

Staying Strong When It Seems You Just Can't Go On

1. When a boxer quits a fight, his manager throws in the towel; when a racer car driver quits a race, he pulls into the pits; when a person leaves a job, he turns in his resignation ("gives notice"); when a fiancé quits a relationship, she gives back the ring. What are some other ways of giving up on someone or something -- or yourself?:
2. Tell about a time in your life or in the life of someone you know when it was difficult to go on. This can be a particular part of life (such as a job or a relationship) or about life in general. Describe in your own words the emotional state of a person in such a situation:
3. Read II Corinthians 1:8,9. Paul had a number of trials in his life and at several points along the way he began to despair. How does Paul describe the circumstances in which he finds himself? If you had to guess, what kind of trial do you think he is going through: Rejection? Poverty? Disappointment? Illness?
4. The following passages record the emotions of several individuals who were in despair. See if you can identify the individual and perhaps the reason for their despair:
 - Acts 27:20
 - I Kings 19:4
 - Job 7:15
 - Jonah 4:3

- Matthew 27:5

5. One of the individuals in question 4 is quite different in terms of the outcome of the despair. Which one is different and why is it so?
6. Read II Corinthians 1:8-11. How did Paul deal with his despair? What did he do? What did he count on?
7. Read II Timothy 4:6-8. What was the outcome of Paul's despair? Did his approach to his "dark time" help?
8. This week's focus on care and prayer

Do you know someone in despair right now -- even as we meet? What kind of activity on our part is appropriate under the circumstances? Would you be able to help someone if you discovered them going through a difficult time?

These questions have one answer with two parts: show them God and demonstrate His love through prayer and caring.

Perhaps you are experiencing despair in one or more areas of life. Let someone pray for you -- and love you. The saints of old used this method with great profit.

Do you know someone in such a situation. Pray for them right now. You need not mention names or you may not be ready to pray -- but let someone pray. God will surely bless you if you do.