



PERSEVERANCE

by Julie Caldwell | Competitive Edge Int'l

Every competitor experiences challenges. Think about some of the challenges that have put you to the test in sports. Maybe you have been in an extended slump. Maybe you have been injured. Or maybe your relationship with a coach or a teammate has been very difficult. The question is, do you embrace the difficult condition or do you run from it?

James, the half-brother of Jesus, challenged Christ-followers to PERSEVERE with these words: *"When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends!"* (James 1:2, J.B. Phillips). Do you wonder why James urged us to welcome trials and temptations? The answer lies not in the hardships themselves, but in how they deepen our character. James continued, *"The testing of your faith produces endurance"* (James 1:3). The Greek word for endurance literally means "to abide under." As the tests of faith become more and more difficult, we develop a greater ability to abide under the pressure. As a result, hard times make us *"perfect and complete, lacking in nothing"* (James 1:4b). In other words, tests or trials mature us. But maturity does not occur overnight. There are no get-mature-quick shortcuts. It takes time, and only the Lord knows how much time it takes to accomplish His goals for us. Therefore, it is best if we do not try to escape tests or trials prematurely, but persevere. When you are in the midst of a trial, you may want to ask God what He desires to reveal to you or what He wants to teach you. Hearing what He has to say can bring perspective to your challenge.

EXTRA INNINGS

- 1) What are some of the challenges have you faced or are currently facing? Do you find yourself welcoming and embracing the difficult challenges or running from them?
- 2) How has God used and/or how is God using these challenges to build character in you?
- 3) Thank God... for the strength He has given or will give you to persevere, for the way He has matured or is maturing you, and for being faithful to complete the good work He's started in you.



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