



WOW: Word Of the Week

Stamina

December 6, 2023

Many are anticipating Christmas. Today I am looking beyond Christmas. 2024 is only 25 days away! Now is the time to dream about and pray about fresh goals, growth, advancing the kingdom, sharing the gospel, moving forward into God's eternal purpose.

After 56+ years of preaching and teaching, I can tell you that there is something more important than resolutions or goals. This week's WOW. **Stamina**: the bodily or mental capacity to sustain a prolonged stressful effort or activity; endurance. Our WOW: stamina, but I want to explore the idea of spiritual stamina.

I am preparing a Sunday morning sermon (still 10 days away). I will focus on Heb. 12:1-2. The text says we must get rid of all extra baggage to run with _____. Translations vary. Perhaps most familiar, run with patience. But it is more than patience. What about stamina?

We need a word that is stronger than patience. Patience is not what it really is. Endurance? Perseverance? In running the spiritual race, your spiritual stamina will become obvious, what my mother called "stick-to-it-iveness." Stay in there; keep running. Endurance! That's what it is. Stamina!

Get up and go, every day, day after day. I will do what I am here to do, what I have to do -- even when I have another agenda, am tired, want to do something else, have other tasks and priorities. You know of wonderful times when what we want to do and have to do are the same. Blissful, but most of time what we want to do, and what we ought to do or have to do, do not coincide. That is the time for stamina.

This is problematic in a culture enamored with feeling. I want to do what I feel like doing. I want to follow my own path. How did you feel about it? Well, I didn't feel like it. Why weren't you there? I didn't feel like it.

I passed out scripture texts for students in class to use to prepare sermons. A student looked at the text he had received, flipped through his Bible, read the passage, and came to ask me, "Can I have another one?" "What's wrong with that one?" Well, I read it and didn't feel anything. Well, take it home and get to feeling something because that is the assignment. Stamina.

Those who minister in fulltime roles must learn self-discipline. Are you serious? Are you competent? Are you for us (or do you have your own agenda)? Every Christian must learn discipline, stamina.

I share my own experience. My first work with elders. They asked me to preach on a specific text. I was terrified. How do you preach on a text? I'd been to school four years, graduated with a degree in Bible. How do you preach the Bible? How do you avoid making your illustrations the center of the sermon? How do you communicate God's message--not your message. It is not easy. It is hard. Every sermon is for me a new sermon, even though I build on previous study. Hours are invested, several work days. Preachers must endure, not take the easy way out. Stamina. Too often preachers preach on whatever they feel like, not on what the church needs to hear or what God wants to say.

The old year wanes, the new year is coming. What makes the church work, what keeps everything going, is stamina. What builds the church, what touches people for Jesus, is stamina. Spiritual stamina. Develop spiritual resources and spiritual reserves. Live life with your spiritual antennae up. Do not become weary in doing good, pay special attention to spiritual needs among spiritual people.

That is some of what I want to say in my sermon in about 10 days. You may not get to hear the sermon (but it will be livestreamed with the video available afterward -- link provided).

For the New Year, I will as always set goals. I will do what God wants me more than what I want to do. I will give 100%. I will build spiritual stamina and give my all in spiritual endeavors. Like Paul. This one thing I do -- I will press on to the spiritual goal.

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