

June 5 & 6: Battling Fatigue

Overview

Everyday life is filled with the challenges of relationships, kids, finances and job stress. Sometimes we may feel like giving up and quitting. But the Bible encourages us to never quit in the Christian life. As we continue our journey through *2 Corinthians*, we will learn how we can move beyond just surviving to really thriving!

Goals of the study guide:

- To recognize that duty and responsibility are crucial aspects of the Christian life.
- To consider what it means to be authentic in our spiritual life and testimony.
- To realize that the spiritual life is a conflict and that Satan tries to defeat us in many ways.

Key points:

- Acknowledging and fulfilling individual responsibility is a key part of spiritual development.
- Sincerity means that we are real about our own weaknesses and about God's power within us.
- Spiritual battles are won as we rely on God's power and refuse to give up or quit.



Take a second look ... Sermon Summary

Have you ever been burned out? Maybe your marriage looks hopeless. Maybe it's your task of parenting. Maybe you have responsibilities at work or your job seems futile. Some of you may feel like quitting the Christian life. But the Bible encourages us to never quit in the Christian life. *Galatians 6:9* says, *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

When I read Paul saying in *2 Corinthians 4:1*, *...we do not lose heart*, I am impressed. He had every reason to quit. He had encountered all kinds of opposition and discouragement. Paul was poor. He was alone. He was often neglected. But he said, *"We do not lose heart."*

2 Corinthians 4:8-9, ⁸*We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;* ⁹*persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.* The *Living Bible* paraphrases that, *we get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going.*

There are a number of qualities in this chapter that kept Paul from losing heart. Here are three suggestions for overcoming fatigue.

1. Remember your responsibility. *2 Corinthians 4:1*

2 Corinthians 4:1, *Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.*

This is talking about the word DUTY. It used to be a good and honorable word, but we have come to hate that word in our culture. One of the reasons there is so much irresponsibility today is that we have convinced ourselves that all of life is *supposed* to be pleasant.

We have the idea that if you're tired of something, you have to back off a year so you can be rejuvenated. There are times when people have been overcommitted and they need a vacation. But a lot of our talk about burnout is just a copout from responsibility. We need to develop a sense of duty—a commitment to keep going regardless of feeling.

Paul knew his responsibility was greater than his own personal feelings. He had a ministry to carry the Gospel to as many people as possible. There were probably times when Paul did not feel like going to prison. It probably wasn't fun to be ridiculed, rejected and shipwrecked. But he refused to quit because he had a duty, he had a ministry.

2. Maintain your authenticity. *2 Corinthians 4:2-3*

2 Corinthians 4:2, *Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God.* If you are going to be a faithful person, you must be real. You can pretend for only so long.

If you try to be something you are not, you will either exhaust yourself or you will be discovered. Either way, you won't finish the course. You'll have to quit. That is why we must make a commitment to be real or we will lose heart. Be yourself!

Here are two reasons why others distort the Word of God.

- Profit
- Pride

2 Corinthians 4:7, *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.* Inside these unimpressive jars of clay we have this treasure of the Word of God. We don't claim to be perfect ... but *Christ* is. We don't say we have all the answers ... but *He* does. We don't preach ourselves ... we preach *Christ*.

3. **Combat the adversary. 2 Corinthians 4:4-6**

2 Corinthians 4:4, *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

1 Peter 5:8 says, *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* How does he seek to defeat us?

- He distorts the truth through *false teachers* so that the Gospel is confusing.
- He blinds the minds of *unbelievers* so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel.

When you're knocked down, don't quit. Remember Jesus Christ has promised, *This is the victory that overcomes the world ... even our faith.*



Take it to the source ... Bible Study

Introductory question: Have you had any job in your life that you wanted to quit as soon as you started it? Why and how did you handle it?

Opening thought:

Sometimes the easiest answer to big problems is to quit. Almost everybody has had a job that they wanted to get out of, no matter what it takes. Sharing your stories can help your group start to think about what it means to keep going through the hard times and the discouraging situations.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1, Ecclesiastes 12:13 and Acts 23:1.

1. What are some things that you consider to be a duty to God?
2. Would you say that your spiritual life has been one of convenience or one of faithful pursuit of God? What's the difference?
3. What kinds of things can make you lose heart? What spiritual truths help you remember your responsibility and stay focused on God and His plan for you?
4. What do you do when you begin to feel spiritually weary? What are some ways you can be energized?

Key points:

- A key part of the Christian life is discipline. Throughout the centuries Christians have grown by practicing Spiritual Disciplines—praying, fasting, silence, worship, meditating on Scripture and other things. The word “discipline” suggests that it takes effort and is not always easy or pleasant. Help your group to consider ways they can develop spiritual disciplines in their own lives.
- The truth of God's Word is the best way to stay focused and to be energized. You may want to ask your group to relate Bible passages that have been most helpful to them. This can be a time of mutual encouragement.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:2-3, 7.

1. Why is sincerity such a crucial part of our Christian life? What do you think sincerity or insincerity says to others?
2. Have you ever encountered somebody who was using the gospel message for their own profit or their own pride? What effect did it have on you?
3. How do you respond to the idea that you are a jar of clay that contains the treasure of God's presence? What does that look like in your daily life?

Key points:

- The more we live a real and sincere life before the world, the more likely they are to take God seriously. If people think we are just using God or religion to serve our own needs or purposes, it will strike them in a way that leaves them feeling empty. Now more than ever, people want and need to see reality.
- Humility is a big part of the Christian life. Recognizing that each of us is a "jar of clay" helps us remember that it is God working in us that really makes the difference. We are not the treasure; He is. As we give Him room to work in our daily lives, He will show up in the most unexpected and extraordinary ways.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:4-6, Ephesians 4:17-19 and 1 Peter 5:8.

1. What are some ways that Satan blinds people's minds today? What is the spiritual result of such blindness?
2. What are some things you can do to be alert to the devil's attempts to defeat you and your relationship with God?
3. Why are false teachers so dangerous? What is the best way to guard against being led into spiritual confusion through false teaching? (Consider Acts 17:10-12.)
4. How can an attitude of perseverance and persistence help you in winning victories when spiritual conflicts occur in your life?

Key points:

- Our society moves so fast that many of us never stop to think or to hear what God might be saying to us. We start to take things at face value, and the god of this age (Satan) blinds us to God's truth because we are bombarded with the principles and values of this fallen world, or we start to listen to teaching that is not biblical. This causes us to lose our closeness to God, and we can easily start to slip into things that take us further and further from Him.
- We will all face hard times in one way or another. Making the decision to keep following Christ, no matter what, puts us on solid ground when those trials come. We keep our eyes on Him because we know He will be with us through everything we face.



Take it home ... Practical Applications

This week take some time to look back over your own spiritual journey:

- Have there been times when you wanted to give up on God or on yourself? If you are still holding onto those things, prayerfully ask God to give you the same strength to persevere.
- Have there been times when God has stepped in and helped you to keep going when you knew you couldn't do it in your own strength? Take some time to thank God for the way He has intervened in your life.
- Are there any things that you are currently facing that make you want to give up? Ask God to give you the grace and the strength to live for Him one day at a time.

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All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.

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