



## How Can I Persevere When Life Gets Tough? (Part I)

**Luke 21:19: (KJV) *In your patience possess ye your souls.***



Perseverance is not something we talk about much anymore. It sounds like an old word from some other time in history. Now we talk about making demands, about our personal perspectives being instantly and unquestioningly accepted by those around us. We now live in a society where it is not about hard work or building something from the ground up; it is about claiming whatever you want, even if it belongs to someone else, simply because I have a voice. It is too bad. In history, the greatest positive changes in all the world happened largely because of perseverance. Gandhi persevered, Martin Luther King, Jr. persevered, allied soldiers in the world wars persevered. Jesus not only personally persevered, he taught us how to do it ourselves.

Though endurance and perseverance are two different words in English, they are like twins:

**Merriam-Webster:**

**endurance:** noun

1. permanence, duration
2. the ability to withstand hardship or adversity; especially the ability to sustain a prolonged stressful effort or activity

**perseverance:** noun

continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure or opposition: the action or condition or an instance of persevering: steadfastness

An example of ENDURANCE is like an ancient building that has endured over time. It has been able to withstand the elements.



PERSEVERANCE has the thought of moving forward through the onslaught of a difficulty, not just standing and taking it, but actually progressing through it in spite of the trial.

**Dictionary.com**

**Persevere:** verb

to maintain a purpose in spite of difficulty, obstacles or discouragement

Throughout this two-part series we will bring you the stories of three people and their difficult, yet different experiences. Each story will give us a look into the necessity of living life with PERSEVERANCE.

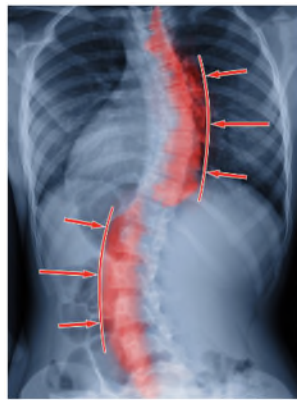
In Part I we share the experience of a 14-year-old young man, Jonathan (not to be confused with Jonathan our CQ Host). Jonathan is persevering through some hard experiences. He is one of the original CQ Kids, meaning he has been listening with his parents since he was very young. Astute listeners will remember years ago when he made a little Rick and Jonathan radio station out of LEGOs.





### What's going on?

Jonathan: I have scoliosis which is a curvature of the spine. My spine is in an S shape right now. It doesn't really do much until it gets to a certain degree. I think when it gets like really bad, it can start interfering with your breathing and all sorts of things. I'm not quite at that point yet but we're trying to prevent it. Each day after school after I do homework, I have to do exercises for my back in the afternoon for a couple hours.



**X-ray of  
a teenager  
with scoliosis.**

(Source: American Association of Neurological Surgeons) This abnormal curvature of the spine affects 6-9 million people in the United States. The common age for onset is 10-15 years old; 80% of the time there is no known cause.

If left untreated, it can worsen and cause the spine to rotate, which can lead to decreased lung capacity and heart problems. It can cause severe pain if the inflammation causes vertebrae to press on spinal nerves.

Jonathan and his parents are going through a very difficult time right now.

Perseverance is CRUCIAL for the life of a Christian!

Romans 5:1-2 tells us that justification brings us peace with God, and His peace brings us grace.

**These facts give us the standing for what is next:**

Romans 5:3-5: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about **perseverance** <5281>; <sup>4</sup>and **perseverance** <5281>, proven character; and proven character, hope; <sup>5</sup>and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the holy spirit who was given to us.

**Perseverance**: Strong's #5281 *hupomone*; from #5278; cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy

The King James Version translates this word as enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting)

**Perseverance**: Online Bible Greek English Lexicon Definition: in the New Testament the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings

Strong's: #5278 *hupomene*; to stay under (behind), i.e., remain; figuratively, to undergo, i.e., bear (trials), have fortitude, persevere

Perseverance is staying the course and moving forward with a positive attitude through very difficult circumstances.



### *Does it hurt? Are there any limitations?*

Jonathan: Right now, no, it doesn't usually hurt. Just on my chest, there's like the left part of my chest is kind of jutting out a bit and then the right part of my back is kind of jutting out a bit as well. But other than that, I don't really feel it. They did give me a brace, so I have to wear that. It's just this plastic thing that I put around me and I wear that for most of the day. Sometimes that causes a little bit of pain. We're not limited too much. The actual scoliosis itself I don't think it really limits me that much. The brace limits me because I can't really bend over that much so it's hard to tie my shoes and stuff. The actual scoliosis itself, I can't really think of anything that it really limits me in doing.



Jonathan's specific condition is not just one curvature in his spine, but two. His spine is in an "S" shape. He is at an age where kids are very sensitive about how they look. Jonathan will also be facing a serious surgery soon. This is an extraordinary example of moving forward through something very difficult.

If perseverance is so deep, then why does Jesus say the following in our theme text?



Jesus is telling his disciples about the ending of the favor to the Jewish nation. He is speaking of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the intense persecution his followers will face.

Luke 21:19: (KJV) In your **patience** <5281> possess ye your souls.

Jesus is NOT saying to wait it out. This word for patience here is perseverance.

Luke 21:19: (Expanded Bible) By continuing to have faith your **endurance/perseverance** <5281>, you will save your lives or gain/win your souls.

This word does not mean we are to be patient, as if while we are in traffic or waiting for someone. Knowing this actually means perseverance makes more sense.

Perseverance is our KEY to Christian faithfulness. If we can master perseverance, we can receive the reward God has promised us.





**Perseverance Applied:**  
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**PERSEVERANCE IS NOT SIMPLY  
HOLDING ON THROUGH TRYING TIMES;  
IT IS MOVING FORWARD TO A  
PREDETERMINED DESTINATION  
THROUGH TRYING TIMES!**

To persevere is to keep moving forward through difficulty, even if it is an inch at a time. It is the willingness to move forward and not just wait it out.

**Now that we know what perseverance is, what does it look like in action?**

Because perseverance is applied in every aspect of life, it will look very different depending on what we are facing. We often reserve our mental pictures of perseverance for the dramatic - soldiers overcoming overwhelming odds or someone standing against evil for a lifetime, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. In reality, perseverance is often quiet and private, as it brings us through difficulty. We could be applying perseverance and the world around us may not even notice.

Perseverance is only achieved by giving it permission to live in our heads and hearts. Three things are necessary:

1. We need a clear intellectual perception of the WHY for our need for perseverance. We must mentally SEE why we are persevering.
2. We must also have a heart that is fully committed to that WHY. We cannot just see it; we must FEEL it!
3. The HOW of our perseverance will come once these two elements are firmly in place.



*How has this affected your faith?*

Jonathan: I feel like it's helped me to remember that there's a reason for everything. God didn't just, you know - this didn't happen by accident. Whatever God wants will happen. I trust Him that if His will is for me to get better. It's kind of drawn me a bit closer I guess just to help me kind of think about that a bit.

Rick: Okay, now so the way you're talking then, you've always had faith in God.

Jonathan: Yeah, for most of my life because my parents are big on that and they kept trying to teach me. Yeah, I had faith in God and then when this happened it just kind of pushed me a little bit towards that.

What we find interesting, is that he believes this difficult experience pushed him towards God. It makes us wonder why so many people rebel and run away from God, are angry with God, or say He does not exist because of their suffering?








This made us think of those victims in the Holocaust and the evil persecutions they endured. How does one persevere through that?

*Those who have a 'why' to live, can bear with almost any 'how.'* – Holocaust survivor and author Viktor Frankl, "Man's Search for Meaning" book

We need an intellectual perception of our WHY and a heart to embrace it in order to bear our trials.

We suggest three types of experiences that stimulate the building up of perseverance in our characters.

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**1. Trials and Afflictions:** THESE EXPERIENCES REQUIRE A PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL PERSEVERANCE.
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**2. PERSECUTION:** THESE EXPERIENCES REQUIRE PRINCIPLED PERSEVERANCE.
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**3. The Testing of our Loyalty:** THESE EXPERIENCES REQUIRE PASSIONATE PERSEVERANCE.

We will be unfolding these thoughts throughout this two-part series. We need to understand perseverance and learn to apply it so our Christianity can grow.



*How does the physical evidence of it make you feel?*

Rick: Okay, you said, "My body is a little bit contorted because of this." How does that make you feel?

Jonathan: It feels a little weird. I try not to think about it too much because I kind of just tend to do what they tell me and then I hope that it's going to get better. Yeah, sometimes I just go, and I feel, "Well, it's getting a little bit more pronounced or it's getting a little better." Just kind of back and forth. So, yeah, it does feel weird.

Imagine being 14 years old and dealing with this condition. He is very matter-of-fact about something that is extremely difficult. We are looking at perseverance unfolding in a very young man who is facing and dealing with trial and affliction, not of any of his own doing. Trials and afflictions require a personal and practical perseverance.

Perhaps through these texts, we can look at this type of perseverance as themes for Jonathan's experience with trials and afflictions:

James 1:2-4: (NASB) <sup>2</sup>Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup>knowing that the testing of your faith produces **endurance <5281>**. <sup>4</sup>And let **endurance <5281>** have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.



Note: This word for **endurance <5281>** is the same word for perseverance.



Our trials, difficulties and traumas beg for perseverance. It is in these experiences that we, as Christians, must realize the reality of our faith with a long-term, perseverance-based approach.



While going through aggressive breast cancer, our friend Vicki said she would focus on James 1:2-4. As a guest on the two-part series called, *What is the Fruit of Your Life*, this was read from the New Revised Standard Version, which says: *Whenever you face trials of any kind, CONSIDER IT NOTHING BUT JOY because you know the testing of your faith produces endurance....* It is a different perspective. It is as if joy is the overarching umbrella and everything falls in line under it.



This reminds us of what Apostle Paul said in Hebrews 12:2: For the joy set before him, Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame. That is perseverance. The idea is to reframe it - it is the intellectual perception and heart acceptance of the WHY. We will address the WHY for a Christian in more detail in the next segment.

Hebrews 12:2: (NASB) *looking only at Jesus, the originator and perfecter of the faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*



### *The exercise routine*

**Rick:** Is it like an hour or two every day, really?

**Jonathan:** Yeah, in the evening I usually go downstairs at like 7:30 or 8:00 and then I'm usually finished by like 9:00 or maybe a little bit later, usually like 9:15 or maybe a couple minutes after. It takes a while, because there's several different things that I have to do.

**Rick:** Is that every single day that you have to?

**Jonathan:** Yes.

**Rick:** Seven days a week?

**Jonathan:** Yes.

**Julie:** We' all trying to prevent it from getting worse, but it's not going to heal it; we're just trying to stave it off?

**Jonathan:** Yeah, we're trying to kind of prevent it from getting worse. Hopefully it'll kind of start to fix it. The doctors always said that like some cases are different. Some are more aggressive curves than others. They said that for some curves no matter what you do it can still possibly get worse.



We're planning that if we do need to have surgery then we'll probably do it hopefully when summer starts so that I don't have to skip any school.

**To persevere means to maintain a purpose in spite of the difficulty, reminding us of the following verses:**

**Psalms 27:13-14:** (NASB) <sup>13</sup>*I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.* <sup>14</sup>*Wait for the LORD; be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.*

We wait on the Lord's providence to move forward but are not sitting there doing nothing and waiting for an answer to fall on our heads. We cannot underestimate that there is activity in spiritual waiting.

When it says *wait for the Lord*, it can be too easy to sit still and wait. We have to live our Christian life to our fullest ability even while we do not yet know the answer. We have to continue to apply ourselves to that life of sacrifice. Waiting is applying - and then God will show us what to do next.

When we look to Jesus as our model of perseverance, we see him prophetically described in Isaiah as putting on his perseverance "game face."

What does it mean to have your game face on?

**Merriam-Webster:**

**Game face:** noun

a look of intense determination on the face of a game player

A game face is when we are getting ready to compete, we put everything else out of our mind and are ready for the competition. We become stern, ready, firm and disciplined to accomplish the task before us.



My family can tell I'm in what I call a "work mode" because I have my game face on. What I mean by that is when I'm focused on a task at hand, I can't have distractions or interruption and sometimes that makes my voice sound harsh, even though I'm not being harsh. I'm just focused.

**Isaiah 50:5-9:** (NASB) <sup>5</sup>*The Lord GOD has opened my ear; and I was not disobedient nor did I turn back.* <sup>6</sup>*I gave my back to those who strike me, and my cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover my face from humiliation and spitting.*

Jesus put himself out there to be humiliated, persecuted, tormented and tortured.

**Once we observe Jesus' example of hearing and following God's instruction, we must set our determination to do the same to the best of our best ability:**

<sup>7</sup>*For the Lord GOD helps me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set my face like flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.*

I looked up the meaning of "face like a flint." Flint means resolute and unshakable. When you have face like a flint, it can look like my work mode!



It is in that resolute, unshakable focus that we will persevere through whatever it is before us. That is how Jesus is being described. *I have set my face like a flint*, like stone - immovable. The purpose is so big I must move through.

**In whatever dishonor man can give, there is no disgrace for the God-honoring life. Therefore, I will set my direction to an unalterable course:**

*<sup>8</sup>He who vindicates me is near; who will contend with me? Let us stand up to each other; who has a case against me? Let him draw near to me. <sup>9</sup>Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who is he who condemns me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them.*

Whatever was being thrown at him does not matter; it *will all wear out*. He will set his *face as a flint* and power through whatever the experiences will be.

All falsehood and misrepresentation - no matter how condemning and powerful - cannot stand against eternal truth and righteousness. We must have that same perseverance in our experiences.

We all must persevere but may all have a different approach. Our unique experiences give us unique opportunities. Therefore, there are many “game faces” of perseverance.

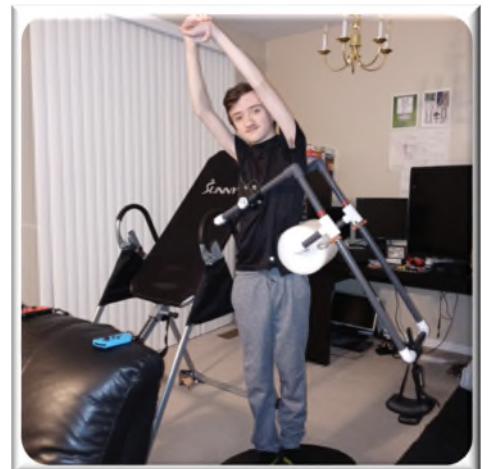
The **game face of an athlete** is the face of discipline, focus and training to compete and win. We will use this to depict Jonathan’s story.



### *Coping with the exercise routine*

**Rick:** If you have to do this exercise thing every day, I mean do you look forward, like oh, great, I get to exercise for two hours. Or is it, oh no, not again!

**Jonathan:** So, at first, of course it was, oh no, not again, because nobody wants to do like all these difficult exercises every day at the end of the day. But it's a little better because I'm downstairs in the living room doing these exercises and sometimes, I put in a little something to watch on the TV just to kind of distract myself. Or other times I play a video game while I'm doing it because my hands aren't really being used. It's more just something on my back and it's just a bunch of different stuff. Most of the time I actually do listen to Christian Questions as I'm doing the exercises and that helps me look forward to it a little bit more.



**Rick:** Finding ways to plow through it.

**Jonathan:** Yeah, yeah.





We are delighted to hear we can help with the perseverance of another individual. What an incredible blessing. Stay tuned to hear Jonathan's favorite episode.

The **game face of a soldier** is the face of one sworn to duty for a cause that he is willing to die for.

The **game face of the farmer** is the face of patience, knowledge, hard work and consistency. It is the face of steady discipline and compassion.



The game faces of an athlete, a soldier and the farmer are found in 2 Timothy 2:2-7, 10-12. We will be getting into more detail on these verses next week in Part II.



Good news! Whatever may come before us can be coped with and overcome by seeing it God's way.

**The big picture is framed; now the details.  
How does perseverance work with trials and afflictions?**

We all have trials and afflictions and they come in varying degrees and last for varying periods of time. The great truth of perseverance is that it has the same basis, whether we experience a lifetime affliction or a short-term trial. Master this basis, and we now possess a pathway to overcoming!

**The basis for our trials and afflictions - know the WHY of personal and practical perseverance:**

Hebrews 12:7, 10-11: (NASB) *'It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*



The purpose of discipline is to grow and mature. Discipline coming from God can only be for our best benefit.

<sup>10</sup>...He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. <sup>11</sup>All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

**Afterwards** is the key word - it comes after we get through the discipline that we can look back to see *the peaceful fruit of righteousness*. Why do we need



to persevere? *So that we may share His holiness.* This is an offer worth persevering through to obtain.



### Staying on task with the routine

**Rick:** Do you ever think about, man, I wish I just didn't have to do this so I can go do that?

**Jonathan:** Sometimes, yeah, it is a thought that comes through my head sometimes. When that happens, I mostly just remind myself that this is supposed to help me. I'm supposed to do this, but yeah, sometimes I do think, why can't I just go and have this night to myself? Skipping one day won't hurt that much. Then I remind myself, well yeah, but you got to do it.

**Rick:** Jonathan, I've got to hand it to you; you have an incredible discipline about you that is really impressive to me. To just hear you say that, "Now I got to do it," because that's the thing that's most important.

He talked about the WHY - "This is going to help me, so I have to do it." We find the intellectual understanding in order to move ourselves forward. But we also need to understand it emotionally.



**Feel the WHY of personal and practical perseverance - accept and embrace it:**

2 Corinthians 4:16-18: (NASB) <sup>16</sup>Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

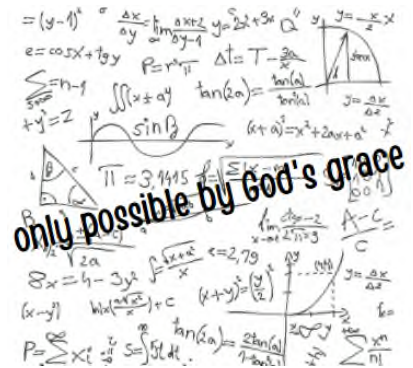
Even if it looks like we are losing, we are winning by persevering. *Do not lose heart!* Embrace the WHY with your heart.

**It is all good - even if it does not look that way:**

<sup>17</sup>For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

This is a mathematical impossibility! We cannot have a light affliction that equals an eternal weight of glory.

It is God's grace that carries us through such an impossible equation.



<sup>18</sup>while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Perseverance is inspired by a long and "big picture" view of our experience.

My son is in the United States Coast Guard. When he was in boot camp, he had to go through a test of squatting with his weapon and not moving. Imagine doing that for five or ten minutes. You start to get tired and cannot move - 20 minutes...30 minutes...they made him do this for 45 minutes. I remember my son explaining to me what was happening and how he was able to do it. He





said your body goes numb and you can't feel your limbs. Tears are streaming down your face. "How do you cope?" He just smiled, and I will never forget this. "You embrace the pain and say, 'This is mine. I am not letting this pain keep me from what I need to do.' You embrace it and it becomes part of you." That is perseverance.

That is what we need to understand about our Christian lives. We have to embrace whatever God allows to come our way: This is for ME and for my eternal welfare.



### Parental Support

Jonathan: They're very supportive and encouraging me to do my exercises. They keep on scheduling doctors' appointments and stuff. At times there's a doctor appointment every other week or there's a couple a week. Sometimes it feels like a lot, and then I have to remind myself they're trying to help me because they love me. They're just super supportive.

We asked Jonathan's mom, Estera, how she and his dad, Jeff, are coping. Dealing with a child with a serious medical condition is a completely different story of perseverance and could be its own podcast.



The pain of having a child diagnosed with a spinal issue is tremendous and there is no question that acceptance needs time. The feeling of guilt I felt in the beginning cannot be expressed, especially when despite Jonathan's intensive program, we were told that surgery was unavoidable. For a day or two, I thought I would not be able to live with my guilt. Talking with others helped a lot. Having a great

support system is a must, but nothing comes even close to the comfort that faith in God brings. Suddenly Romans 8:28 ceased being just a beautiful promise. It became our strong reality, our stronghold that carries us through: *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.* Arriving at the point of acceptance is such a blessing! Without faith, there would be such confusion, fear, anxiety, and even anger.

We trust where we cannot see.

We trust with what we were entrusted: with our child.

We trust, knowing that our loving Heavenly Father knows exactly what we are going through, and that He permits this experience knowing that the results would be so much more to His glory.

We already see Jonathan being transformed and showing signs of great maturity, being even able to comfort us! This is, undeniably, a direct result of what he is going through. Come what may, we know that our Heavenly Father is in control and this brings the true peace of total acceptance.



In talking with Estera, this acceptance is definitely a process and needs a daily, if not sometimes hourly recommitting to that acceptance. There is a reason why the word is per-SEVERE. “Severe” is right in the title! It is not “per-super-easy.”

This is a beautiful example of a family persevering, working together through the difficulties and ups and downs, supporting one another.

**The result of our trials and afflictions if we apply perseverance is we will know WHERE the WHY leads us:**

James 1:12: (NASB) *Blessed is a man who **perseveres** <5278> under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*



We must carry that developmental weight of experience until we complete it according to God's standard.



For Christmas this year, my son-in-law got a 40-pound weighted vest (and I know it weighed 40 pounds because I carried it into the house!). Who in their right mind would put on a 40-pound weighted vest on purpose? Somebody who understands that carrying that developmental weight is going to make them stronger.



We must carry the development weight of experience as it is promised to make us stronger.



***What if you didn't have faith?***

Rick: So, it's like, okay, the past is already past and the present is what I have to deal with, and I know what I have to do in the present so that I can have a future.

Jonathan: Yes.

Rick: That's what you're telling me.

Jonathan: Yeah, yeah.

Rick: In your circumstances, you are a Christian, you have faith and you really are trying to have that faith be a centerpiece of working through this. What would it be like if you didn't have faith?

Jonathan: That's a really good question. I didn't really think about that. I feel like it would be a lot more scary because if I thought, oh no, I'm alone in all of this, even with my parents and all the doctors and stuff. I feel like I would be really frightened. That would be horrible now that I think about it! Wow.

That question caught him off guard because he had not considered that before. Sometimes we take our faith for granted, especially when we are going through extremes - when things are really bad, we tend to look down and it is hard to lift our head. When things are going really well for us, we might be too busy





looking around at all we have. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:12 (KJV): *I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound.*

Using the athlete's "game face" analogy, we now focus on applying perseverance.

Personal and practical perseverance through trial and affliction is attained  
HOW?



**Acknowledge our experiences:**

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: (NASB) <sup>24</sup>*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.*



**Decide on self-discipline:**

<sup>25</sup>*Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.*



**Embrace training and practice:**

<sup>26</sup>*Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;*



**Always keep the most important thing the most important thing:**

<sup>27</sup>*but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*

This is a picture of a persevering Christian life.



It is refreshing to see the power of perseverance over any troubles that afflict us. Stay focused on our highest purpose and push through.

**When we apply perseverance to our trials and afflictions, what is really happening under the surface?**

We have talked about the HOW of perseverance, which is to be seriously focused on our decisions and discipline. The other part of its application has everything to do with God's influence and guidance in our lives. We can be disciplined but will not spiritually overcome without the power of God through Christ leading us. This is not about how strong our own personal discipline is; it is about how much we rely on the power and strength of God, His grace and His spirit.



### Encouragement

**Rick:** How would you encourage somebody to be able to cope with that schedule that seems like it's never ending?

**Jonathan:** I don't know.

**Julie:** I think a lot of kids would get frustrated with that. Why is it me and not somebody else? Why do I have to be the guy that is stuck here doing this? What do you say to that person who's like, "I don't want to do this; I want to do my own thing? I just think this is ridiculous that this is what I have to go through."

**Jonathan:** I think that was me actually towards the beginning just a little bit. You've got to accept where you are right now. You can't just wish that you were somewhere else, had a different situation and just snap your fingers and make that happen. You are where you are now, and it's your choice to be able to work at it and try to fix it, or if you want to just give up and go and let it get worse. Don't give up. God knows exactly what you're going through, and you're not alone. You got this. Just keep working hard and have faith.

This is profound coming from a 14-year-old facing major spine surgery this year. He talked about accepting the reality of his present circumstances - the intellectual acceptance of the WHY, and then the emotional embracing of it that gives him the ability to cope with it. That gave him the HOW, which is his advice to others. We can all say, "Do not give up," but look at what it looks like to not give up. Feel what it feels like to not give up. We want to apply this to ourselves for when we hit tough situations.

### Back to James 1, verse 5 adds a dimension that needs attention:

James 1:5: (NASB) *But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach (without chiding or defaming), and it will be given to him.*

Why does James say: ask for wisdom after he said to let perseverance have its perfect work? Because wisdom is the tool we may be lacking if we struggle with persevering. If we are not able to apply ourselves, we may be lacking that godly wisdom.

Wisdom makes our burdens bearable because it defines them from a godly perspective and that changes everything! It lifts us out of our misery and helps us to see the path forward.



We do not always know what to ask for or how to ask, but often God gives us answers even before we ask. This happened recently to me. When reading an article, I received confirmation from the Lord that I was handling a difficult situation correctly. This gave me peace. I said "thank you" to the Lord for showing me I was on the right track.



Jonathan was working through a difficult experience, persevering, but then a little bit of godly wisdom came along through his reading to encourage him in his perseverance. That is the point of living a Christian life. These bits of wisdom illuminate our path.

**James 1:6:** (NASB) *But he must ask in faith without any doubting (hesitation), for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.*

Asking in faith without hesitation shows unflinching trust. Our faith has to provide the foundational strength to live in trust that God will provide whatever we need.

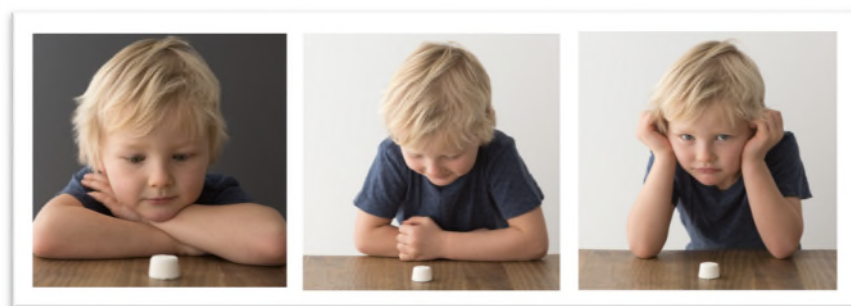
**We are not like Solomon where we can ask for wisdom and become the wisest man in the world:**

**James 1:7-8:** (NASB) *<sup>7</sup>For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, <sup>8</sup>being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

We have to ask in faith - which means we have to live in faith, expecting and looking for the Lord to provide the wisdom to see what He wants from us. This is about being fed throughout our walk with our Lord as we need it. Jonathan was looking for spiritual guidance in the article he was reading, and he got it. If we go to the source of guidance, the Bible, from there we will be blessed with the strength to persevere through trials, to wait when needed, to act when we need to act and to keep things in perspective.

Not seeking with unflinching trust will only bring us instability. Ask in faith, stand and seek in faith and receive the wisdom to transform burdens to blessings by continually persevering *through them*. There needs to be forward motion all the way through an experience.

In a famous study from the 1970s at Stanford University, 3 to 5-year-old kids were left alone with a marshmallow for 15 minutes. They were promised a second marshmallow if they did not eat the first. Kids who were able to delay gratification were found to be more successful later in life. This demonstrated, it was thought at the time, the importance of willpower.



But when the studies were repeated in 2018, they found it was actually the child's socioeconomic background that shaped their long-term success. Poorer kids are less motivated to wait for that second marshmallow. They have learned that while there may be food available today, there might not be enough tomorrow. There is a risk with waiting. Kids from financially stable homes with better educated parents have food certainty and trust things will work out in the end.



We see comparisons with the Christian life. We are asked to sacrifice in the name of Christ - to not eat the “marshmallow” (all the world has to offer in this age), with the promise that our reward in the future will be much greater. Without absolute faith in that promise, and without maintaining our purpose, we will not have a strong enough vision for perseverance.



### *My favorite CQ episode*

Julie: You've been a listener of Christian Questions since you were a young boy. Do you have a certain episode or certain lesson or something that sticks in your mind of something that you remember, a favorite episode or some topic that really interests you?

Jonathan: There was one where I still remember you were playing like music and it was like a hero kind of thing, heroism kind of thing. I remember I really enjoyed that one, and I want to go and find it to listen to it again.

Rick: I think that might have been the episode years ago, something about God's Superhero Avengers or something like that.

Jonathan: Yeah, yeah, something like that.



This was a podcast from 2012 when The Avengers movie came out.

**Wisdom helps us to see our burdens for what they are - an opportunity to flourish in the fact that God is faithful:**

**1 Corinthians 10:12-15:** (NASB) <sup>12</sup>Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. <sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. <sup>15</sup>I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say.

There are two strong concepts here:

### **1) God is faithful:**

One of my favorite hymns I often turn to is *Great is Thy Faithfulness*. It is comforting to know our heavenly Father will follow through on everything He has planned.



“Great is Thy Faithfulness” (Verse one)

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee.  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not  
as Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.





## 2) We will *not be tempted beyond what we are able*:

The Greek word for *temptation* here includes not only the concept of “temptations,” but also of “trials” and “adversity.”

(Source: Biblical commentator Jay Adams) Viewed from one perspective, a problem is a test, which if solved biblically, strengthens and helps one grow in grace. Looked at from a different perspective, the same problem may be used by Satan as a temptation for sin.

This Scripture tells us that when we reach a crossroad - where we will either grow from the experience or give into it - God promises a *way of escape*. This means He will provide a path to follow, a way to progress forward.

*So that you will be able to endure it* - meaning to “bear up under the weight upon your shoulders,” according to the Greek Lexicon.

However, we have to be actively looking for that path. This rarely means that a disease will disappear, or that Jonathan’s spine will miraculously become straight. It is about the help that God will send. We may even be someone else’s *way of escape*. God might send us with our experiences to help others, which will, in turn, help us. Godly perseverance is walking God’s *way of escape* while carrying the necessary burden for the necessary time (enduring). All of this is so we grow in Christ. Perseverance is about growing in Christ.



### *Today is the day*

Rick: It sounds like you're saying, “I just look at each day and today is the day that I have to do this.” Is that kind of the way you're handling this?

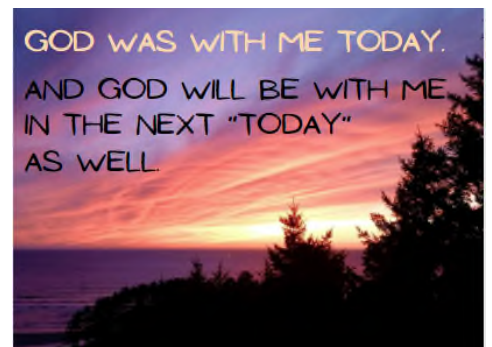
Jonathan: Yeah, that's pretty much. I just say, right now I have these to do, and I have to do them and the rest of the day whatever time I have left, that's time for me. But if I don't have any time left, then that's okay, too, because maybe tomorrow I'll have some time left.

Rick: And God has helped you with today, and you said that, though not in so many words. God has been with you today, and when tomorrow's sun rises, God will be with you in *that* today. And when that tomorrow's sun rises, God will be with you in *that* today. As long as you take care of today, it's all in God's hands.

Jonathan: Exactly.

Rick: Jonathan, you're awesome.

Jonathan is a wonderful picture of what our Christian perseverance needs to look like, illustrated in a 14-year-old’s battle with scoliosis. He has found the wisdom in staying with it day by day.





## Jesus spoke of the wisdom of facing the battle a day at a time:

**Matthew 6:33-34: (NASB)** <sup>33</sup>*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* <sup>34</sup>*So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Why does Jesus say tomorrow will take care of itself? Because Jesus has all of our tomorrows already in his hand. We do not need to worry about having the strength to face tomorrow, because when we get there, Jesus is waiting with all the strength we will need for that day's experiences. That is the way perseverance works. If we can focus just on today and make that little bit of progress - like Jonathan does his exercises each day - God will give us the strength for tomorrow's challenges and difficulties.



This is what we strive for! Our lives should be all about Christian maturity. Jesus taught us about Christian maturity. The Apostle Paul encourages us towards Christian maturity. We will never get to Christian maturity without persevering.

Next week in Part II, we will hear the stories of Lorain and Fred, demonstrating perseverance under persecution and perseverance as an expression of loyalty. We will see what their “game faces” are as a metaphorical soldier and a farmer. We will examine perseverance as a way of life.

- |  |                                       |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
|  | <b>1. Trials and Afflictions:</b>     | THESE EXPERIENCES REQUIRE A PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL PERSEVERANCE.<br><b>JONATHAN/ATHLETE - PART I</b> |
|  | <b>2. Persecution:</b>                | THESE EXPERIENCES REQUIRE PRINCIPLED PERSEVERANCE.<br><b>LORAIN/SOLDIER - PART II</b>                |
|  | <b>3. The Testing of our Loyalty:</b> | THESE EXPERIENCES REQUIRE PASSIONATE PERSEVERANCE.<br><b>FRED/FARMER - PART II</b>                   |

This is an important, godly necessity for every one of us. We must embrace the idea of perseverance because our life depends upon it. Be a persevering soldier in Christ!

*So, how can I persevere when life gets tough?  
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie) and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on January 11, 2021  
Ep. 1160: How Can I Persevere When Life Gets Tough? (Part II)

### Bonus Material and Study Questions

***In a gentle way, you can shake the world. — Mahatma Gandhi***

Several texts we did not have time for:

#### Perseverance at the beginning of Jesus' earthly walk:

**Luke 4:1-13:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Jesus, full of the holy spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the spirit in the wilderness <sup>2</sup>for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, he became hungry. <sup>3</sup>And the devil said to him, If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread. <sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered him, It is written, man shall not live on bread alone. <sup>5</sup>And he led him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. <sup>6</sup>And the devil said to him, I will give you all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. <sup>7</sup>Therefore if you worship before me, it shall all be yours. <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered him, it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only. <sup>9</sup>And he led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, If You are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; <sup>10</sup>for it is written, he will command his angels concerning you to guard you <sup>11</sup>and, on their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. <sup>12</sup>And Jesus answered and said to him, it is said, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. <sup>13</sup>When the devil had finished every temptation, he left him until an opportune time.

#### Perseverance through the battle fighting together as a body:

**Philippians 1:27-30:** (Weymouth) <sup>27</sup>Only let the lives you live be worthy of the Good News of the Christ, in order that, whether I come and see you or, being absent, only hear of you, I may know that you are standing fast in one spirit and with one mind, fighting shoulder to shoulder for the faith of the Good News. <sup>28</sup>Never for a moment quail before your antagonists. Your fearlessness will be to them a sure token of impending destruction, but to you it will be a sure token of your salvation--a token coming from God. <sup>29</sup>For you have had the privilege granted you on behalf of Christ--not only to believe in him, but also to suffer on his behalf; <sup>30</sup>maintaining, as you do, the same kind of conflict that you once saw in me and which you still hear that I am engaged in.

#### Perseverance over the long haul:

**2 Corinthians 11:21-30:** (NASB) <sup>21</sup>To my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison. But in whatever respect anyone else is bold—I speak in foolishness—I am just as bold myself. <sup>22</sup>Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. <sup>23</sup>Are they servants of Christ? I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. <sup>24</sup>Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. <sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. <sup>26</sup>I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my



countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; <sup>27</sup>I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. <sup>28</sup>Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup>Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? <sup>30</sup>If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.

### Perseverance in suffering:

**Acts 5:40-42:** (NASB) <sup>40</sup>They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. <sup>41</sup>So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for his name. <sup>42</sup>And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

### Perseverance to the end:

**Philippians 2:12-18:** (NASB) <sup>12</sup>So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup>for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. <sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or disputing; <sup>15</sup>so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup>holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. <sup>17</sup>But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. <sup>18</sup>You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

## Christian Questions Weekly Newsletter

CQ Rewind Show Notes and Study Questions

Text  
**CQREWIND**  
to **22828** to get started.





# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep. 1159: How Can I Persevere When Life Gets Tough? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1159-perserverance/>

See:  **CQ Rewind**  
SHOW NOTES

1. How does perseverance differ from endurance? What does it mean to persevere as a Christian? Why is this important to us? (See Luke 21:19, Romans 5:3-5)
2. Why is it important that we clearly see *why* we need to persevere? By truly feeling the reason behind that *why*, we are able to do what? What do we gain through these two steps? What are the types of experiences that help us build perseverance in our characters?
3. How can perseverance help us turn our trials and afflictions into faith-strengthening experiences? What is a necessary mindset in approaching these experiences? (See Hebrews 12:2, James 1:2-4)
4. What does it mean to wait on the Lord's providence? What is important to keep in front of our minds as we wait? How did Jesus wait and follow God's guidance? (See Psalms 27:13-14, Isaiah 50:5-9)
5. What steps should we take to put our perseverance into practice when faced with trials and afflictions? What do we gain if we persevere? Why do we need to embrace the "long view" to keep in mind *where* the *why* leads? (See 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Hebrews 12:7,10-11, James 1:12)
6. Practically, how is perseverance through trial and affliction attained? What are the four parts of this? (See 1 Corinthians 9:24-27)
7. Why is faith so important to have when we are trying to apply Christian perseverance? If we are strongly disciplined, can we overcome our trials? (See James 1:6-8)
8. What role does wisdom play in developing perseverance? How might not understanding the godly perspective affect our ability to persevere? (See Matthew 6:33-34, 1 Corinthians 10:12-15, James 1:5)
9. What have you had to persevere through in your life? How did your faith help you through those experiences? What Scriptures inspire you to persevere through your trials and tribulations?