

The Power Of Perseverance

by **Steven D Huff**

At 7:00 p.m. on October 20, 1968, a few thousand spectators remained in the Mexico City Stadium. It was cool and dark. The last of the marathon runners, each exhausted, were being carried off to first-aid stations. More than an hour earlier, Mamo Wolde of Ethiopia crossed the finish line, the winner of the 26-mile event.

As the remaining spectators prepared to leave, those sitting near the marathon gates suddenly heard the sound of sirens and police whistles. All eyes turned to the gate. A lone figure wearing the colors of Tanzania entered the stadium. His name was John Stephen Akhwari. He was the last man to finish the marathon. His leg was bloodied and bandaged -- severely injured in a fall. He grimaced with every step. As he hobbled around the 400 meter track to the finish line, the spectators rose and applauded him as if he were the winner.

In view of his injury and having no chance of winning a medal, someone asked him why he had not quit. His reply was that of a champion. He said, "My country did not send me 7,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 7,000 miles to finish it."

Here are a few benefits of persevering in difficult times:

- **Perseverance Develops Our Character** - Henry Ford once noted, "You can't build a reputation on what you're going to do." Character isn't a conviction, nor good intentions, nor is it something you profess. Character is what you practice in good times and bad. Character is hammered out on the anvil of perseverance. There's an old saying, "Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking in anything."
- **Perseverance Expands Our Experience** - After addressing a Harvard Business class, Walmart's Sam Walton was asked, "Sam, tell us your secret. How did you really become so successful?" Sam replied, "I can answer that in two words: Good decisions." Still curious, the young man asked, "How did you make all your good decisions?" Sam thought for a moment and said, "I can answer that in one word: Experience." Now frustrated the man shot back, "How did you get all your experience?" After a brief pause Sam Walton replied, "I can answer that in two words: Bad decisions!" Persevering in difficult times forces us to take on new challenges, be creative, find solutions, and sharpen our skills.
- **Perseverance Demonstrates Our Commitment** - As David McNally is credited with saying, "Commitment is the enemy of resistance for it is the serious promise to press on, to get up, no matter how many times you are knocked down." Ken Blanchard once put it this way, "There's a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when it's convenient. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses; only results." People with commitment always press on toward the goal to win the prize.