: "Put some gratitude into your attitude." Helen Keller was born blind, deaf, and dumb, but she had a deep wellspring of joy that ruled her life. In her autobiography, she wrote: "Three things I thank God for every day of my life-that He has granted me knowledge of His works; that He has set in my darkness the lamp of faith; and deepest thanks that I have another life to look forward to-a life of joy, flowers, heavenly songs, and the light of His glory." Whenever I am discouraged, I begin to list anything and everything good and positive. Weighing the blessings of life always gives me confidence and results in a realignment of priorities.

4. **TURN WEAKNESS INTO STRENGTH.** Major League Baseball Hall of Famer Babe Ruth knew this principle well. He gave this advice to young "wannabe" ballplayers: "A part of control is learning to correct your weaknesses. The person doesn't live who was born with everything. Sometimes he has one weak point; generally, he has several. The first thing is to know your faults and then take on a systematic plan of correcting them. You know the old saying about a chain being only as strong as its weakest link. The same can be said in the chain of skills a man forges."

5. **EXAMINE YOUR WEAKNESSES.** The struggles they produce are actually your strengthening exercises. These spiritual and emotional aerobics are the keys to endurance in crossing the finish line to goals and dreams. It is the ability to see the positive in a tough situation that makes the event thrilling and rewarding.

-Dr. Jay Strack