



Family Values

Virtue Realities

Persistence

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Kids know that persistence pays off. They understand that “no” does not always mean “no.” If they keep at it long enough, they may eventually get what they want. All it takes is outlasting or wearing down Mom or Dad until he or she gives up and gives in. This technique works especially well when other people are present and in public places. Even though they may not succeed every time, periodic reward reinforces their determination.

Persuasiveness and persistence frequently go hand in hand. Abraham persists in his attempt to save Sodom and Gomorrah. (Gen. 18:22-33) Hannah does not back off in her request for a son, “*but prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish.*” (1 Sam.1:10) So much so that Eli mistakes her intensity for drunkenness. In the New Testament, the Canaanite woman refuses to give up when Jesus brushes her off. She pleads her case with wit and confidence until Jesus grants her request to heal her daughter. (Matt. 15:21-28)

Jesus identifies persistence as an important element of prayer. As a way of emphasizing to his disciples “*that they should always pray and not give up,*” Jesus tells the parable of the widow who kept coming to a judge “*who neither feared God nor cared about men*” (people) demanding justice. The judge finally gives in to get her off his back. In comparison to this unjust judge, Jesus asks, “*And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?*” He concludes: “*I tell you he will quickly grant justice to them.*” (Luke 18:1-8) Paul makes a similar point when he encourages the Thessalonians to “*pray without ceasing.*” (1 Thess. 5:17)

Jesus also uses persistence to drive home a point. He is like a broken record when he asks Peter three times, “*Do you love me?*” Each time Peter insists that he does and each time Jesus responds, “*Feed my sheep.*” This conversation took place after

Jesus served his disciples a breakfast of fish and bread in his third appearance to them after his resurrection. (John 21:15-17) One cannot help but connect the triple question with Peter’s triple denial. Peter’s loyalty is reaffirmed.

Like Peter, we on occasion turn our back on God. But the Good News is that God the Father is persistent and does not give up on us. The Bible is really a history of God continuing to be there for His children even in the face of their rebellion. We reject. God continues to accept. We follow our own path. God pursues us with His grace and love. Paul reminds us that “*neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Rom. 8:38,39)

Following the example of our Father, we need to demonstrate that same determination in our love for one another – especially for our children. There is nothing more tragic than when a parent says, “I give up” on a child. God persists on our behalf and gives us the strength to persist with one another. Such persistence pays off.

The following are ways to practice persistence:

1. **Pray without ceasing.** Continually let God know your thoughts and concerns. Don’t hold back. Rather ask God to back you up.
2. **Persist in showing love.** Let your children know that you will always be there for them, just as God is there for you.
3. **Never give up on yourself.** Give yourself a measure of what God consistently gives you.
4. **Protect your values.** Reiterate, if necessary, what you believe. Set limits when people become intrusive.

Affirmation: Today I will not give up!

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