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Life Lessons, What Keeps Me Going for God, Part 1



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #329 ~

I just retired from serving as a pastor, something I have done since 1979. What a blessing, what a great privilege and honor to have been able to work for God in this way, especially in the area of teaching God's word, and specifically with regards to Christ's 1st coming and 2nd coming. My purpose in the next few posts is to share lessons I have learned that have helped me to keep going for God through all the years. I am passing them on to you because I want you to clearly understand how you can persevere for God in the end-times, in these last years leading up to Christ's return to rapture the church.

1. *"One thing is necessary."* Luke 10:38-42 tells us that Martha was busy doing all these things, but Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet. The lesson is that I must be like Mary – God must be first and foremost in my life (*"The Lord is my portion"* – Ps. 119:57). And God has helped me to love Him, to live for Him, to seek Him, to trust Him, to be satisfied by Him, and to put Him first, in family, finances, church, work, etc. Ps.

27:4-5, Mark 12:30

2. *“Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up and went out to a lonely place and prayed”* (Mk. 1:35). Ps. 42:2 says, *“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God.”* This is the practical outworking of the first point. God has motivated me to get up in the morning and spend time with Him, and without question, this is the most important and favorite part of my day, the best thing I’ve done over the years. When I get with God, I read His word, pray to Him, enjoy Him, learn from Him, am strengthened by Him, and I am led by Him.

3. *“Let him who boasts, boast of this, that He understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth”* (Jer. 9:23-24).This is about knowing the character of God. Back in the 1970’s I read a life-changing book by A.W. Tozer on God’s character. Knowing His character, that He is holy, just, powerful, loving, forgiving, patient, wise, faithful, sovereign, etc., has been a key ingredient in being a growing, healthy, persevering Christian. *My ABC’s*

4. *“Seek to abound for the edification of the church.”* 1 Cor. 14:12. A necessary part of my life has been going to church every Sunday, unless I’m sick or on vacation. For the past 50+ years, God has always, year after year after year, provided a good church for me. When I say church, I mean a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching, Christ-glorifying church, one filled with true believers who love God, love Jesus Christ, love God’s word, and love one another. Being with believers, and worshiping together, learning God’s word, and being mutually encouraged, has been absolutely essential to my progress and joy.

5. *“Enjoy life with the woman you love all the days of your life.”* Eccl. 9:9. I love my wife, and I know she loves me. *“He who finds a wife finds what is good…”* (Pr. 18:22). In God’s wisdom and goodness, and for His

purposes and glory, God has given me a wife who's perfect for me. She's a great helper, encourage, counselor, and she supports me and prays for me more than anyone else. Where I'm at today is due in large part to having an incredibly wonderful wife. I'm so thankful that God picked her for me!

6. *"There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."* Prov. 18:24. Over the years, I've gotten to know hundreds of Christians, from Iowa to Maryland to Florida. But this is about having a few close, devoted, and faithful friends, ones you can always talk to and who are always there for you. For sure, it's been my wife and children. Then there's my physical brother Jeff who is also my spiritual brother. There's Mike, a very close friend and gifted teacher who I met in Ames, Iowa in the late '70's. And there's Steve and Vickie, good and faithful friends of both my wife and I for close to 40 years. These precious friends, gifts from God, have been an important part of His work in my life!

7. *"Join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us"* (Phil. 3:17). I have learned from many believers through the years. There was Abe, the faith-filled leader of a Sunday School class, and Wayne, a man with solid, word-based convictions, and Rick who exhorted me, *"fulfill your ministry"*, and Brent whose example of getting times alone with God motivated me to do the same, and Roger who, when I was facing opposition, encouraged me to teach the whole truth of God, and Marv and John who, by their good example, motivated me to teach God's word more than anyone else. All these men loved God, loved His word, and loved His people. What I learned from them had a profound, lasting effect on me and my ministry!

8. *"Humble yourself in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you"* (James 4:10). Being humble means knowing God is my Creator, Lord, and Savior. Being humble means knowing that God is my primary and ultimate authority, and then doing not what I want but what He wants. God has used His word, trials, relationships, being sick, and others'

examples to make and keep me humble. Humility is telling God, *"I need You, apart from You I am nothing and can do nothing – You get all the glory"* (Ps. 115:1). Humility has been a means to my salvation, my spiritual growth, having faith, receiving grace, loving others, having good friends, and being where I am at today.

9. *"Man plans his way and the Lord directs his steps"* (Prov. 16:9). God is sovereign, He is in control, He reigns over all things and all people. I began learning the practicality and glories of God's sovereignty in the 1990's, and it has had a major and super-positive impact on my life. God saves people, and He determines who is saved. He does what He wants with this world, with the countries, and with the leaders, including our President. He is in charge of the weather, the storms, and even calamities. He leads Israel and the church, and He directs my life, your life, and the life of every person in the world.

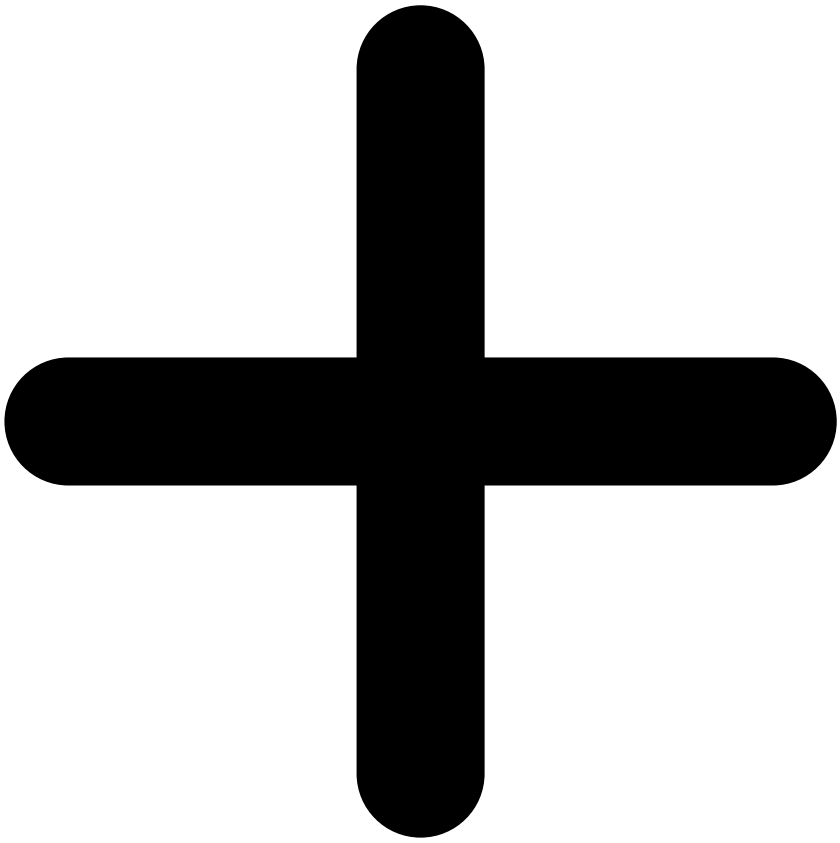
Now that I'm older, it's easier to look back and see God's sovereign work. God was sovereign over my father's death in 1961, being saved in 1972, moving to Maryland in 1983, being married in 1986, being blessed with four children, being gifted to teach in 1993, moving to Tampa in 1999 and being here for the past 26 years, and now moving once again. Knowing the truth and the outworking of God's sovereignty has been most beneficial to my life. Gen. 50:20, Rom. 8:28, Eph. 1:11-12, James 4:13-15

10. A major reason I've been able to keep going for God through the years is His love for me. Here are some thoughts about His love:
– God's love is based on Christ's death and resurrection, with the result that I have been forgiven, have eternal life, am holy, am a child of God, and have a glorious future.
– God's love has been personal, powerful, continual, and effective in my life.
– God's love is multifaceted and is seen in that He's been forgiving, patient, gentle, compassionate, faithful, and perfectly wise in all His dealings with me.

– God’s love is shown in that He constantly thinks about me, cares for me, talks to me, helps me, protects me, strengthens me, and gives me everything I need.

There are many verses about God’s love that feed and fuel my soul. *“Surely goodness and love follow me all the days of my life”* (Ps. 23:6). *“Your love is better than life”* (Ps. 63:3). *“Your love toward me is great, and You have delivered me from the depths of Sheol”* (Ps. 86:13). *“Satisfy me in the morning with Your unfailing love that I may sing for joy and be glad all my days”* (Ps. 90:14). *“In Your unfailing love, preserve my life, that I may keep Your commands”* (Ps. 119:88). *“Neither height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord”* (Rom. 8:39). *“By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”* (1 John 4:9-10). Amen.

P.S. My purpose in these posts is two-fold, to help you know what is going to happen, and to help you know how you should live. And the Bible is filled with truths about how you should live, and you must learn and know them in your heart. “How Then Should We Live in the End-times” summarizes the character and the conduct that God wants you to have.



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