

Many Aspire, Few Attain

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There's a war on today. We wrestle in this war day after day - it's a spiritual conflict. As the Apostle Paul said, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). This spiritual warfare is probably intensifying rather than receding.

When I was at a Wycliffe Bible Translators jungle camp in 1961 and 1962 we used to go on survival hikes. I loved camping out in the jungle. We would build a campfire and sleep around it in our lean-tos. We built a big fire because fire drove the wild animals deep into the jungle. But if you happened to wake up during the night as the campfire dwindled down, you would observe that the lower the campfire got, the braver the animals became and the closer to the camp they crept. They formed a circle around the camp and you could see those pairs of eyes looking at you from the forest. It was an incentive to throw a few more logs on, not so much because the night was cold as because you didn't know what was behind those sets of eyes.

In many respects, that's what is happening today in American evangelical Christianity. My generation and the generation that came before me were moral generations. The generation now on the scene is an immoral generation. As the fires of evangelical Christianity grow dim, as biblical preaching diminishes across the nation, and as people give themselves more and more to sin, greed, the affluent life, permissiveness, and other selfish pursuits, then the eyes of the evil one come closer and closer into the camp.

Today, probably because we have abandoned the puritan ethic and have given ourselves over to the fruits of existentialism, we can see the forces of evil encroaching on our camp in a way we haven't seen in the last 50 years. The occult, witchcraft, Satan worship and all these manifestations are very, very real. There are demons; there are demon-possessed people; there is sorcery. When you begin to play with astrology, ouija boards and similar things, you're giving expression to something which is not the figment of man's imagination; but which are warned against throughout the Bible. Because of this we live not only in perilous days but in days of unprecedented opportunity. The one glimmer of hope is that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).

But the devil is like a roaring lion and his objective is to devour us. He is devouring through dope. He is devouring through loose living. He is devouring through people giving themselves to wrong goals and objectives.

Involvement in this spiritual warfare is a voluntary thing. It's our choice. In ancient Israel, before going to war, the officers said to the people, "What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart" (Deuteronomy 20:8). Involvement in spiritual warfare is voluntary as well.

The Apostle Paul writes that a soldier must endure suffering and hardship if he plans on getting into the battle (II Timothy 2:3). The spiritual battle is a battle for keeps. Don't enter it unless you plan on winning. Don't enter it unless you plan on giving your life totally to it. Don't enter it unless you plan on suffering and enduring hardship because your adversary the devil and his legions of demons play dirty. They fight rough. They give no quarter.

But Christ is in you is greater than he that is in the world (I John 4:4). And you are on the winning side.

You can take refuge and consolation in that, but it is a dirty, rough warfare and the deeper you get into it, the meaner and nastier it gets. Men come and go, and the attrition rate in the Christian life is absolutely horrendous. In the final analysis, many aspire but few attain. Many begin well, but precious few end well.

You can climb on the shelf and render yourself ineffective for God in many ways. You can sign peace treaties with Satan and let him go his way while you go yours. Satan is willing to hold the ladder for any individual who wants to climb on the shelf for God. It is your choice.

It is relatively easy to recruit collegians because they are at an idealistic age. They have a whole adventuresome life ahead of them. Everything looks like it's filled with opportunity. Collegians hate mediocrity. If there's one thing they want, it's idealism - idealism expressed in a better way of life.

That's why collegians rally around the banner that seeks to destroy the establishment. The establishment is given over to mediocrity. The establishment has compromised. The establishment has gotten fat with self-interest. The best thing to do from the idealist's point of view is to burn it down and start over. The average collegian is looking for a cause, for a flag to follow, for something to which he can give his life.

Recruiting the collegian to the spiritual battle is fairly easy. But it's a long uphill climb afterward. And the older a person gets the more he feels like quitting. Victory is always in the future. It's not just around the corner.

Victory doesn't come by burning down a building. Victory doesn't come by having a law or two rescinded. Victory doesn't come when the university changes its ways. These are all symptoms.

The spiritual battle will take the rest of your life. It will consume every ounce of your energy.

I talk to men in their thirties, forties and fifties who were giving themselves to this cause when they were in their twenties. When they ask what I'm giving my life to and I respond it's the conquering of the world for Jesus Christ, their attitude toward me becomes very benevolent. A benign look comes across their faces and they pat me on the back and say, "Well, bless your heart, that's idealism for you." When you get that reaction, you've just met a person who has aspired and not attained. You have met a person who started well and ended poorly. You have met a man who began like you began and yet somewhere down the road has opted for mediocrity.

Most Christians do the same thing. The cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things enter in, choking the Word. Their lives become unfruitful. They begin to give themselves to wall-to-wall carpeting, foam rubber, push buttons - to the acquisition of things. They begin to think in terms of retirement, pensions, the stock market and wealth. They become encumbered with junk and are happily involved in it.

If you don't want to become a person who has aspired but not attained, you are going to have to make some resolutions in your own soul. You cannot give yourself or your enemy any quarter. Paul was concerned about his walk with God, "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Corinthians 9:27).

As a Christian in the battle, like Paul, you're in the business of preaching to others. And like Paul, it is necessary to plan on not being a castaway. Let me suggest some ways you can avoid becoming one. This list is not exhaustive and the items on it are not necessarily in the order of their importance.

1. Have a heart for God

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple” (Psalm 27:4).

David writes, “One thing I ... seek,” not, “these forty things I dabble at.” Moses said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5). With everything you've got. Now stop and evaluate. Do you have a real heart for God? Do you love Him with everything you have in you? Do you find that your life is consumed with the desire to follow Him? I'm not referring to emotionalism or sentimentality. I'm talking about a resolute spirit. Somewhere along the way have you said, “Oh, God, I will follow You with all of my heart and with all of my soul and with all of my mind”?

There are many Christians around but there are very few godly people. And there is a big difference between the two. Long before I was married I prayed, “Lord, if You ever want me to get married, I don't want a Christian girl, I want a godly woman. `Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised' (Proverbs 31:30). Lord, that's what I want. A woman who loves God.”

The first thing you need to do to avoid becoming a castaway is to love God with everything you have.

2. Hate sin

“Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (Romans 12:9).

Close your eyes for a moment and think of something that really nauseates you. That feeling is the word that Paul is using when he says abhor. God wants you to view sin like you view the thing you're thinking about right now. That's what God wants your attitude to be. You can hardly contain yourself. You almost begin to gag you hate it so badly.

Do you have a hatred for sin? Do you find that you abhor that which is evil? Everyone is plagued with some sin, but some Christians don't hate evil. As a matter of fact they have little pet sins they embrace to their bosoms. They play with them and pet them. No one else may even know about them except God.

Have you ever thought about the fact that people will do in the presence of the living God what they would never do in front of other people? There are things that you'll do in God's presence that you won't do in front of anyone else. Isn't that true? You'll think thoughts and you'll commit acts in the quietness and privacy of your own room or your own life that you'd never think of doing in front of another person.

God says, “I want you to hate sin. Abhor it.” If there are sins you have embraced, if you have allowed them to rule in your life, if you play with them, if you have never dealt the victory blow to them even though the power has been given you and all you have to do is appropriate it, there's no way you'll survive the battle. You don't want to give up the sin because you enjoy it. There's no way you're going to make it if you don't, though. You're going to be one of the casualties.

3. Hunger for the Word

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (I Peter 2:2).

The third way that you can become a casualty in the spiritual warfare is by not having a hunger for God's Word. Throughout the Bible the importance of hiding the Word of God in your life is emphasized. “Let

the Word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16). “Thy words were found, and I did eat them” (Jeremiah 15:16). “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11). “For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword” (Hebrews 4:12). Your only chance of survival is to take the Word of God and to hide it in your life. The Word cleanses. The Scriptures give you the life and character of Jesus Christ. The Word of God gives you power. The Word gives you the ability to do the will of God.

How well are you hiding the Word of God in your life? Has the Word become perfunctory for you? Are you doing Bible study or are you studying the Bible? There's a big difference between the two. Most people do Bible study. Are you really giving yourself to studying the Bible?

I can fill out a Bible study blank in about 45 minutes, but it takes me between 10 and 15 hours to really study the chapter. I can show up with 45 minutes preparation. I can have the blanks all filled out, I can participate and I can make it look pretty good. I have done my Bible study, but I have not studied my Bible.

How do you evaluate yourself in terms of studying the Bible? Are you hiding the Word in your life? Do you find that you hunger for it? Do you find that you have a “sweet tooth” for the Word? Is it honey and milk to your lips? Do you find that you love to drink deep at its well? If not, then there is no way you're going to make it. You're going to be one of those who begin well and end poorly. There's no way you can survive.

I run across people again and again in the Christian community who say, “Well, you know, Henrichsen, you can't be legalistic in these things.” And that's right. Or, “You know I find that when I am around Navigators, they kind of squeeze me into their mold.” I know exactly what they are talking about. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man” (I Corinthians 10:13). But, if you have that attitude, remember it's not your Bible study leader's problem, it's not your Navigator representative's fault, it's your fault. It's because of the coldness of your heart. It's because you have no hunger for the Word of God. Yours is not really a legalistic problem, it is a spiritual problem.

You can solve the problem of allowing yourself to be trapped in the web of method rather than using method as a key to unlock treasures. First, spend a lot of time in the Word. Second, meditate and think on the Word of God instead of doing the perfunctory ritual of the form. You can really make it live. Third, apply it to your life. After all, the Word of God was given primarily to change your life, not to increase your knowledge.

Make sure you are applying the Word of God.

4. Trust God

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

There are going to be times in your life when the living God, to use a gambler's term, is going to take all of the blue chips and He's going to push them right in the middle of the table and He's going to say, “Friend, we're going for broke on this one. Let's see how you're doing in your Christian life.” More often than not, people push all kinds of panic buttons on the console and punch out.

If you really want to walk with God, then you have to learn to trust Him. And if you want to learn to trust Him, you've got to learn to trust Him in the little things, so that when the big things come along, you have established a habit of it. Your faith will be tested. You are no greater than your forefathers. The day is going to come when the bottom is going to drop out, the roof is going to cave in and somebody's going to

say, "Cheer up, it's going to get worse." And sure enough, you'll cheer up and it will get worse.

Are you trusting God in the little things? How about your finances? It's tough to really trust God in this area. To give when you can't afford it. There's no faith involved in giving when you can afford it. Faith comes when you give and you can't afford it.

There are many things you can do in your life without faith. Without faith you can get married. Without faith you can have a home. Without faith you can become a millionaire. Without faith you can live a normal, relatively happy life. But there's one thing you cannot do without faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6). If you're planning on pleasing God, you've got to walk by faith.

God is in control of this world. And all He wants from you is intelligent cooperation. Boiled down to one word that simply means trust. Many will never make it simply because they cannot muster up enough courage and faith in their souls to really trust Him when the going gets rough.

5. Burn bridges and ships

"No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

You'll never attain if you refuse to burn your boats. When Hernando Cortez took his men to Mexico, his objective was to march on Mexico City and conquer Montezuma. When he landed at Vera Cruz, he put all his men on the beach and sent demolition teams out to destroy their ships. As the men stood on the shore watching the ships burn and sink, they realized that there was no turning back. They were in Mexico for life.

Have you burned your ships? Have you taken whatever avenues of retreat you have - I'm talking about mental things - and burned them? If you are a college student, how about your education? You began in college or the university with a goal. You wanted to get a degree to do something. There's nothing wrong with education. There's nothing wrong with getting your degree, but there is something wrong if that becomes an end in and of itself. Have you given your degree, your vocational goals and the direction of your life back to God? If your university is a mission field for you to accomplish the will of God, good. If the university is a means for you to accomplish your own selfish ends, you are living in sin, and God wants you to burn that boat.

Perhaps you have a boyfriend or a girlfriend. Have you given him or her back to God? Many people have bitten the dust on this one. They have punched out. They've never made it simply because they were unwilling to commit this area of their lives to God.

There are several reasons why people date. Some reasons are good but others are not. One reason that is sin is to shop for a husband or a wife. Have you ever dealt the death blow to this area of your life? That's a tough one because after you give this back to God, God may not give it back to you. It may be that you'll live the rest of your life single. Are you willing to do it? Are you willing to wait for 10 or 15 years before you get married?

It is better to get married at age 35 or 40 to the right person than to get married at age 25 to the wrong person. It is better to live 10 fewer years with the right person than 10 more years with the wrong person.

Have you burned that ship? Have you dealt the death blow to that desire and given it back to God?

Sometime ago some parents asked me to talk to their 18-year-old daughter. I'll call her Sharon. She was a

beautiful young girl - sweet and attractive. Sharon was in love with a fellow. She wanted to marry him. I asked her if it was the will of God. She said, "No." I asked her if she was willing to give him back to God. She said, "No." We talked about it until 2 or 3 in the morning. But Sharon had made up her mind that she was going to marry this man, and she did.

About a year and a half later I was talking to her folks and I asked how Sharon was. They kind of dropped their heads and said, "Oh, fine." I asked what she was doing. "Well, she's got a baby girl ... She's living in an apartment by herself ... Her husband left her ... She's divorced and she doesn't know what to do."

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). The only way you can avoid that terrible, terrible plight is to burn your ships and to let God make those decisions.

6. Beware the road of no return

"But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, 'Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter'" (Deuteronomy 3:26).

In this passage Moses is making his closing remarks and reviewing his life with the children of Israel. Remember, he spent the first 40 years in the palace, the second 40 years squeezing sand between his toes and the third 40 years wandering around the wilderness with a rebellious people, burying his own generation. Can you imagine the number of funerals Moses had to attend? Forty years of burying his own generation, and there were a slug of them. Now he's reviewing his life and he says, "But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me."

Why was God angry? In the wilderness the children of Israel complained about water. God told Moses to strike the rock and water would come out. Moses struck the rock and sure enough, the water came out. The second time that the same incident occurred, God said speak to the rock. But Moses was angry because of the rebelliousness of the people and he struck the rock. The water came out, but God said, "Moses, you are through. You will not go into the promised land." Moses had lived over 100 years of his life with one thing on his mind getting into that promised land. Over 100 years! And now he couldn't go in because of one dumb mistake. Just one, not two or three, not five one! Paul tells us that the rock was Jesus Christ and He should be smitten only once (I Corinthians 10:4). Because of that, God said, "You will not go into the promised land."

Now Moses pled with God, "Lord, change Your mind. Lord, please give me another chance." But, "The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, 'Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter.'" In other words, "Moses, don't bring the matter up again." And when God says, "Don't bring up the matter again," it is best not to bring up the matter again.

The sixth reason why people don't make it is that they enter the road of no return. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9), is not the answer to some wrong decisions.

Take courtship and marriage for example. If you get married and then wake up some morning and find out that you are lying next to the wrong guy, I John 1:9 won't undo it. God says it's till death do you part. That is an irrevocable decision. No amount of pleading with God can change it.

If you don't make certain decisions in the center of God's will, you will automatically become disqualified from the race. You're through.

7. Avoid an independent spirit

The seventh reason why people will never make it is because they have an independent spirit. They are mavericks, loners. They want to serve God, but in their way. Perhaps you are like the fellow I asked about the episcopal form of government. He answered, "Well, I'm against bishops unless I can be one."

A lot of Christians have that attitude. They are against spiritual authority and leadership unless they are the authority and the leader. But God says He will not give you that which is your own until you have been part of that which is another man's (Luke 16:12).

The Prophet Elijah, as he was about to be taken out of this world, said to his follower Elisha, "Tarry here" (II Kings 2:2). Elisha answered, "No way, friend. Where you go, I go. There's no way you can get rid of me." Where is the guy or gal you have committed yourself to in an Elijah/Elisha relationship? Where is your Elijah? Where's the person that you are going to lock into by the will of God and go for broke with? You might say, "Well, God is my teacher. He can speak to me as easily as He can speak through someone else. After all, doesn't the Bible say that you shouldn't be lord over the flock and you shouldn't be like little tin gods?"

That's true. Nobody is your lord except Jesus. But I'm not referring to lordship. I'm talking about an independent spirit.

Do you remember the argument that Dathan, Korah and Abiram gave Moses? (Numbers 16) "You take too much upon yourself, Moses. God can speak to us just as easily as He can speak to you. We don't need to follow you. Man alive! Don't we believe in the priesthood of believers? Don't our prayers get through to God? Can't God speak to us? After all, why should we follow your leadership?"

And Moses said, "Well, let's talk this over with God and see what He says." "Okay, let's do it."

So they went to God and He said, "Moses, step aside and let me show you what I think of that idea." So Moses stepped aside and God opened up the earth and Dathan, Korah, Abiram and all that belonged to them, fell in. God closed the earth back up and then sent fire and consumed the 100 or so princes that were with them in rebellion.

Then God asked the children of Israel, "Any other questions?"

But Israel got mad at Moses and said, "Moses, you dirty rat, you sicced God on us!" Thousands more died of the plague that day because of their attitude.

God asked again, "Any more questions?"

And the children of Israel said, "No. We got the point."

God does not hanker to an independent spirit. You can be a maverick, you can be a loner and you can go your own way. It's up to you. But that is an awfully quick way to climb on the shelf.

8. Be wholehearted

"And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart" (II Chronicles 25:2).

He did what was right. But one thing was lacking - his heart wasn't right, so God couldn't use him. Within

a short time Amaziah, the man this verse refers to, was dead.

Some Christians create the impression that they are doing God and their Christian organization a favor by being around - that God Almighty is about the luckiest of the lucky to have them on His team. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Perhaps you have this attitude. Now God is delighted beyond words over the fact that you are His. He loves you with an everlasting love. But never deceive yourself into believing that you are doing either God or man a favor by being faithful.

It is easy to be wholehearted in the things you like doing, but it's hard to be wholehearted in the things you don't like doing. When I moved into a Navigator home, one of my responsibilities every Saturday morning was to clean the bathroom in the master bedroom. I can remember being on my hands and knees over the toilet bowl with the cleanser and wondering to myself, Henrichsen, what in the world are you doing here? There are millions of places you could be rather than sitting here looking down inside a toilet.

It's hard enough to clean your own dirt, but it is even harder to clean other people's dirt. How do you rate yourself in terms of your wholeheartedness in being a servant of God?

I don't mind being a servant of Jesus Christ. I revel in it. I don't mind you calling me a servant. But you know what I do mind? Your treating me like a servant.

Can you be wholehearted when people treat you like a servant of the Most High God and a servant of your fellowman?

9. Be faithful in the little things

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10).

Many aspire, but few attain because they are unfaithful in the little things. Lorne Sanny, president of The Navigators, has said that Charlie Riggs was one of the few men he has ever worked with who could be counted on to carry through a request. Lorne could check it off as being accomplished and never had to go back and see if it had been done. That challenges me tremendously.

Can people say that about you? When you are given an assignment, when somebody's asked you to do something, can they mark it off as being completed? No matter how small it is - whether it's picking up a couple of postage stamps or mailing a letter - when you have been asked to do something can you be counted on to do it? Are you faithful in that which is least? Jesus said there is no way He is going to give you greater responsibilities till you've proven yourself faithful in the little things.

And when promotion does come, it doesn't come from men, it comes from God. “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psalm 75:6,7).

10. Avoid the root of bitterness

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15).

The tenth reason many will never make it is because of envy, jealousy and bitterness - a competitive spirit. A bitter spirit, a spirit of resentment poisons not only you, but others.

A root of bitterness is the result of real or supposed ill treatment. It does not make any difference. You can get just as bitter thinking people treated you badly as when they actually do treat you badly. Feeling hurt and sorry for yourself are bedfellows of bitterness. Self-pity is the other side of the coin of the root of bitterness. Have you ever felt sorry for yourself? Have you ever felt hurt over the way people have treated you? Then you are bordering on bitterness.

George Washington Carver once said, "I will never let another man ruin my life by making me hate him." Those are profound words. Because you see, when you hate, you destroy yourself.

If God is God - and He is - then nobody can hurt you. Nobody. That simply means that anytime you are angry with another person, it's not really the other person that you are angry with - it's God. God is the One who allowed that to happen in your life. Whenever circumstances go amiss and things don't go your way, and you get angry and become resentful and bitterness begins to creep into your heart, remember your complaint is always with God. Never with anyone else. There is no such thing as having a problem with another person. It doesn't exist. And bitterness will destroy you if you let it.

11. Accept rebuke

"For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6).

Some people never make it because they can't take rebuke. I don't mind God rebuking me; what I hate is other people rebuking me. But the fact of the matter is that God uses other people. Solomon says, "He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul" (Proverbs 15:32). If you refuse to take instruction, you are despising your own soul. Why? Because the rebuke that comes into your life is for your own good.

"Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee" (Proverbs 9:8). Don't reprove a scorner because he turns around and hates you. Reprove wise men because they will love you for it.

When was the last time someone rebuked you - the last time someone sat down and instructed you more perfectly in the way? If it has not been recently, it is because people don't consider you to be wise. They think you are a scorner. They are afraid if they rebuke you, you won't take it. Don't deceive yourself into believing that you haven't been rebuked lately because you haven't needed it. You need it. The question is, are you getting it? You can tell whether or not people think you are wise by how often they rebuke you.

Once when Warren Myers and I were doing Bible study together his application was to pray that God would send somebody into his life to rebuke him at least once a week. What a challenge! Want to pray that one?

12. Stay constant

"Thus saith the Lord, 'Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' But they said, 'We will not walk therein.' Also I set watchmen over you, saying,

'Hearken to the sound of the trumpet.' But they said, 'We will not hearken.' Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, Oh congregation, what is among them. Hear, Oh earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but rejected it" (Jeremiah 6:16-19).

Some people just want to be different - they don't want to be pushed into any particular mold. So they vacillate from one place to the next. For example, many people are excited about The Navigators when they first become involved. It's new; it's exciting; it's fresh. But then they become critical of the cliches and the traditions of the group. God's Word, on the other hand, is applicable for all time, because it is timeless.

And what happens when a person wants change for the sake of change is that he exchanges one mold for another. The beatniks of the fifties and the hippies of the sixties are examples of this. Desiring to be nonconformists, they created a new kind of conformity. And while God has created everyone individually and uniquely, He has also set standards and given the Christian instructions on how to be the kind of person who will survive the battle and be able to move forward for Christ.

13. Walk by faith

In the beginning living by faith has an excitement which is unlike anything else. But after awhile, the novelty of it begins to wear off and it begins to seem more desirable to have some security - to be able to count on something rather than trusting God all the time.

And then, slowly things begin to become more important. What you have, rather than what God can provide, becomes your security. This can go to the extreme. For example, one woman did not like to have people in her home because they messed it up. If your home or any of your possessions become more important than people, then you are already out of the battle. God is interested in people. And when your security is in Him, what happens to things is not as important. If your rugs, sofa and cut glass bowls are more important than people, you will never qualify for the battle.

14. Keep up the heart for the battle

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

If you get used to seeing God do miracles, you can cease to be thrilled and thankful.

Things can become old hat. You remember the story of the hare and tortoise. The hare started out great, but he was sidetracked along the way because it was so easy - there was no question about succeeding. No big deal. The tortoise, on the other hand, just kept plugging along, recognizing that in order to win the race, he needed to put all his efforts into it. And he won. He kept his eye on the objective and did not allow himself to be distracted.

Like the race between the tortoise and the hare, the battle which Christians face today needs to be won. It is for keeps. And also like the race between the tortoise and the hare, there are many potential distractions along the way. Have no doubt that Satan will try everything he can to take your eye off the objective and to disqualify you for the battle.

The fourteen suggestions listed here are ways that Christians can follow to avoid being taken out of the battle. Too often Satan is successful and the Christian becomes a casualty. Thus, while many begin well, few end well. While many aspire, few attain.

May you be one of those who attains.