

The Black Belt Book of Life - Topic #33 –

It Is Nothing To Begin. It Is Everything To Finish

It is not to disparage,
nor any seeker to diminish,
yet . . .

*It is nothing to begin.
It is everything to finish.*

*Never run away from anything. Never! . . .
If you are going through hell, keep going . . .
You only have to endure to conquer.*

Winston Churchill

*Effort only fully releases its reward
after a person refuses to quit.*

Napoleon Hill

Age wrinkles the body. Quitting wrinkles the soul.

General Douglas MacArthur

*Most people give up just when they're about to achieve success.
They quit on the one yard line. They give up at the last minute of the
game, one foot from a winning touchdown.*

Ross Perot

Life is not only a journey, it's a test, a test to see if we can endure the struggles, trials, tribulations, heartaches, heartbreaks, tears, fears, and other incendiary challenges confronting us from cradle to grave. This test is meant to strengthen the soul for the journey ahead, not destroy it. If we give up, we fail. If we never give up, we triumph. It is nothing to begin this journey. We're born into it. However, it is everything to finish it. Therefore, we must never, ever quit.

As the esteemed Winston Churchill emphatically states: *Never run away from anything. Never!* He also encourages and admonishes: *If you are going through hell, keep going.* In many ways, Churchill was to Britain in their darkest hour what Lincoln was to America in her darkest hour. These were great and strong men without whose guidance, courage, wisdom and leadership the lives of untold thousands of people would have been drastically altered for the worse. They both knew they could never quit and didn't. They both led their countries through hell without stopping. They were blessed souls with powerful and meaningful destinies.

General Douglas MacArthur was a great military leader in the Twentieth Century. He understood quitting, and his quote hits the heart hard: *Age wrinkles the body. Quitting wrinkles the soul.* In other words, it's far better to have a wrinkled body, a wrinkled physical form, than to have a wrinkled, crinkled, crumpled and ruffled soul. The body is nothing more than structured dust. But the soul is that divine part of us that lives forever. It needs to be kept pure. Quitting adulterates it, leaving us unkempt, disheveled.

It's never crowded at the top of the mountain. Why? Because people quit the climb. Perhaps it's because the climb is hard, lonely, cold, daunting, dangerous. Whatever the reason, the reality remains that those at the top of any mountain, of any field of endeavor are few, and they are few because they never quit. But they are also the ones who gain the laurels and gifts of the climb. They, and they alone, are the ones deserving of the wealth of the climb, and only those who climb acquire such wealth.

True story. In a visit to Yosemite National Park in 1994, my daughters and I wanted to climb to the top of Vernal Fall. From the public road, the journey to the top of the fall is 1.5 miles. At .8 miles along the slightly elevating path is Vernal Falls Bridge. From there it's .7 miles to the top. As we started along the path, there were many people dressed in all kinds of attire. Some women were even in high heels. Hardly the kind of footwear to wear on a mountain trail. When we arrived at the Vernal Falls Bridge, there was a crowd. The path from there on was quite steep in relation to the path from the road to the bridge. At that point, most of the hikers quit the climb. But those who wanted to get to the top kept going, us among them. It wasn't all that tough a climb but it was more difficult than the first leg up to the bridge. For those of us who continued to the top of the fall, the reward was beautiful. Such a view! In simple fact, we who made it never quit. We kept going, enduring the slight discomfort of the climb. But because we never quit, we were among the ones who experienced the gift of the climb and the majesty of the view

from atop Vernal Fall. Although this is a simple analogy, it underscores the value of not quitting and the rewards bequeathed on those who do not quit.

In more challenging struggles, however, the consequences of quitting can be perilous, even lethal. In a self-defense situation if we quit, we could easily lose our life. If, during family challenges such as the death of a loved one or loved ones, a divorce, bankruptcy or other heart-wrenching event, if we quit trying to maintain our psychological focus and emotional balance, we lose, and the consequences will most likely not be good. We must keep trying. There is no other alternative. How many people have quit fighting the urge to consume alcohol in an attempt to drown their problems, thus becoming alcoholics in the process? The same applies to quitting the struggle to stop the usage of nicotine and other drugs, thus leading to addiction and all of its attending evils? In quitting the struggle, such souls eventually become physically or lethally victimized by these consumptions and addictions. They suffer. Their loved ones suffer. To some degree, we all suffer.

Life is struggle. Great souls know this which is why they exhort us to keep fighting the fight and to never quit. As Churchill proclaims: *You only have to endure to conquer*. And isn't this the great challenge in life, to endure? Isn't this the way to lead a noble life, to endure? Christ said: *He that endures to the end shall be saved* [St. Matthew 10:22]. Need more be said? And so it is for all of us in the journey of life or in any of its challenges or pursuits. *It is nothing to begin. It is everything to finish*. To finish, we must endure and never, never, ever quit.

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