

*Pre-Decide
When You Want to Give Up.
Clay Weed*

TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

Matthew 26:39 (NLT)

39 He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

Matthew 26:42 (NLT)

42 Then Jesus left them a second time and prayed, "My Father! If this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will be done."

John 19:30 (NLT)

30 When Jesus had tasted it, he said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

2 Timothy 4:5 (NLT)

5 But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you.

Romans 8:11 (NLT)

11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

Philippians 1:6 (NLT)

6 And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Discuss a time when you completed something, or didn't quit, even when you really wanted to give up.

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read Matthew 26:39, Matthew 26:42 and John 19:30.** What is the importance of Jesus' commitment to the completion of the Father's will?
- "When I commit, I won't quit. I am a finisher". In what types of situations have those statements been true in your life? In what types of situations have they not been true? Is there a pattern?
- What were the impacts to yourself and to others when you've given up? How about the impacts when you've persevered and completed something?
- Discuss the difference between giving up on something and changing your mind.
- Read **2 Timothy 4:5, Romans 8:11, and Philippians 1:6.** What is Paul trying to tell his audience in each of these passages? What changes can you choose to make that will help you finish in a way that will bring resolution at the same that it brings glory to God in your life and/or the lives of others?
- When faced with _____, I have pre-decided to _____. Does filling in those blanks cause you to pause and consider, or can you think of answers immediately? Pray as you consider your life right now and allow God to show you His answers for those blanks. Fill in or adjust accordingly.

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Use the fill in the blank exercise above to pre-decide, to cultivate commitment to one practice you know will help you carry out the ministry God has given you.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Pray over your decision making and obedience to God's will for your life. Ask Him to help your small group to hold each other accountable, to help each other run the race well.

Question: "What does the Bible say about giving up?"

Answer: The opposite of giving up is perseverance or endurance—two qualities encouraged for believers (2 Thessalonians 1:4; Romans 5:3; James 1:3). When we persevere through difficulties or weariness, we refuse to give up on what God has called us to do. Galatians 6:9 encourages us to never give up: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

Several factors can cause people to consider giving up. The first is discouragement. We may begin an endeavor gripped with passion to see it through, but after a while, when we don't receive the results we expected or when people don't appreciate our efforts, we can become discouraged. The Bible instructs fathers not to be harsh with their children, lest the children become discouraged. Discouraged children often give up trying to please their parents and act out. Discouraged, disillusioned adults often give up or act out as well. God's solution for discouragement is that the church “encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Another factor that leads to people giving up is pride. We may take on a challenge, confident of our own abilities and eager to impress people we care about. God has warned us that “pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). When we crash, our pride is wounded, and we often give up altogether, rather than get up and try again. This happens to some in ministry. They start in the ministry for the right reasons, but somewhere along the line pride takes over. When they are embarrassed, confronted, or challenged, pride insists on giving up, and they walk away.

Exhaustion can also lead to giving up. If we don't pace ourselves and set healthy boundaries, we may become so mentally, physically, spiritually, or emotionally exhausted that we simply quit. Those in helping ministries are most susceptible to giving up due to exhaustion. Needy people are everywhere, and helpers who try to be all things to all people all the time are subject to burnout. It helps to remember that we cannot give to others what we don't possess, so taking care of ourselves is not selfish. Caregivers for young children, the elderly, or the terminally ill must remember to carve out time to keep themselves healthy. Those in ministry must keep themselves immersed in a personal relationship with God, or they will lack the spiritual strength to continue pouring into others. Jesus gives us a perfect example of someone who continually ministered to others, while still prioritizing His relationship with the Father. Jesus often slipped away “while it was still dark” to spend time in prayer (Mark 1:35; Matthew 14:23; Luke 5:16).

Scripture exhorts us that, when we are on the path God has ordained for us, we are not to give up (Philippians 4:1; Galatians 5:1; Revelation 3:10). Nehemiah never gave up the construction of Jerusalem's walls, despite the fierce opposition he faced. Caleb never gave up on the promise of God, and he conquered a giant-infested, fortified hill country when he was 85 years old. Jesus persevered all the way to the cross. “Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:3). When we give up too soon, we lose out on all God planned to do through and for us.

Sometimes giving up is an indication that people were never true followers of Christ. That's what the Bible calls apostasy (1 Timothy 4:1; 1 John 2:19). Those who have truly been born again by the Spirit of God (John 3:3) will never give Jesus up. They are kept in the Lord's hand (John 10:28–29), and they will persevere to the end.