

Talking about Perseverance

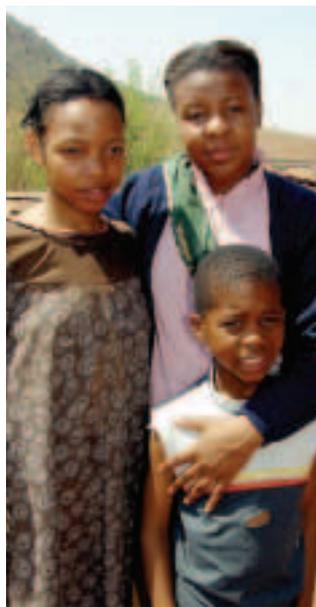
HEARTLINES film – The Good Fight

Preparation for the discussion

Read the notes “Leading a discussion group around the eight values” on pages 2 & 3. It is recommended that you also read the Bible notes on Perseverance in the ‘Go deeper’ section on page 48.

KEY THOUGHT to keep in mind when leading a discussion on perseverance:

Everyone suffers hardship in life, but God teaches that those who persevere because of their hope in Him will see their patience rewarded.



Nomsa, Faith and Sifiso



Mr Lin and Faith

1) Introduce the discussion 3 Minutes

Briefly introduce the film “The Good Fight” and the value of “perseverance” that the film highlights. Read the following Scripture from Romans 5: 3-4: **“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character, and character, hope.”**

2) Show the film 17 Minutes

Show the HEARTLINES film “The Good Fight” as provided on the DVD in the back inside cover of this book. If you are extending the discussion over 2 sessions, and have already watched the film, read the summary at the start of the second session.

3) Start the film discussion 20 Minutes

1. What is the main message communicated in this film?
2. What do you think the cross pendant represents in the following scenes?
 - When Faith found it with her mother’s things.
 - When it was returned to her after her rape.
 - After she had faced her fears before she left to go home.
3. In the beginning of the film what was Faith’s outlook on life?
4. After the rape Faith was too afraid to leave the safety of Mr Lin’s shop. What do you think motivated her to leave the shop at night to look for Mr. Lin?
5. What do you think caused Faith to finally face her fears?

[film summary]

In the film Faith, her younger sister Nomusa and younger brother Sifiso, are left alone to fend for themselves when their mother dies of AIDS. Faith is forced to go to Johannesburg to find work so that she can pay for food and school fees for her brother and sister. Tragically she is raped and loses her job and her faith. She sees a Chinese man practising martial arts and asks him to teach her to fight. Reluctantly Mr Lin allows her into his shop and his life. Mr Lin carries his own pain of the past but nevertheless starts to help Faith gain enough confidence to face her fears.

4) Discuss the film quotes *15 Minutes*

Show the following clips as provided on the DVD and use the relevant quote as a discussion starter:

[CLIP 1] Isaiah the narrator

"Faith is the only weapon that will defeat despair. Between the rock and the stream, the stream always wins – not through strength but through perseverance." (Isaiah)

[CLIP 2] Faith runs inside the shop and cries

"Life is not easy. Believe in yourself. Persevere." (Mr. Lin)

[CLIP 3] Faith and Mr Lin having tea

"The wise turn the dark colours of sadness and pain into the most beautiful rainbow. Fall down seven, stand up eight." (Mr. Lin)

[CLIP 4] Faith and Papi in the street

"If God loves you so much then how come you're scrubbing floors for a living?" (Hloni)



Mr Lin

[film discussion summary]

Faith had a dream. This young woman had an ambition that she intended to fulfill. It was a good dream.

She wanted to earn money to provide for her sister Nomusa and her brother Sifiso. That money would enable Nomusa to finish school, get her matric and have a better chance for the future.

Most of us have dreams that lie deep within our hearts. Some of us have lost sight of our dreams because life has been so hard on us. Like Faith, tragedy and suffering can strike us with such force that we can hardly breathe, let alone think. Our dreams once full of hope are replaced by despair because now we see no hope.

"Fall down seven, stand up eight."

5) Discuss: How can we practise perseverance? *25 Minutes*

1. Ask some people in your group to share about a time when they were going through difficulties and had to persevere. Don't force this if they are unwilling.
2. In the story Faith lived with a lot of fear. Ask the group to share some of the fears that they face in their lives. Discuss how you could persevere and overcome these fears.

Refer to 1 John 4:18 *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear"* and Romans 12:10-16 which speaks about helping one another and sharing *"with God's people who are in need"* (Romans 12:13)

3. In Deuteronomy 30:19 – we read *"...I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him."*

Q: Do you think that perseverance involves choice? On what basis do you make such choices?

[leader's note]

God's love for us helps us cope with our fears. Through prayer, faith in God, and the support of friends and family we can face our own fears.

[leader's note]

Although we can and must call on God to help us persevere, we also have a responsibility to make sound choices. Part of the process is deciding not to quit, but to keep going.

Group discussion on Perseverance

4. **For the Christian**, perseverance is not rooted in personal ability or strength because all of us are weak and fail at some point. It is not rooted in our family or friendships because family members can be lost, friends can change and some even betray us. Perseverance is only possible through our hope in God.

Our faith in Christ is rooted in the fact that he persevered for our sake:

“... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Hebrews 12:1-3

Q: How does Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection provide us with hope? How does this relate to any current problems that you may be experiencing?

[perseverance through Christ]

We have hope in Christ, because of what He accomplished on the cross. Imagine what Jesus' disciples were thinking when He was executed on the cross. Who could think of a tragedy worse than this — that the Son of God Himself is not able to escape the evil powers of this world? (See Colossians 2:13-15)

Christ has triumphed over failure and death. There is nothing we face that cannot and will not be redeemed by him, whether it is something we've done or something that has been done to us. But very often Christ's victory over sin and death is not worked out in some quick-fix way. Redemption often takes us on an inevitably painful journey through the ugly processes of trauma, loss, grief and hardship. The manner in which we handle these can be a powerful testimony, allowing Christ's power to “triumph” where human eyes see only despair.

5. In Romans and James we read:

“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character, and character, hope.”

Romans 5: 3-4

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

James 1: 2-4

Q: Discuss some of the positives that are produced by persevering. Can you think of some examples of perseverance as described in these verses from people that you know?



Faith

“We have hope in Christ because of what He accomplished on the cross”

[time to think...] 10 minutes

Read the following and ask each person to think about perseverance in their own lives.

If you are going through a time of suffering and you don't feel that you can persevere through it, Hebrews 13:5 says "He will never leave us nor forsake us" and 1 Corinthians 10:13 says that God will not give us more than we can bear.

Ask Him right now to give you the strength you need to persevere.

"He is more eager to answer than we are to ask" (Smith Wigglesworth)

At home this week:

Encourage the group to read the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-45 and to ask themselves the questions "What dreams has God placed in my heart?" and "How important is it to hold on to God's principles as I pursue these dreams?" **Encourage everyone to memorise Romans 5: 3-4** "Not only so but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character, and character, hope."



Isaiah

6) Talking about HIV&AIDS (Optional) 10 minutes

1. What would your response be to a family member or friend who had been raped? What would you do?



[leader's note]

Any unprotected sex with someone who might be HIV positive places an individual at high risk of being infected with HIV. This is especially the case with rape as one does not know the status of the rapist. A course of ARVs (medicine) taken every day for a month can prevent HIV infection. The treatment must be started within twenty-four hours of the rape. Rape survivors need the support and care of family and friends in order to come to terms with what has happened.

7) Perseverance in Action: Ideas to make a difference in your community

- Is there someone you know who is going through a very difficult time right now? Consider getting alongside this person, walking the road with them and thus helping them to persevere.
- Many South African children find themselves without their parents as a result of AIDS. For children to grow up as godly people who will contribute to a healthy society they need the care of loving adults.

Q: What can we as Christ's followers do to see that children orphaned by HIV&AIDS have proper care and support?



Papi



What God says about Perseverance

HEARTLINES film – The Good Fight

Faith had a dream. This young woman (the main character in the HEARTLINES film – The Good Fight) had an ambition that she intended to fulfill. It was a good dream. She wanted to earn money to provide for her sister Nomusa and her brother Sifiso. That money would enable Nomusa to finish school, get her matric and have a better chance for the future.

Most of us have dreams that lie deep within our hearts. Some of us have lost sight of our dreams because life has been so hard on us. Like Faith, tragedy and suffering can strike us with such force that we can hardly breathe, let alone think. Our dreams once full of hope are replaced by despair because now we see no hope.

PURSUING DREAMS in the face of adversity

Joseph had a dream (Genesis 37:5). Several in fact and each dream was about his future. Each dream was about the same thing: Joseph, great grandson of the patriarch Abraham was born to be a leader and even his family would find themselves under his leadership. Joseph chose to share his dreams with his brothers, which was foolish because they did not like him. The writer of Genesis tells us that after he shared his dreams his brothers “hated him all the more”.

Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of something very important here. Joseph’s dreams were God-given. They were not his own teenage ambitions (he was after all, only seventeen). God was giving him a vision of his future as a significant leader. What dreams has God placed in your heart? How does He want to write you into his magnificent Story?

Such dreams can be incredibly exciting. They give us a sense of purpose and they give us hope. Until that is, we hit a wall of adversity. Like Joseph did.



Mr Lin



Sifiso and Faith

His brothers were so bitter about his self-confidence and his dreams that they found a clever way to fake his death and then sell him into slavery to some passing traders (37:12-36).

Many of us know this story. Joseph ended up as a servant in the household of an Egyptian nobleman, Potiphar (39:1-6). He did well as Potiphar's servant, but do you think Joseph saw this as bringing him any closer to fulfilling his dreams? Well, we might say, at least he was alive and healthy and earning respect. But not for long.

Potiphar's wife thought Joseph was attractive and tried to seduce him. It didn't work. He held onto his principles. So she framed him for rape. For a second time, Joseph was treated unjustly through the deceptions of those who had power in his life (39:6-20). And he ended up in prison. For a very long time.

What things come in the way of our dreams? In South Africa unemployment, HIV&AIDS, education problems, crime, violence and corruption can all appear as huge obstacles to the various dreams people have. What is stopping your dreams? Can anything be done about the things that challenge the fulfillment of your dreams?

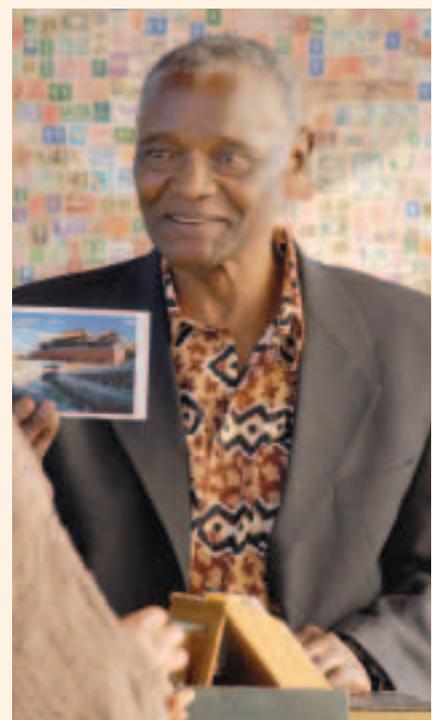
SEEING BEYOND the challenges

We don't know exactly how long it took for Joseph to get to Egypt with the slave traders. We don't know how long he worked as Potiphar's servant, but after some time he found himself in prison. Prisons in those days were terrible places with foul living conditions and full of disease. Joseph had every reason to despair. In fact he had to suffer prison for a number of years before things changed. How long do we last before we lose hope?

Eventually, at the age of thirty - thirteen years after being sold into slavery - Joseph experienced redemption (40-41). Through a somewhat miraculous set of circumstances he found himself able to demonstrate to the Pharaoh his skill and insight – and even this came not from him, but from God. Through all his years in prison he had not stopped honouring God in the way he related to others and served them. His perseverance paid off. Pharaoh was so impressed he made Joseph his second-in-command and gave him administrative powers throughout the nation in order to deal with the coming famine that Joseph himself, through God, had predicted.

When the famine struck, Joseph's family were in desperate need of food. Who should they have to turn to for supplies, but Joseph (42-44)! Still, Joseph forgave his brothers. He was able to do this because he understood how God works redemptively through our sufferings.

“What things come in the way of our dreams?”



Isaiah

Joseph now had the means to have his brothers imprisoned or killed. Instead, he said:

[from the word]

“Do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you ... to save your lives by a great deliverance.”

Genesis 45:5-7

**“Persevering
in God’s
ways brings
redemption”**

Persevering in God’s ways brings redemption not just to us, but as Joseph’s life showed, to others. It is because of the long-suffering perseverance of men and women that South Africa attained democracy. Although some saw violence as the only answer, the tireless efforts of people in nonviolent protest, negotiation and prayer (such as the famous Jesus Prayer Rally in 1994) enabled this country to enter democracy peacefully after decades of oppression. Nelson Mandela’s willingness to forgive, like Joseph’s, provided the opportunity for years of perseverance to now become years of progress into the future. Where would we in South Africa be without perseverance?

**“Where would
we in South
Africa be without
perseverance?”**



Faith



Mr Lin

OUR HOPE IS IN a persevering God

For the Christian, perseverance is not rooted in personal ability or strength because all of us are weak and fail at some point. It is not rooted in our family or friendships because family members can be lost, friends can change and some even betray us. Perseverance is only possible through our hope in God. Through all his years of suffering, Joseph believed that God's purposes for him were true and good and so he persevered.

For the Christian today, we have hope in Christ, because of what He accomplished on the cross. Imagine what Jesus' disciples were thinking when He was executed on the cross. Who could think of a tragedy worse than this - that the Son of God Himself is not able to escape the evil powers of this world!? But Paul in his letter to the Colossians tells us that:

[from the word]

"When you were dead in your sins ... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled ... [all] that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

Colossians 2:13-15



Papi

"Christ has triumphed over failure and death"

Christ has triumphed over failure and death. There is nothing we face that cannot and will not be redeemed by him, whether it is something we've done or something that has been done to us. But very often Christ's victory over sin and death is not worked out in some quick-fix way. Redemption often takes us on an inevitably painful journey through the ugly processes of trauma, loss, grief and hardship. The manner in which we handle these can be a powerful testimony, allowing Christ's power to "triumph" where human eyes see only despair.

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[from the word]

"... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart"

Hebrews 12:1-3

How can we practise Perseverance

1. Think about a time when you were going through difficulties and had to persevere.

2. In the story Faith lived with a lot of fear. What fears do you face in your life? Discuss how you could persevere and overcome these fears. Refer to 1 John 4:18 *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear"* and Romans 12:10-16 which speaks about helping one another and sharing *"with God's people who are in need"* (Romans 12:13).

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Q: Do you think that perseverance involves choice? On what basis do you make such choices?

4. Our faith in Christ is rooted in the fact that he persevered for our sake: *"... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* (Hebrews 12:1-3)

Q: How does Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection provide us with hope? How does this relate to any current problems that you may be experiencing?

5. In Romans and James we read: *"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character, and character, hope."* (Romans 5: 3-4) *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."* (James 1: 2-4)

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