How To Maintain Our Spiritual Endurance

Intro: When fall begins, I always feel like I’m getting ready for a 9 month race. I’m at the starting line, waiting for the gun to sound. (Explain the ministry year concept) The race is NOT a sprint, but a 9 month marathon. This race God has called us to can be exhausting…it’s not easy…We’re coming out this Fall aggressive (New parking / new preschool / 6000 flyers / Kids church at both services / we have a great web-page – 70% of new people / by May finish our KAC project and purchase the building!

- How do we maintain spiritual endurance for God and what He’s called us to for the next 9 months? We can all start well…but can we maintain the spiritual passion / endurance we need for the next year? We don’t want to wear out / burn out / wash out / flake out / or dry out!
- I’m still learning, but let me give you 4 Biblical essentials that I’ve seen play out in my own life that I believe we all will need for the journey ahead.

I. The Presence of God Maintains Our Spiritual Endurance

- We will simply not make it without God
  A. Spiritual endurance must be connected to the source
     Is. 40:29 “He gives power to those who are tired and worn out…” (NLT)
     Ps. 73:26, 28 “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart...as for me, the nearness of God is my good...” (NASB)
     Ps. 16:11 “…in Your presence is fullness of joy…” (NASB)
  1. Don’t miss the simplicity of this: God is the source. Spiritual endurance / passion / strength / comes as a direct result of going to Him / seeking Him / spending time with Him.
  2. Spiritual strength is NOT found in religious activities but in a relational pursuit of God. Don’t substitute one for the other. Going to church / home group / worship service / serving / all these do not equal connecting with God…experiencing His presence.
  3. We all can get so busy doing things for God that we are not spending time with God. Busyness does not equal godliness.
4. We were designed to experience the presence of God. God made every person this way. We need it / we require it / we long for it / we are recharged and empowered because of it

5. In order for us to have the endurance for the journey ahead, we need to be people who seek after experiencing the presence of God in our lives. We will have endurance for the race no other way.

B. Spiritual endurance requires a commitment of time

Is. 40:31 “But those who wait for the Lord will find new strength…” (NLT)

1. Often, I believe we burn out / wash out / wear out / because we don’t find new strength in the Lord. We just don’t take the time to connect with Him and let Him pour into us the resources we need.

2. Why not? Because this takes time. Strength is experienced as we wait…in other words, those who take the time.

3. We want God to operate like one of those energy drinks (show – Rock Star / Red Bull / Full Throttle / Jolt /) We want to slam down a quick prayer / a few scriptures / and be empowered!

4. In order for us to do more for God, we have to be committed to spending more time with God.

5. I want to challenge you with a time commitment this year. If you don’t have a time set aside to seek after God, create one. This is a time to be in His word and to pray.

   • If you don’t set aside a time you never develop the habit

6. If you already have this in place, is it enough? Are you just going through the motions or are you spending time with God…seeking Him…enjoying Him? Is it time to kick it up a notch? It might have been enough awhile ago, but will it be enough now? Ministry leader!

   • It is the presence of God that will give us endurance this year!

II. The People of God Maintains Our Spiritual Endurance

A. Spiritual endurance requires us to be relationally selective

Prov. 13:20 “Whoever walks with the wise will become wise; whoever walks with fools will suffer harm.” (NLT)

1. The principal is very simple. We become like the people we spend time with, those we share life with. This is not just true for our children in making friends, but with adults as well.

2. If you don’t spend time with other believers who have a spiritual fire / a passion / a high commitment to Christ, then you will not maintain your spiritual endurance either!
3. If we want to have spiritual endurance this year, it will require us to be relationally selective. Relationships are contagious things. People infect us with good or negative influences.

4. I can spend time with someone who is negative / critical / faithless and it just sucks the life and passion right out of me. I also can be tired and weary and spend time with someone with spiritual passion and leave energized!
   - Some of you energize me. I love talking to you!

5. To say that you are not influenced by the people around you is to be in denial! You’re lying to yourself. This year you may need to be even more selective and intentional with who you spend time with.

B. Spiritual endurance requires it to be a shared experience
   - You don’t develop endurance alone!
   
   **Heb. 10:24-25** “Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do...” (NLT)

1. Spiritual endurance does not happen in isolation but in the context of community! We all have a responsibility to encourage each other, to keep meeting together, to run the race together.

2. Your spiritual endurance is my responsibility. My spiritual endurance is your responsibility. WHY? Because we are in this thing together! We all have to make it to the finish line!

3. We all are to think of ways to encourage each other. How? (Start with those who are serving here / say thank you / write a note / email / There are a lot of thankless unnoticed jobs that get done here.

4. Secondly, this fall, place yourself in environments where your spiritual passion and endurance can grow.
   - Home group / TNT nights / Ministry team / Be intentional this year by choosing to be with people who grow your faith. Being with God’s people will give you endurance.

III. The Pleasures of God Maintains Our Spiritual Endurance

A. Spiritual endurance is the result of learning to enjoy what God gives
   
   **I Tim. 6:17** “…but their trust should be in the Living God who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.” (NLT)

   **Prov. 17:22** “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength.” (NLT)

1. God gives us many things for the sole purpose of wanting us to experience pleasure. Some Christians just have a hard time with this because it doesn’t sound too spiritual.
2. But the simple fact is how are you supposed to maintain spiritual endurance if you not having any fun…your not enjoying what you’re doing? A broken spirit will sap your strength!

3. Think about how many things God has given us for the sole purpose of pleasure? Why is the planet so beautiful? Why does a rose smell so good? Why does a steak taste so good? (Belize and Lobster) Why is the laughter with friends so enjoyable?

4. God has created so many things in this life to simply give us pleasure. When we experience pleasure, it should remind us of the goodness of God. (The flowers in my yard / the smell of the country – explain)

5. I can just get so busy that I forget to take pleasure in the things God has placed around me. All of the beauty / the sights / sounds / smells / tastes / friendships are things that He created to re-energize my life.

B. Spiritual endurance is the result of scheduling times for enjoyment

_Neh. 8:10“...Go and celebrate with a feast of choice foods and sweet drinks...Don’t be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!” (NLT)_

1. God required the nation of Israel to take time off for enjoyment. God built it into their culture. He scheduled it for them!

2. God required a Sabbath day / Sabbath year – 7th year / after 7 Sabbath years there was the year of Jubilee. (no planting / harvesting / all debts released / slaves went free / property was restored / It was a year off for the nation!

3. On top of this, God set up annual feasts and festivals that celebrated the work of God in the lives of His people. Some of these calendared events lasted a week long!

4. God commanded celebration…commanded His people to take pleasure in life and in their relationship with God. He commanded them to have fun…He commanded them to schedule it!

5. Statistically, Americans are the worst nation in the world for taking time off / We work more hours than any other nation. We don’t value time off; we instead value productivity. We suffer for it!

6. Endurance is the result of learning how to schedule times for enjoyment. God loves to watch His kids have fun! Remember, the joy of the Lord is your strength.

7. Every time you take time off and have fun can be an act of worship! Pleasure helps restore passion and endurance! Where are you building that into the next 9 months? You can’t just wait for a vacation once a year folks. This needs to be integrated into life.

IV. The Purpose of God Maintains Our Spiritual Endurance
• Purpose is a powerful motivator, but how do we discover it?

A. Spiritual endurance begins with getting past our past

Phil. 3:13-15 “...but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize...I hope all of you who are mature Christians will agree on these things...” (NLT)

1. Our energies will never be completely focused of what God wants until we are able to move past our past...move beyond any guilt that we are packing around.

2. Until we can forget the past, we will never be able to look forward to what God has ahead for us. The past becomes a hindrance to embracing God’s future.

3. Some of you are hindered from embracing God’s purpose for your life because you feel that you have disqualified yourself / or believe God wouldn’t want you / or maybe can’t forgive yourself?

4. The Apostle Paul was faced with the same choice some of you face. Will I let my past keep me from embracing my God-given purpose? (Explain Paul’s situation) He chose to believe in and embrace God’s forgiveness! NOW, you should too!

B. Spiritual endurance is maintained when we embrace the right purpose

Matt. 6:33 “He will give you all you need from day to day if you live for Him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.” (NLT)

1. We are to be Kingdom minded people / Kingdom oriented / Kingdom concerned / Kingdom focused people. There is more power available for those who chase after God’s agenda.

2. If we want to pursue our agendas, God will let us, but we do that in our own strength and with our own resources. When we cooperate with God’s purposes, He empowers us to fulfill them.

3. God’s purposes generate spiritual passion and strength. Inactivity does not create spiritual passion…it creates spiritual atrophy! I believe some Christians have no spiritual stamina / passion because they’re just plane bored! Never allowing themselves to be challenged.

4. Maintaining spiritual endurance over the long haul is doing what God created you to do! Embracing the purpose that He has for you. How do I discover this?

5. Make some “Kingdom of God” choices! (Get involved advancing His Kingdom – ministry / Increase your understanding of His Kingdom – 101, 201, 301 & 401 / It’s easier to be led by God when you’re moving than when you’re sitting still!
6. This is a Kingdom minded church and we need to be Kingdom minded people. This will give us the endurance we need.

If we are going to maintain our spiritual endurance this year we need to focus on experiencing the presence of God / spend time with the people of God / take time to enjoy the pleasures of God / and be sold out to the purposes of God! If we do these things, we will see God do miraculous things in us and through us in this community!