

CA 25 TFP1 THE PERSEVERING CHRISTIAN LIFE (formerly CA 27 TFP1)

Theme music in

PRAY – PHONES/Watches off

FOSTER: Have you ever felt frustrated with your Christian walk? Maybe you were thinking something like this: *“I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.”*

Living the Christian life can be tough sometimes, but how do we persevere?

Welcome to Champions Arise. I’m Foster Braun and I’m with Kent Darcie. The Bible speaks of perseverance as a positive quality, but perseverance is often necessary because of trials and obstacles that we face. However, are there common obstacles people face when they are trying to live a fruitful Christian life? We’ll find out when we return to Champions Arise.

Theme Music

FOSTER: Kent, obstacles are a part of life, but they aren’t a fun part of life.

KENT: No they aren’t. But God does use them to make us stronger Christians.

FOSTER: I think that’s true, if we let Him. I’ve seen people respond to obstacles as irritations. I’ve responded that way too.

KENT: We all have. We have things to do, people to see, goals to accomplish and, particularly in the western culture, we see anything or anyone that stands between us (and where we want to go) as a negative thing.

FOSTER: Yet that’s not how God sees it.

KENT: No. We see God’s perspective in Romans 5 where Paul writes, *“We can rejoice too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance (which is another word for perseverance). And endurance develops strength of character.”* [Romans 5:3-4 NLT]

FOSTER: So obstacles really are a good thing.

KENT: Yes. Particularly if we have the goal of deepening our relationship with Jesus Christ. Which is really what we’ve been looking at with the first few programs in this series. This series is based on the book *The Four Priorities* by Dr. John Tolson and Larry Kreider. And all four priorities deal with growth in our Christian life.

The first priority is developing a personal, progressive **commitment to Jesus Christ**. And our programs so far in this series have focused on this priority.

The second priority is to develop a personal, progressive **commitment to yourself**. We’ll start looking at this priority in our next program.

The third priority is to develop a personal, progressive commitment to relationships. And the fourth priority is to develop a personal, progressive commitment to the work of Christ in the world. And the key words there are “personal”, “progressive”, and “commitment”.

FOSTER: “Progressive” meaning that we’re moving forward in our walk with Christ. And “commitment” being that decision like we hear in the song “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.” No turning back. No turning back.

KENT: Exactly,

FOSTER: And we’ll get to those last two priorities in upcoming programs, but right now, what are some of the obstacles that stand between us and living a fruitful Christian life?

KENT: We’ve mentioned a big one already—if we see obstacles and trials as bad things. When we believe that obstacles have no meaning in our Christian walk, we can get discouraged, frustrated, and angry. And those are great motivators to quit.

But we must remember that the Christian life is like running a race. And you run a race to win the prize. Paul wrote, “*So run that you may obtain it.*” And that means focusing on the prize. God wants us to live our lives in such a way that we focus on what is really important.

FOSTER: Jesus was the best example of that.

KENT: Absolutely. Jesus ran His race with an unwavering focus on the prize—which was the salvation of mankind. There were lots of obstacles, but He kept His focus and crossed the finish line. Jesus is the best example of persevering through obstacles. And He set the standard for the kind of man God wants each one of us to be.

FOSTER: And with that point, I’d like to mention that you are listening to Champions Arise. I’m Foster Braun and I’m with Kent Darcie. We’re discussing the importance of perseverance in the Christian life and how obstacles can make us stronger or weaker depending on our perspective.

Kent, you mentioned the obstacle of perspective, what’s another obstacle we need to watch for?

KENT: Being distracted by idols.

FOSTER: When you say idols, you mean like little statues that represent other gods?

KENT: That is the first image that comes to most people’s minds, but that’s not it. I’m talking about what 1 Corinthians 10 verse 14 is referring to where it says, “flee from idolatry.” The Amplified Bible goes into more detail on this. Verse 14 in the Amplified Bible says. “*Therefore, my dearly beloved, shun (which means keep clear away from, avoid by flight if need be) shun any sort of idolatry (which means loving or venerating anything more than God).*”

And “venerating” is admiring, being in awe of. So this verse is saying anything we love more than God, is an idol—and interferes with a fruitful Christian life.

FOSTER: Anything we love more than God is an idol. Can you give us an example?

KENT: One example could be; how do we spend our time? And I’m not talking about work or things like that. I’m saying are we spending four hours with our hobby or our favorite sport, and

four **minutes** in prayer and Bible reading. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also". So the question is, is our heart really with something or someone other than God. If so, it's an idol, and we need to ask forgiveness and repent.

FOSTER: So we lose perspective, we can be distracted by idols, what are other obstacles we need to persevere through?

KENT: A big obstacle is fear. One of the last things Jesus said before He ascended into heaven was, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*" [Matthew 28:19-20 ESV]

Fear can stop us from doing that, but we need to push through our fear.

Paul was a great example of this. About 20 years after Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead, Paul found himself in Athens, Greece. At this time in history, Athens was one of most popular cities in the Roman Empire. But it was also the capitol of idol worship. Everywhere Paul looks, he sees shrines, monuments, and statues dedicated to false gods.

FOSTER: It's easy for people to talk about Jesus in a friendly environment or when life is good. But when we are in a hostile environment like Paul was, it's easy for fear to take over, isn't it?

KENT: yes it is. For Paul, the public square was in Athens. For us, it might be a family gathering, at our workplace, or when we are with our neighbors. But like Paul, we have to overcome our fear and focus on giving glory to God.

FOSTER: 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "*Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*"

KENT: That is the goal of living a fruitful Christian life.

FOSTER: You know Kent, I'm surprised you haven't mentioned the obstacle of sin.

KENT: Actually that one was next. Hebrews 12 verse 1 says, "*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.*"

Here at Champions Arise, we stress the importance of daily prayer, Bible reading, and meeting regularly with other believers. When it comes to avoiding sin, these really help. For men, meeting with another man or a group of men, is a great way to be held accountable and reduce the chances of falling into sin.

FOSTER: I've found that being accountable to a group of men is very helpful.

KENT: me too. You don't want to have to tell them that you messed up. But if you do mess up (and we all do), you have a safe place that doesn't condone the sin, but can help you to overcome it in the future.

FOSTER: We can't overstate the importance of accountability. But Kent, we have time to look at one more obstacle.

KENT: Here is one that we don't think about much, and that is overcoming failure. Let's go back to Paul in Athens. He sees a city that is overrun by people who worship idols, and he wants to share the gospel of Christ with them. So he asks them a couple questions and presents the gospel. Now some people believed, but the Bible says others just mocked him. (Acts 17:18 ESV)

And that was tough for Paul (like it's tough for us), but he didn't quit. He kept his eye on the goal. He kept sharing God's truth.

And this is important for us. Proverbs 24:15 states, "*for the righteous falls seven times and rises again.*" My friend, your testimony is not based on your past failures or mistakes. Your ability to serve God is based on Christ's work in you and through you.

If you've sinned, confess it to God. Stand on the truth of 1 John 1:9 that says, "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

So my friend, if God has forgiven you, and you have the truth of His word to stand on, and the power of His Holy Spirit, persevere.

FOSTER: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Kent, that last obstacle, overcoming failure is so important for us, because we are going to fail.

KENT: And that can be so frustrating and disappointing, but I love what Paul wrote in Romans 7. This is verses 21-25. And listen for two things. Paul's frustration of being a sinful man, and his hope.

*"So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. **Wretched** man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*

Those are words that can help us to persevere!

FOSTER: You're absolutely right Kent. Those words should help us overcome any obstacle. And there's many obstacles we need to persevere through. Kent, please do a quick review of what we've covered today.

KENT: Sure. We talked about how one obstacle that can distract us from a fruitful Christian life, is the belief that obstacles themselves are unnecessary and unwanted. When often, God uses obstacles to build our character and our dependence on Him.

We mentioned that idols can be an obstacle for us. And an idol is anything we love more than God. We also looked at how fear can be an obstacle to our sharing the gospel, living the gospel, or creating disciples. And a big obstacle is our sin. But that can be overcome by confession and repentance. Lastly, we looked at the obstacle of dwelling on our failures instead of moving forward in the strength of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*"
[John 16:33 NIV]

FOSTER: Thank you Kent for such an encouraging teaching.

My friend, I hope you are hearing this. It doesn't matter where you are in your life. This is a new day. Maybe the obstacles have temporarily stopped you. Maybe...secretly...you have quit. And then you found our program today. God is ready to help you get back on the path of a fruitful Christian Life. He loves you so much that He gave His Son Jesus for you, so that you could rise up and become a champion for God. That's why we call this program, Champions, Arise!

My friend, every step in your life has brought you to this day. The important thing is not to count the number of times you've fallen, but to give thanks for the number of times God helped you to get back up. Be strong! Be of good courage, and persevere for a fruitful Christian life. We'll be right back.

Program Close

FOSTER: Thank you for listening to Champions Arise where men are equipped and strengthened to meet their God-given potential. Today we discussed the importance of persevering for a fruitful Christian life. This program was based on the book "The Four Priorities," by Dr. John Tolson and Larry Kreider which is published by "The Gathering USA" in 2007 and used with permission. You can learn more about this book and listen to any of these programs at our website championsarise.org. I'm Foster Braun with Kent Darcie. Thank you for listening to Champions Arise. May God mold you into the man He knows you can be.

Music Theme out

Closing TAG

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