

RESOLVING TO FINISH STRONG

I once heard that 91 million Americans make New Year's Resolutions, but that 70 million Americans break those commitments within a week! Going to a health club seems to confirm the stats. During the first week of January, gyms are packed. All of the treadmills are in use, people are lining up for a turn on the exercise equipment, and it's hard even to find a parking space. Yet, by about the third week of January, you can park in the space nearest the front door and exercise on any machine that suits your preference. What happens between January 1st and January 21st? People demonstrate their unwillingness to finish.

Character, discipline, sacrifice, tenacity—these qualities aren't stylish, but they are surefire ingredients for any leader who wishes to finish strong. As we enter the final month of the calendar year, I encourage you to make the most of the remaining weeks in 2010. Live and lead in December so that you'll end this year on a high note and cruise into the New Year with positive momentum.

CHARACTER

Emotions are unreliable allies. One moment they propel us forward, while the next minute they impede our progress. People guided primarily by emotion must feel good before doing right. They make popular choices, choosing whichever route is most convenient. They are concerned about protecting their rights instead of taking care of responsibilities, and they are easily discouraged by adversity.

Emotion might drive us to make a decision, but character, or discipline, is what keeps us going when the journey gets hard. A person with character makes decisions on principle, not on the basis of what is popular. He or she honors commitments instead of catering to convenience. High-character, disciplined individuals work steadily regardless of circumstance, creating their own momentum by dint of a steady work ethic.

SACRIFICE

Being a finisher requires recurring installments of sacrifice, not a one-time payment. Sacrifice is a leader's constant companion. As influencers, we must give up to go up, ever exchanging our rights for greater responsibility.

I believe most people expect to pay a price to achieve their goals. Yet, many people seem to have a vague concept of sacrifice, viewing it as something distant or far-off. Consequently, when their goals demand a significant investment, people are bewildered and resist giving up anything. If you desire to finish strong, you will need to sacrifice earlier than expected and to give up more than is comfortable.

TENACITY

Pierre and Marie Curie had made 487 experiments to try to separate radium from pitchblende. All had failed. “It can’t be done; it can’t be done,” Pierre Curie lamented. “Maybe in a hundred years it can be done, but never in our lifetime.” Madame Curie replied, “If it takes a hundred years it will be a pity, but I dare not do less than work for it so long as I have life.” Madame Curie’s tenacity goaded the scientists into making another attempt and opened the door to new scientific discovery.

Tenacity means quitting only when the job is done, not when you’re tired. Much of life is spent laboring in the trenches. To reach the finish line, you must wade through tedious details, take care of thankless tasks, and tie up thousands of loose ends. Most people tire along the way, settle for second-best, and stop before reaching their goals. However, a select few push on, refusing to stop until they’ve taken hold of their dreams.



© 2011 THE JOHN MAXWELL COMPANY, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without written permission.