

Why Christians Cannot Afford to Give Up

Hiram Kemp
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He quit. He did not even wait until the game was over. He just quit at halftime with two quarters of football left to be played. These were the statements that made headlines everywhere a few weeks ago when Vontae Davis, cornerback of the Buffalo Bills, quit and retired at halftime. He said he “just should not be out there [on the field] anymore.”¹

I share the story of Davis abruptly ending his NFL career because many Christians may be on the verge of doing the same thing. Many are struggling with anxiety, depression, various kinds of temptation, the challenge of being new parents, cancer, and a host of other issues. God has promised that there is always a way of escape if we look for it, but quitting is never an option (1 Cor. 10:13). I do not know why Vontae Davis gave up and quit, but I know Christians cannot afford to. There is far too much at stake for Christians to throw in the towel and surrender. Let me share a few reasons why Christians cannot afford to quit.

Others are depending on us

Whether you know it or not, people look up to you. There are Christians who have marked you as someone that they should follow and as someone whose faith they should emulate (Phil. 3:17). I am always encouraged when I read of Paul linking his faith to those he taught. Paul and his co-workers could live and rejoice if his converts remained faithful; he was depending on them (1 Thess. 3:7-8). Those who you have taught and shared your faith with will be deflated if they come to know that you have given up. If you have a spouse or small children, they are looking to you, not to be faultless, but to be faithful. Our non-Christian friends expect us to be those who are able to withstand trials in this life because we claim to be living for the next (Phil. 3:20). We do not simply live for ourselves, but for others as well. We cannot give up because there are many who are depending on us and deriving strength from our resolve despite our physical circumstances.

Our labor is not in vain

There are so many things that are done in this life for nothing. I do not think I have ever made much use of the Pythagorean Theorem. It seems like I wasted my time learning that in school. Christians must always remember that, as it relates to Christianity, our labor is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). Since Jesus rose from the grave and conquered sin and death, we are a part of the only eternal cause in the world (Dan. 2:44; 1 Cor. 15:24). Every evangelistic effort, every prayer uttered, every Bible verse memorized, every kind deed performed in the name of Christ has value. We might feel ignored by the world, but God is keeping a record of things and He will not forget (Heb. 6:10). Our work does not earn us anything. We are saved by grace through faith, yet we must work. We will be less likely to give up if we keep in mind that our Christian work will outlast this world and its problems. So many things that people are overwhelmed about in this life will be burned up in the end (2 Pet. 3:10). Christians must not give up because only what is done for Christ will last.

Things could be worse

This is not meant to undermine the struggles you may be facing. Some of you reading this are facing things I can only imagine. However, the truth is that things could still be worse. The writer of Hebrews encouraged Christians to remember that they had not yet spilled blood in their resisting of sin (Heb. 12:4). When I read of all that Job suffered through, I am always reminded to keep my first world problems in their proper perspective. We often think we have it worse than others because we are more acquainted with our own problems. Study the prophets and the lives of the early Christians and realize that these are not fanciful characters who were written about but flesh and blood people who suffered many difficulties (Jas. 5:10-11). We could prevent the devil from pumping steroids into our

problems if we looked on the difficult trials others faced and appreciated that things are not as bad as they seem.

The Reward is on the Way

We have to live in this world but not for long. Our reward is on the way and this should help us to never give up. There is nothing in this life that can happen that can overshadow what God has in store for His people (Rom. 8:18). Like children who are anxiously waiting for Christmas, Christians are waiting for the incorruptible inheritance that will soon be ours (1 Pet. 1:3-5). When is the last time you have seriously thought about heaven? It might be wise to take a break from the hardships of this life and study about our eternal home that Jesus has prepared for us (John 14:2-3). Paul describes our affliction as both light and temporary in comparison to the weighty and eternal blessings we will receive at this life's end (2 Cor. 4:16-18). We cannot afford to give up because our reward is still on the way.

God can see us through

If God can do anything, He can deliver. We look at what God has done, and it breeds confidence in us for what He will do (2 Cor. 1:9-10). Whatever you are going through, God sees and God is concerned. The fact that God does not deliver us immediately from every hardship does not mean that He is absent. God uses hardship to refine and mature us (Jas. 1:2-4). If God gave up Jesus for us, we can be confident that He will use passages, providence, and His people to see us through the worse times this life has to offer (Rom. 8:31-32). God will not abandon us, so we would be foolish to abandon God. To give up on our faith because times are tough means we lose our faith in the time when we need it most. Do not give up because God can and will see us through (Isa. 43:2).

Jesus gave up everything

Christians cannot afford to give up because Jesus gave up everything. Jesus left heaven so that one day we never have to (Phil. 2:5-11). The gospel story should always penetrate the deep recesses of our hearts and we must never allow it to get old. Jesus was persecuted, falsely accused, and betrayed so that we could be forgiven. Jesus' overcoming this world means that we can overcome as well (John 16:33). It was never God's goal that we get through this life without suffering or trial. God's goal is that through Jesus no one has to go through this life without Him. Let the victorious and sacrificial life of Jesus encourage you to keep going when you would rather not. He is the author and finisher of our faith. Now we can finish (Heb. 12:2-3). Do not give up because Jesus gave up so much for you.

Vontae Davis could not make it through another down in the NFL. He deserted the game, his team, and his responsibility before the game ended. Christians must not quit before the end (2 John 8). Let's encourage each other, lean on one another, and turn to the Lord, but we must never give up (Heb. 3:13).

Footnotes

1. http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/24703207/buffalo-bills-cb-vontae-davis-abruptly-retires-football-half-vs-los-angeles-chargers