THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSEVERANCE

INTRODUCTION

Today's devotional begins with edited excerpts from an amazing video called "A Father's Devotion." As you will see it portrays as well as anything I could say the character trait of perseverance and how love cannot exist without this trait.

Remarkable! Dick Voit's love for his son embodies the blue jeans definition of perseverance. **PERSEVERANCE IS… pressing through hardships based on a firm belief in a worthy goal.**

COMMENTARY: THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSEVERANCE

Honestly, most of us have a romanticized impression of love. It's something we feel; something we want to feel. If we could feel love more we'd be able to love people better. But that's not how it works. Love is first and foremost a commitment—a decision—a priority. If love feels anything at all, it first and foremost feels an urgency ("I *cannot* give up on you") and then a determination ("I *will not* give up on you.")

Love is perseverance. If you want to love like Jesus, the people around you need to know there is nothing, no hardship, no unexpected results, no interference, no disappointment that can break your bond with another person.

Truly all of us are a far cry from that kind of love. But that doesn't mean we don't aspire to show that kind of love. So we practice perseverance. We practice handling hardships without giving up. We dial up the strength of belief in what's really important. What goal, what purpose, what conviction is worth sacrifice and suffering some pain and discomfort?

That's what people need: someone in their life that simply will not give up. Will not walk away. Will not fail to be there. While we will never have the absolute unwavering love of God, we should still hear these words from Romans 8:38-39 and think, "If that is how God loves me, then that's how I want to love others."

> ***For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

As I said, we will never achieve that level of love, but all we need to do is take another look at Dick Voit's love for his son Rick to realize we can get very, very close. And that's because of three simple facts:

1) When we were saved we were reborn with the Father's DNA, which is love.
2) Since hardships produce perseverance and our heavenly Father wants us to grow up into His likeness, He will give us carefully controlled doses of perseverance producing hardships.
3) And in the moment of hardships, He gives or allows you to also gain experiences of God's persevering grace and enabling strength that deepen your gratitude and strengthen your resolve to bring that kind of persevering love to others.

REFLECTION:

So let me draw you to a closing prayer with a couple of questions:

- **Are you willing to embrace hardships—ones you're going through or ones yet to come—for the sake of increasing your ability to persevere?** That means not letting yourself get trapped in complaining or impatience.
- **Are there any tasks, commitments or responsibilities that you're tempted to drop?** Even loving others like the Lord is the most important reason to develop your perseverance, one way to

practice perseverance is to not give up on completing tasks you've started. Even the most mundane tasks. Finish a book. Finish a chore. Finish a project. Finish a class. Finish a goal you set. Pressing on to finish anything when your initial inspiration runs out strengthens the trait of perseverance.

- **Is there any person you're getting close to giving up on?**

How about joining me now in prayer?

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, I can't thank you enough for the patient, persevering love You've shown me. Plus, without a doubt I am aware of only a small portion of the ways You've had to persevere because of my many weaknesses and failures. I want to increase my ability to persevere, since it is my great desire to become more like You. I understand this means I am willing to practice. Your Word makes it clear that "hardships produce perseverance and perseverance, character." So by asking for perseverance I acknowledge that I must be ready to have a different attitude than I normally have toward hardships. Help me adjust. Before I start to complain about them, before I start to ask You to take them away, let me be willing to live through them in faith that I will become more like You if I bear them patiently. And then as my perseverance increases, help me use that character trait in the way I love people. In Jesus name, amen.