

**Series:** Running on a Full Tank  
**Title:** A Tank Full of Perseverance  
**Text:** Genesis 37:10, 19, 20  
**Key Word:** Characteristics  
**Proposition:** Everyone can grow in the down times and realize God's dream because of these characteristics.

Good morning everyone. My name is Chris Farmer. I thank God that I can serve as one of your pastors. We are thrilled that you have chosen to come and worship with us today. God is in this place. He is here to reveal His presence so that we can live the life God created us to live. As we express our love for God and others, we will encounter the Risen Christ who helps us grow to be like Him and to serve the world.

Someone once said that dreams are conceived long before they are ever achieved. The period between the birth of a dream and its realization is always a process. Along the way, there are doubts, resistance, changes, and surprises. During the process, we experience good days and bad days. Frequently, one is faced with the question: Do I quit or go on?

I love football. I played high school football. I love to watch college and professional football. In many ways, I find valuable life lessons from the game of football. Some may remember game between the Chicago Bears and the Cleveland Browns. A week before the Bears came from behind to beat San Francisco in overtime. Ironically, it looked hopeless for the Bears. Time was running out, and the Bears were down 21-7. Then, with less than 30 seconds left on the clock, the

Bears did the seemingly impossible. They scored a touchdown, recovered an onside kick and scored another touchdown to tie the game. A few minutes later, the Bears had won again in overtime. They did some things that no other professional football team had done: they were the first to win 2 overtime games back-to-back with a touchdown. They were also the first to come from behind by 14 points to win with less than 30 seconds on the clock.

Therefore, what can we learn from this? I suspect some of you may be thinking... "Winners never quit. It is not over until it is over. Don't give in as long as there time on the clock." Of course, they are more than platitudes. They are a strategy for winning—in sports, in business, in relationships, in life.

I am reminded of the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis chapters 37-42. If he was alive today, he would say, "Don't give up on your dream!" From lessons learned in the classroom of adversity, he would encourage us to persevere.

**First he would say, don't give up even when you didn't start well.**

Joseph dream came to him early-when he was seventeen years old. At that time he received visions from God that one day his brothers and even his father would bow down to him. Joseph immediately shared that information with his family, and it got him into trouble. However, that didn't stop him.

Often times the beginning of a dream, of a vision generates more enthusiasm than wisdom. We say things we shouldn't say and do things we shouldn't do.

Like Joseph, we sometimes do not start well. However, unlike Joseph, too often we give up on our dreams in the early stages when they are the most fragile. Joseph urges us to recapture the dream we abandoned and once again claim it as our own.

**Second, he would say don't ever give up even if your family doesn't support it.** The book of Genesis records that when Joseph told his family about his dream, his father responded, *“What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?”* (Genesis 37:10) His brothers' response was worse: *“Then they said to one another, ‘Look this dream is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, ‘Some wild beast has devoured him.’ We shall see what will become of this dreamer!’”* (Gen. 37:19-20)

Joseph's family could not support him. Rarely will anyone sustain his dream unless he receives support from significant others in his life. It is hard to sustain the dream when the family only wants you to release it. However, when the dream is birthed in heaven, then all the power of heaven empowers you to hold on to it, no matter what.

**Third, he would say don't ever give up even if your journey is full of surprises.** Just because things don't go as planned, that's no reason to give up on your dream. Joseph faced all kinds of surprises that attempted to derail God's dream for his life.

His family misunderstood him. Did he give up? His brothers sold him into slavery. Did he give up? He lived in a strange and foreign land. Did he give up? His dream held him when he found favor in Potiphar's house. Potiphar's wife wrongly accused him. Did he give up? They imprisoned him. Did he give up? He dream held him when he served as the chief trustee. The chief butler forgot about him. Did he give up? He remained in prison for two years. Did he give up? His dream held him when he interpreted Pharaoh's dream and became vice president of Egypt.

Why didn't he give up? He had every reason to cash it in. He had more setbacks than steps forward. Every dream has negative surprises that attempt to discourage us. How did Joseph persevere in the midst of several obstructions? Whenever he found himself slipping into despair, ready to quit, he remembered that God was with him. He knew that God is too good to be unkind. He is too wise to be confused. When he could not trace his hand, he trusted his heart. When life makes no sense, it always makes sense to God. His ways are higher than our ways, His thoughts, higher than our thoughts.

**Fourth, he would say don't ever give up even if it takes a long time to realize it.** Twenty-three years passed from the time Joseph had his dream until it was fulfilled. In the end, Joseph lead the Egyptians and the Hebrew people, he reconciled with his family, and saved the nation of Israel. We never know what

God's timetable will look like. When we are in the middle of the journey, never give up on the dream.

Joseph knows how hard it is to persevere when we are wearied from the journey of life. On a more personal level, you may be facing some battles right now that are tempting you to give up. Maybe your marriage seems hopeless. Maybe your children are rebelling against your leadership. Maybe your health is causing you great concern. Maybe your business seems destined for bankruptcy. Maybe the sin in your life has destroyed what once was a joyful, dynamic relationship with Christ. Maybe all of the above! If so, then maybe you feel like quitting. Out of his story, Joseph offers us some holy tips that will energize us as we press on in the journey of faith.

**First, remember that God is always with you.** We must never forget this even in the most difficult times. Joseph remembered this when he was lying in a pit. He was grateful that his brothers did not kill him when they could have. He claimed God's presence Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him. Friends, God is with us too.

**Second, reach deep in the down times.** Joseph reached deep when he suffered injustice and hard times. He refused to complain. When people throw you in a pit or fail to remember you while you are in a personal prison, you can be bitter or better. The question we must ask is "God, what do you want me to learn

from this?” What can I learn about you? Your holiness...your jealous love....your mercy toward sinners...your ways....and your call upon my life? What I learn about myself? My fears...my pride...my complacency in my walk...my apathy toward those who have yet to receive your love and power? How can repentance and recommitment transform my life?

**Third, replace self-promotion with God’s promotion.** Joseph learned a valuable, yet painful lesson when he promoted himself by telling his brothers about his dream. By the time he was presented to Pharaoh, he knew that all of his success came from God. The only advancement, the only achievement that matters is the one God does through us.

**Fourth, realize that fulfilled dreams always taste sweet.** When a dream is God-given and Spirit-empowered, then its fulfillment is always worth the wait. Unless one has followed Joseph’s example one cannot imagine Joseph’s joy when he finally reconciled with his brothers. He told them, “*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*” (Genesis 50:20) AS a boy, he dreamed only of power and prestige for his own gain. However, by the Spirit of God, he saved his family from famine, lived on prime land, led the most powerful government on earth, and helped preserve God’s people and Egypt for a great purpose. His realization of his dream far outweighed his expectations. God has a plan and purpose way beyond our

imagination. He is the giver of every good and perfect gift. He is the dream maker.

The Chicago Bears made the record books because they refused to quit with time on the clock. In 1999, the Tennessee Titans made it to the Super Bowl because they refused to quit with time on the clock. John Elway made all those outstanding fourth-quarter comebacks because he refused to quit with time on the clock. Butler University made it to the NCAA basketball finals because they refused to quit.

Imagine then, since we are striving for a prize that is eternal, how much more important it is for us to stay in the fight. Our reward is not a big paycheck, or a nice house, or the recognition of our peers. Our reward is our growing to be like Jesus...our holiness...to hear him say to us, when the game is truly over and we stand before his throne, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Our reward is to worship before the throne with every person we served to share His Word, with every life we touched with the healing love of Jesus, with every lonely orphaned we clothed and educated, and with every homeless person we ever fed. Now that would be a life running on a tank full of perseverance. 1753