

This week, Pastor Sharon delivered the sermon entitled "Secrets of Staying Power," which is Part 3 of the six-part series "Vineyard Values." In his second letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul wrote, "*We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed*" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9, NIV). The apostle Paul knew what it was like to persevere through struggles. Like a quarterback facing the opposing defensive line, Paul faced trials regularly but always finished well. Like Paul, you can run the race and finish well by following some key points.

You must first be willing to relax in God's grace. You can be a recipient of God's grace, because grace is not based on what you deserve, but rather on God's mercy. The Bible says, "*Since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart!*" (2 Corinthians 4:1, NIV). Once you accept His grace, you need to be who you are and refuse to fake it. Our pastors sometimes share their imperfections during sermons, which demonstrates that God uses even our imperfections! TV communicates the message that "*it's all about me,*" which will eventually lead a person to flame out. Genuine service to God, even with shortcomings, enables you to persevere. Understanding why you do what you do determines how long you will do it!

You must also resolve to love others. Pastor Sharon points out that couples will sometimes say that they "*fell out of love,*" when actually that's not true. Love is a choice. The Bible says, "*Love never gives up and endures through every circumstance*" (1 Corinthians 13:7, NLT). The Norfolk campus multisite is an example of how Vineyard is moving forward in the vision to love others and reach the lost throughout the surrounding communities. Small groups are another resource to help keep us strong. Renewing oneself daily is another ingredient of staying power, and a partner in the faith keeps you accountable to your plan to stay renewed.

Finally, you should refocus on eternity. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, "*For our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever!*" A person who was shipwrecked, endured beatings, and often went hungry wrote those words! Maybe you are enduring trying times with your job, your marriage, or other areas of your life and feel like giving up. God doesn't want you to give up; instead, He wants you to look up! God gave Paul staying power, and He will give it to you as well. Are you ready to apply the secrets of staying power to your life?