

WHEN LIFE STINKS

Week 2 — Don't Give Up

Sometimes discouragement hits hardest when we've done the **right** thing—and life still gets worse.

Joseph knew what it was like to remain faithful through changing circumstances. He experienced success, temptation, injustice, and disappointment, yet he continued to follow God.

Perseverance isn't simply finding enough strength to keep going. This week, we'll look at what it means to **remain faithful by staying connected to God in every season**.

LET'S GET STARTED — Worth It?

Think of something you stuck with long enough to finally get better at it—a hobby, recipe, exercise, home project, skill, or something else.

What made you keep going when it would have been easier to quit?

VIEW

Watch the video for Week 2: **Don't Give Up**.

VIDEO NOTES:

DISCUSS

1. When you hear the word “perseverance,” do you mostly think about getting through difficult circumstances? Where else in life do you think perseverance matters?

READ ALOUD

Joseph arrived in Egypt as a slave, far from home and without control over what had happened to him. Yet God was with him. Potiphar recognized that Joseph was trustworthy and capable

and eventually placed him in charge of everything he owned. Then Potiphar's wife began repeatedly pressuring Joseph to compromise what he knew was right.

Genesis 39:1–18 NLT

When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

²The LORD was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. ³Potiphar noticed this and realized that the LORD was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. ⁴This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. ⁵From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the LORD began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. ⁶So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!

Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man,⁷ and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. "Come and sleep with me," she demanded.

⁸But Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. ⁹No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."

¹⁰She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible. ¹¹One day, however, no one else was around when he went in to do his work. ¹²She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, "Come on, sleep with me!" Joseph tore himself away, but he left his cloak in her hand as he ran from the house.

¹³When she saw that she was holding his cloak and he had fled, ¹⁴she called out to her servants. Soon all the men came running. "Look!" she said. "My husband has brought this Hebrew slave here to make fools of us! He came into my room to rape me, but I screamed. ¹⁵When he heard me scream, he ran outside and got away, but he left his cloak behind with me."

¹⁶She kept the cloak with her until her husband came home. ¹⁷Then she told him her story. "That Hebrew slave you've brought into our house tried to come in and fool

around with me,” she said. ¹⁸ “But when I screamed, he ran outside, leaving his cloak with me!”

2. What do you notice about the way Joseph handles the responsibility and success he has been given? What does his faithfulness look like before the crisis comes?

3. In verse 9, Joseph describes giving in to Potiphar’s wife as ultimately a sin against God. What does that reveal about what mattered most to Joseph? How might an awareness of God’s presence change the choices we make when no one else would know?.

4. Potiphar’s wife pressures Joseph “day after day.” What does his response teach us about the importance of staying connected to God before we reach a moment of crisis?

5. We often recognize how much we need God when life is difficult. Why can it sometimes be easier to drift from Him when life is going well? What helps us continue seeking and depending on God in good seasons, too?

READ ALOUD

Joseph chose to do the right thing and ran from temptation, but Potiphar’s wife falsely accused him. Once again, Joseph’s circumstances changed through no fault of his own.

Genesis 39:19–23 NLT

¹⁹ Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife’s story about how Joseph had treated her. ²⁰ So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king’s prisoners were held, and there he remained. ²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the LORD made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. ²² Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. ²³ The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The LORD was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.

6. Joseph had been faithful, and his circumstances still got worse. How can that challenge the way we think about obedience? What can happen to our faith when we confuse God’s faithfulness with getting the outcome we want?

7. What evidence do you see in verses 21–23 that God was at work, even though Joseph was still in prison? How might recognizing God’s work in smaller ways help us persevere when the bigger situation hasn’t changed?

8. Joseph couldn’t control whether he was released from prison, but he could choose how he lived while he was there. What does staying faithful with what is in front of us look like when we’re waiting on something we cannot control?

READ ALOUD

Paul and James both encourage believers to keep going when faithfulness becomes difficult. As you read, notice what each passage says about perseverance.

Galatians 6:9 NLT

So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.

James 1:2–4 NLT

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

9. What do these passages teach us about why perseverance matters? What can God produce in us—or through us—as we continue to faithfully follow Him over time?

READ ALOUD

Hebrews 12 begins with the word “**therefore**,” pointing back to Hebrews 11—a chapter filled with people who continued to trust God through all kinds of circumstances. Some saw incredible answers and victories. Others remained faithful without seeing everything they hoped for in their lifetime.

But Hebrews doesn’t ultimately tell us to keep our eyes on those people. It points us to Jesus.

Hebrews 12:1–3 NLT

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ²We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.

Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. ³ Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.

LOOK CLOSER

Read verses 1–3 again slowly. This time, look specifically for what the passage tells us about Jesus.

10. What do you learn about Jesus in these verses? How does what you see change the way you think about perseverance?

Hebrews doesn't tell us to stare harder at our circumstances or dig deeper inside ourselves for more strength. It tells us to **fix our eyes on Jesus**.

READ ALOUD

Before going to the cross, Jesus gave His disciples a picture of what it means to remain connected to Him. As you read, notice what He says about the vine and the branches.

John 15:4–5 NLT

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. ⁵ "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

LOOK CLOSER

Notice how many times Jesus talks about **remaining** in these verses. Other Bible translations use the word **abide**.

11. Hebrews tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus, and John tells us to remain in Him. How do those two ideas fit together? What is the difference between simply trying harder to persevere and staying close to Jesus as we persevere? What might remaining in Him look like in the season you're in right now?

APPLY IT

Perseverance isn't about trying harder. It's about **staying close to Jesus in whatever season we're in.**

Think about one area where you need perseverance right now.

Jesus, I need You in _____.

I'm tempted to rely on _____.

One way I can intentionally remain close to You this week is
_____.

This week, put that last answer into practice. It might mean spending time in Scripture, praying honestly, asking someone to pray with you, or intentionally thanking God in a good season.

Remember, staying faithful doesn't mean staying in a harmful or unsafe situation. Sometimes the faithful step is asking for help, setting a boundary, or changing direction.

PRAY

Take a few minutes to pray together as a group.