

Why Persistence Pays Off

In my younger days, I was that guy the others fought over when choosing sides for a game.

"You take him."

"No, you take him."

"We'll take Ralph instead."

"Ralph's not even here!"

"We know. But we'll do better with an absent player than with Lynn."

OK, so sports are not exactly my thing. I know that's un-American to say. ESPN is programmed out of my TV, and I could not tell you the name of a single player for the local Tennessee Titans or Nashville Predators. (I do know which one plays football. I think.)

But there is one sport I enjoy. Cycling.

For many years, I thoroughly enjoyed coming home from work and getting in 20-30 miles. And there were those early morning long rides on Saturday. I was never in the league with some of my friends who put in 200-300 miles every week, but I wasn't doing it to compete with them.



I did it for the sheer enjoyment.

Cycling is not always easy. Two particular steep hills in Williamson County were my nemesis. The first few times I attempted them, I'd stop halfway up to die. But then I'd keep going. I learned to endure.



With each trek up those hills, the climb got less strenuous. I won't say I zipped up the hills, but I was no longer stopping to wheeze for ten

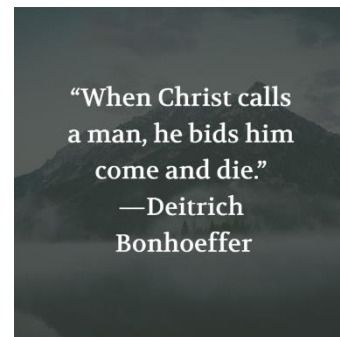
minutes. The persistence paid off. Those steep climbs were tough, but they were worth it.

- The view at the top was phenomenal.
- The trip down was a rush. Literally.

This experience mirrors my walk with Christ. Some days are uphill, and some days I'd like to stop and die. But I keep climbing.

"I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12-14).

This morning I heard Ben Mandrell, the new President and CEO of Lifeway tell the employees, "Ministry is not meant to be easy." I would echo that truth for the Christian life in general. Jesus never painted a rosy picture for those who wanted to follow Him; He told us to count the cost (Luke 14:26-33). He spoke of giving up everything and loving Him more than family. If that wasn't enough; He told us we must die to self (9:23-24).



So, no, the Christian life is not easy, but it's worth it. My plea is this: never give up on your walk with Christ. Keep growing in Him. Keep climbing. The hills don't get smaller, but you gain strength in each climb. And you're not climbing alone. Christ is with you.

Keep climbing. The view at the top is phenomenal.

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