

Persevering When Everything Else Tells You to Quit

This is better than Aesop's Fable about the tortoise and the hare. Partly because it's true. And partly because it's so amusing.

In 1976, at the height of all the patriotic, bicentennial fervor, the Great American Horse Race was held. All across the country, folks were doing things to recall and celebrate our nation's history. Chuck Waggoner and Randy Scheiding thought nothing would capture that better than a trek across America on horses. After all, people settled across our country by way of the horse, not the minivan. These men planned a 3,500 mile trek across the country that included pieces of the Oregon Trail, the Pony Express Trail, and even the route used by the Donner Party.

When the race started in Frankfort, New York, 200 horses took off. We're talking quality horses: Arabian stallions, Irish thoroughbreds, Appaloosas, and high-bred horses from around the world.

Oh, yeah, and Leroy the mule.



Lord Fauntleroy was a mule, but his friends called him Leroy, Leroy belonged to Virl Norton from San Jose, California. Norton had spent his life around horses,

so he knew a thing or two about horses—and mules. Thoroughbreds could beat a mule in a quick race, but this was a long haul over all sorts of terrain. Norton knew Leroy the mule had something the horses didn't: stamina and durability.

And they were off. Calling it a race may sound misleading, since it was more of a 14-week saunter across the country. They only traveled 35 miles a day with required stops every ten miles to be checked by a vet. Horses could be forced to ride in a trailer until the vet deemed the horse was healthy again. And that meant penalty points.

Meanwhile Norton and Leroy kept moving. At the finish line in Sacramento, Leroy was the 31st to cross. Doesn't sound like a stellar finish, but when the points for time and penalties were tallied, a mule won the horse race hands down. "Team Mule" had spent 315 hours in the saddle. Second place was an Arabian horse that clocked in with 324 hours—plus penalties.

There you have it. The Great American Horse Race was won by a mule. [Source]

We know the moral of Aesop's original fable: Slow and steady wins the race. And while we would agree with that principle, it can be hard to live up to for two key reasons:

1. You're not a tortoise.
2. You're not a mule.

I know I'm not. I get tired. I get frustrated. I have "Ecclesiastes days" when, like Solomon, I want to yell, "It's all meaningless!" (Ecc. 1:2).

But I must persist. And so must you. Jesus has called you to follow Him, and that plays out in how we do our work, how we relate to people, and how we ... well, how we do everything.

And that calls for persistence. Perseverance. The stamina of Leroy the mule.

"You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised" (Heb. 10:36).

Thankfully, we're not left alone. Just as God calls us to serve Him faithfully and persevere, He gives us what we need to do so.

*"May **the God who gives endurance and encouragement** give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had" (Rom. 15:5).*

*"Live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, **being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience**" (Col. 1:10-11).*

I start my day—every day—with a focus on Christ. I know I won't survive the day on my own. I'll get tired. I'll get grumpy. I'll want to call it a day and plan to try again tomorrow. So I choose to start my day surrendered to His lordship and indwelling Spirit, and I seek to stay there moment-by-moment.

If I persevere in keeping my focus on Christ, I can persevere in anything. And you can too.

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