



# Stay the Course

I remember the moment as if it were yesterday. I was standing about 20 rows up from the floor in the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne, Indiana. About 20 minutes previous, Brooks Gibbs had given the invitation to receive Christ at the close of our *Reach For More* event. Now, the entire floor of the coliseum was covered with counselors, counseling new believers. There were over 400 counselors at work on the floor.

What I was seeing was the culmination of over two years of work preparing for the event. I was exhausted beyond description . . . but overwhelmingly happy! We had prevailed. We didn't quit even though the event had been aborted three times during those two years.

It all started when I was in the city visiting friends. Word got around that I did city-wide outreach events, and someone insisted that I meet with Pastor Ron, pastor of the First Assemblies of God Church in the city. When we met, I spread an assortment of visuals of events I had done on the table. The one of the Louisiana event got his attention. It showed 1000 students answering the altar call on the floor of the coliseum.

"We have to do this event," Pastor Ron said. "We have to reach our teens."

We set a date, and it crept up on us without significant movement on the part of leaders in the city. This is typical. Leaders of the city don't realize the commitment an event takes, and pretty soon it is too late to make the date that was set. Most of our successful events, first had a date that the city didn't make.

So the date was set again . . . and missed again. Three dates were missed, and honestly, I was tired and disgusted. I told the Lord, "I'm done with this city," and I got in my car and went home.

When Jonah told God he wasn't going to Nineveh, God in effect said, "Well, we'll see about that." You know the story. God arranged for a great fish to swallow him and take him to Nineveh.

God had his ways and means in my case with Fort Wayne. An international speaker from the 9-11 tragedy called me and asked if I was going to the National Convention of the Assemblies of God in Washington, D.C.



I don't like large conventions (small ones are okay), and besides I didn't have the money to go, so I told him "No, I don't have the money." That was a mistake, because he paused a second and said, "I am supposed to pay your airline ticket."

*"Oh, well I guess I am going then."*

In Washington D.C., God had the circumstances set to convince me that I was supposed to do an event in Fort Wayne. The first day of the convention, I immediately ran

smack into Pastor Ron and his wife, Joy. I had just printed a new promotional piece, that featured the American Flag, produced in full color. Pastor Ron took a look and said, "Well, I think we can do this event."

*I was taken aback. "Really?"*

The same day, I went to hear Thomas Trask, head of the Assemblies, speaking in a large auditorium. There were about 2000 present, but as soon as I got into the building and slipped into the men's room, there was Pastor Ron . . . again.

Well, unless you are really dumb, you realize that this is not coincidence. I tried to run from the event, but God was bringing it right back to me . . . right back in my face.

Pastor Ron and I led the event, and eventually about 100 other churches joined us. The event was pretty huge. We brought in four school assembly speakers and booked 24 assemblies that reached about 18,000 students. There were about 5000 in the big event at the end of the week and well over 400 answered the altar call to commit their lives to Christ.

The event broke records in the city. It was the largest initiative ever to bring character-based education into the schools, and it was the biggest participation ever by the churches of the city to evangelize their city.

When God calls you to do something, Satan throws everything he's got against you. During the event timeline, I had two very large distractions back home that I had to deal with. Most of the time, I didn't know if I was coming or going. Pastor Ron happened to be completing a master's degree at the time. He was sleep deprived and stretched thin. Right before the event, a careless driver rear-ended him.

At times the event process resembled Abbot and Costello's famous "Who's on first, What's on second." But God was faithful. Together we all "got 'er done."

What's the point of the story? So many great efforts for God are aborted, because it "just gets too hard." There is no such thing as "too hard," when you are serving the Lord. When He gives you an assignment, you have to see it through . . . no matter what.

Anyone can start, but it takes a real warrior to finish. Stay the course. Never give up, keep your eye on the prize, keep pressing toward the mark and make sure you cross the finish line.

***I press toward  
the goal  
(the finish line)  
for the  
prize of the  
upward call of  
God in Christ Jesus.  
Philippians 3:14***

***F.Y.I***

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