



THE LIVING SENT PODCAST: SHOW NOTES

EPISODE: **O25**

TITLE: **Before You Throw in the Towel (Developing Resilience, Persevering in Ministry, and Seeking God)**

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever felt like throwing in the towel in a challenging moment in your life? How did you handle it?
2. How does the fear for safety affect our willingness to persevere in difficult situations?
3. In what ways have you seen God's hand in protecting and guiding you when you felt threatened or unsafe?
4. How does the concept of storing up treasures in heaven impact our attachment to material possessions?
5. Share a time when you were tempted to prioritize your schedule over serving others. How did you handle the situation?
6. What can we learn from Philip's obedience and willingness to adjust his plans for God's calling?
7. Do you feel like you have an invisible boundary line that determines how far you're willing to say yes to Jesus? What are some things that might be holding you back?
8. How does prayer play a role in overcoming the desire to throw in the towel?
9. Discuss the significance of giving first and how it impacts our perspective on material possessions.
10. What are some practical ways to navigate moments when we're tempted to give up and throw in the towel?



Questions to Ask Before You Throw in the Towel:

1. Have I taken the time to pray and seek God's guidance in this challenging situation?
2. Am I prioritizing my own safety above God's calling and purpose for my life?
3. How can I adjust my schedule and priorities to align with God's plans and opportunities for serving others?
4. Am I attached to material possessions to the extent that it's hindering my willingness to sacrifice and give for God's kingdom?
5. What steps can I take to overcome the fear and pressure to give up and instead trust God's provision and guidance?

Prayer Guide: Pausing Before Throwing in the Towel

- *Reflect on God's Faithfulness:* Begin your prayer by acknowledging God's faithfulness in your life. Thank Him for His presence, guidance, and provision thus far.
- *Pray for Wisdom:* Ask God to grant you wisdom and discernment as you face difficult situations. Seek His guidance in making the right decisions and discerning His will.
- *Submit Your Fears and Concerns:* Lay your fears, concerns, and doubts before God. Surrender them to Him, trusting that He is in control and has a plan for your life.
- *Seek God's Perspective:* Invite the Holy Spirit to help you see the situation from God's perspective. Ask Him to reveal His purposes and lessons in the challenges you're facing.
- *Pray for Strength and Perseverance:* Seek God's strength and endurance to press on in difficult moments. Ask Him to give you the courage and perseverance to overcome obstacles and stay committed to His calling.



- *Ask for a Renewed Mindset:* Pray for a renewed mindset that aligns with God's truth. Ask Him to replace any negative thoughts or discouragement with hope, faith, and trust in Him.
- *Pray for God's Provision:* Trust God's provision in challenging times. Ask Him to supply all your needs, whether it be safety, resources, or opportunities to serve others.
- *Commit to Obedience:* Surrender your plans and desires to God's will. Ask Him to give you the strength to obey and persevere, even when it's difficult or goes against your own preferences.
- *Express Gratitude:* Conclude your prayer by expressing your gratitude to God for His love, faithfulness, and the opportunity to trust Him through challenging times.

Transcript

Well, there are moments in life that make us want to throw in the towel. You know, we go through something and think, this is just too hard. This isn't worth it. This isn't looking good. This isn't producing results.

This isn't what I signed up for. This isn't making a difference. You've likely been here before. You know, your arm is raised, that white towel and hand ready to throw it into the ring. But just as you draw back to throw, you pause.

Because you know what it means if that towel hits the mat. This episode is all about those moments before you throw in the towel. Those few ultra critical moments prior to calling it quits. Here we go.

Welcome back to another episode of the Living sent podcast. I'm your host, Justin Wester. If you are brand new to the show, I wanted to let you know that I release a new episode on the first Wednesday of each month with the purpose of helping everyday Christ followers like yourself live like missionaries in their household, their neighborhood, their workplace, and their city. This is episode 25 before you throw in the towel. And I think this is so, so important because if you haven't been here before, I think one day you will.

You will get to the place where you think, say, or at least want to say things like this. You know, I'm done. I am intentionally ending this. I am choosing to stop, to quit, to give up. But imagine



with me for a moment that you were given the ability to press the pause button, to actually pause time before that white towel soars through the air.

That's the space where I'd like to go on this episode before you throw in the towel. So to get us into that conversation, I want to share some of the times that I've been tempted to throw in the towel on living scent. I want to dig into what I think got me to that point and what Jesus taught me through it. So I'm just going to riff on three key moments and try to highlight what I think, what was happening in my heart so that we can press the pause button and take a closer look at it. But before we jump in, let me remind you to get the show notes from this episode.

They are packed with extra information, resources that can help you go deeper into this content. And maybe after listening to the episode, you found it valuable. And perhaps you want to use the show notes to start a discussion with your family. Maybe over dinner. Maybe it's with your small group from your church and you're looking to become more missionally engaged.

Maybe you're listening and you say, well, I've got a group from my office that's looking to talk about what it looks like to live out your faith in the workplace. However you'd like to use them, they are yours, and they are always and will always be completely free. Just head over to my website@justinwester.com, navigate to the podcast tab and you can download them from there. Okay, so let's roll right into this. We're going to jump right into the deep end of the pool, and I'm going to list off three key moments.

They're really in no particular order here, but the first one is the idea of safety. Safety. When you feel as though your safety is threatened or your safety is compromised, throwing in the towel becomes much more attractive. So I'm going to tell you a little story. Two years ago, we purchased a home, and prior to moving in, we prayed and we asked God to use our home to, to reach our neighbors.

That was, and that is still the dream. Our home is our biggest God given asset, and we want to use it to point others to Jesus. So I think it's positioned perfectly. It is on the corner of a cul de sac, and so our kids and these other neighborhood kids can play without, you know, cars flying by. It's also adjacent to the road and it has a sidewalk on it.

And we love the accessibility that it creates to our neighbors. You know, we've met multiple people just by hanging out outside, being on our back deck while they're on a walk. But about six months ago, my wife, Lindsey, she wanted to be even more intentional about meeting our immediate neighbors. And so we decided to clear an area on our side yard that had a few trees



and put a picnic table there as almost like a community meeting space. We thought it would be awesome to have kind of like a little hangout space right there in our neighborhood.

If you've ever heard of christian shell and the turquoise table movement, the idea was kind of like that. So we cleared the trees, we bought the picnic table, and things are just moving right along, moving in the right direction. The vision, if you will, the dream is becoming a reality. And then, I kid you not, like a week later, something happened that made us just absolutely pump the brakes. And my wife, Lindsey, she's a stay at home mom.

We've got four kids running around, so she's going from place to place, hanging out at the house. She's naturally at our house a lot of the time. And without getting into the specific details, something happened shortly after all of this movement that I thought, and she thought threatened the safety of my family. And so, suffice it to say, the moment I heard of it, I literally wanted nothing more to do with the picnic table on the side yard thing. I wanted to close up shop.

I didn't really even say it out loud, but I would have been totally cool with Lindsey and the kids, like, never leaving the house for the next, like, year or two. I think it was just a weird mixture of, I was scared, I was mad, and quite honestly, it's like I wanted to throw in the towel. And the more I thought about it, I said to myself, man, it's one thing for my safety to be in question, but for those of you that are married and with kids, you know that it's an altogether different ballgame when it's your wife's safety or your kid's safety we're talking about. So after a few days, I started to calm down. I started to kind of take a closer look, like, at how I was responding.

And I began to ask God, you know, what exactly is going on here? Like, I thought you strategically positioned us in this neighborhood. You've called us to reach our neighbors. Like, what are we supposed to do now? And he led me to the book of acts, and I started thinking about what the early church went through.

And if you've never read through the book of acts, I encourage you to do that. The early church went through some absolutely wild stuff. It was almost like God was saying to me, Justin, you just need to go back to school for a little bit. Like, you need to go back to school on the early church. Check out what they went through, how they responded, and in that, you'll find some encouragement.

So I want to share where I was. I was in acts, chapter three and four, and this is when Peter and John are going to the temple in Jerusalem to worship, and they heal a lame man in the sight of



all these other Jewish worshipers. And this massive crowd starts to gather around them. And so Peter, he's recognizing what's happening. He takes the opportunity to share the gospel.

And the religious leaders, these are the most powerful men in the Jewish community at the time. They take note of the crowd. It piques their interest. They come over, they hear what's happening, they see what's happening, and they arrest Peter and John. They question them about this healing that just occurred.

And they're talking to them about the message that they're sharing, that there's life in Jesus. And prior to releasing them, they threaten them. And the scriptures say that they strictly charge them to stop. Now, I just kind of want to pause here for a second, because these are really, really powerful men. You know, they are wealthy.

They are well connected. These men had authority. These are the men. Think about this. These are the men who not even 100 days ago, they arrested Jesus and they handed him over to Rome to be crucified and get into the mindset of the apostles here.

I mean, this was still super fresh for them. This had just happened. So Peter and John, they know, man, when these guys threaten you, when these guys threaten your safety, they mean it. This is real. So what do they do?

This is what it says in Acts 4:23. On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them when they heard this. Verse 24. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. This is what the Lord shared with me.

When their safety was threatened, they prayed first. Before they threw in the towel, they prayed. Okay, so kind of keep that in the back of your mind. Before they threw in the towel, they prayed. I want to move on to another moment, and at the end of the episode, we'll kind of come back together, maybe draw some conclusions.

But here's the second moment I want to shift gears to away from safety and toward another one. And it's really around the idea of our schedules, our beloved schedules, our calendars. And let me tell you another story to get into this. We have some neighbors that live very, very close to us, and we have been wanting to have them over to our house for dinner for a long, long time. But as you know, sometimes life can feel really full.

And before you know it, you know, your good intentions have never come to fruition. And we



realized this. You know, we said, man, we gotta have these people over. We keep talking about it. We just need to do it.

But we kept putting it off and putting it off, and then before we knew it, you know, it's been a week, and then it's been a month. And I'm not kidding you when I say this now. It's been like a couple years. We still haven't had them over. But there was an evening when Lindsey felt prompted to just act, to just do it.

I mean, they were available. We were available. And she approached me about this, and I initially said, yes. I said, yes, let's just do it. But then right after I said that, I immediately began feeling the pressure.

And this is what I mean by that. We had actually taken our couch out of our living room, and we had taken it into our driveway, and my wife, Lindsey, had tried to, like, clean the entire couch, and she had. I mean, she used this, like, green machine thing to clean the dirt and the filth from our four kiddos off of this couch. And it's just sitting in the sun, drying out. So our couch was outside in pieces.

Our house was kind of in disarray. We didn't have any food, really prepped, and they were gonna be here in, like, 45 minutes. And so I am, like, feeling the pressure. And I came in the house, and I told Lindsey, I said, I just want to call and cancel. Like, this is ridiculous.

This is wild. We don't have enough time. And I was in a terrible mood. I wanted to throw in the towel. And so, as I was reflecting on, man, why did I respond that way?

I was in acts chapter eight. And in this chapter, it really focuses on a follower of Jesus named Philip. And Philip initially leaves the city of Jerusalem due to a great persecution that arose in the city. And he runs for his life, and he goes into the city of Samaria. And while he's there, the Lord uses Philip's testimony to the resurrection of Jesus to do some amazing things.

Like, there's literally a revival that is taking place in this city. But then, as you read all of a sudden in verse 26, the lord prompts him to go from that place to Gaza. And so if I'm in Philip's shoes, I'm thinking, no, no, no. I want to stay here. Like, you're working here.

You're doing amazing things around me. Revival is taking place. This is amazing. Stay here and witness this for as long as I possibly can. But the lord tells him to go from Jerusalem to Gaza.

And I just think what an absolute inconvenience or interruption it would seem. And so there's



no confusion here about just the contrast between these two cities. At the end of verse 26, it says, this is a desert place. This is a desert place. We're talking northern Africa.

And the Lord really gives him no reason as to why his schedule was likely interrupted, but he obeys nonetheless. And when he gets there again, the lord speaks to him, and he says, I want you to go over. Stand by this caravan. There's a court official there. Just go over there and stand by him.

And again, he's not told why. The Lord just tells him to go do it. He just goes over there and stands there. And here's what the Lord showed me. Even when his schedule was inconvenienced, even when the plans that he had made got disrupted.

He obeyed first. Before he threw in the towel, he obeyed. Okay, so that's kind of moment number two again. Keep these in the back of your mind. We're going to come back together at the end.

We've got safety schedules and now stuff our stuff. Okay? And to get into this last moment again, I want to intro it with this story because I have been there many, many times before. We were a part of a small group, and we were rotating from house to house on a weekly basis. And it went to this one particular family.

And we had a great meal, we had a great Bible study, we had a great prayer time, and we all went home. Everything seemed to be fine. And then I connected with this person about a week later, and they called me up and they said, hey, look, I think we're done after that last session. And I said, whoa, okay, well, what's going on? And they said, well, at one point, I didn't bring this up, but at one point, I went back to the area where the kids were being kept and where the babysitters were, and I went into the room and some of the kids were jumping on the bed.

And I said, oh, okay. And he said, yeah, they were jumping on the bed. And I started to realize, oh, like, this is, this is a no no in their house. Like this is a deal breaker. And sure enough, it legitimately was.

They thought that was way over the line. And he basically said, I think we're done. I don't think we can host anymore. And I know that might sound a little funny to some people, but that's really the reality of hosting. If you've ever done any hosting or having people into your home, there's a sense in which you're taking a little bit of a risk.

You know, you could get stuff spilled on your carpet. You could get something ripped in your



house, like a brand new couch, brand new sofa, brand new chair. Dishes can break, you know, prized possessions can get knocked over. And if I'm honest, man, I've been here before because we try to open our home and have people in it on a regular basis, things just happen. And it makes you wonder, man, is this worth it?

Like, do we need to stop? Should I throw in the towel? And in a culture that says, man, you earn this stuff, you deserve those nice things you earned. And in a culture that says, man, you deserve those things, you earn those things. You have a right to enjoy them.

It can be difficult to wrestle with that. You know, Jesus says that we're to store up treasures in heaven. But it really tests your faith when your treasures on earth are like being destroyed before your eyes. And so again, the Lord brought me to another passage in the book of acts. And in this passage, you're introduced to a man named Joseph.

You're introduced to a man named Joseph. And it says this beginning in verse 34. It says, there was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles feet. And it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus, Joseph, here he is, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas, which means son of encouragement.

He was a Levite, a native of Cyprus. He sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles feet. Here's what the Lord showed me, man. He gave first. He gave first.

And this really reminded me of something that Henry Nouwen once said. He said, poverty makes a good host. Let that sink in for a moment. Poverty makes a good host. And my interpretation of what he means is this.

You know, when you've truly given everything to God, just like Barnabas did, when you've given everything to God, you have nothing left to lose, and yet you have everything now to give. That is, you know, when you relinquish everything to God and you say to God, God, it is yours. It is not mine. I'm just a steward. I'm not an owner.

I'm taking care of the things that you've entrusted to me. To relinquish means that you've given control or possession of something to another person. Man, there is so much freedom in that. Okay, so we have safety, we have our schedules, and we have our stuff. And I think if we're honest, man, for a lot of people, those are the hangups.



Those are the things that, when they're disturbed, when they're threatened, when they're broken, those are the things that can cause us to want to throw in the towel. But let me just kind of go full circle here and talk about why this becomes so, so critical, this becomes so important when we follow God on mission, when we are living sent, because we all have breaking points and we will all be pressed, we will all be squeezed in different ways as we follow Jesus into the world. For most of us, we have an invisible boundary line in our life. You know, these are the lines that we draw, either consciously or unconsciously, that indicate just how far we're willing to say yes to Jesus before throwing in the towel. It's an invisible line that says, Jesus, you know what?

I'm going to sacrifice, but only until this point. I'll go there. Jesus, yes, but no further. I'll give this much, but not an ounce more. I'll love them, but not those people.

Let me wrap up just with kind of a couple concluding thoughts. You know, some things, let me just say this. Some things need to end, right? Some things need to be reconsidered. You know, they need to be retried, reworked.

This is not some sort of never give up and just kind of blindly just keep charging ahead episode no, no, no. We need to act in wisdom. We need to use our brains, we need to use our minds to honor God. But on the other hand, if we're not careful and we just throw in the towel as a knee jerk reaction, it can cause us to forfeit some amazing things. I mentioned Acts four earlier.

In Acts four, it said that the apostles, they continued to talk, even despite being threatened and warned against the religious elite. They continued to talk and preach the resurrected Jesus. And it said they experienced great grace. I don't know a single Christ follower on earth that would say, nah, I don't really, I'm not really interested in knowing that. No, no, no.

They experienced great grace. That is God's unmerited favor. It was in great supply. I'm sure you would say that you want to experience that. In Acts chapter eight, Philip, you know, goes down to Gaza, goes over there by the caravan.

What he discovers because he obeyed was that there was a divine appointment scheduled by God and he was there. And he got to witness God doing an amazing thing. In Acts chapter five, Joseph or Barnabas, later called the son of encouragement man. He experienced the joy and the freedom and the encouragement that comes from giving to God first. And he got to see God do some amazing things throughout the book of Acts.

Before you throw in the towel, be sure to pray first, be sure to obey first, be sure to give first,



and watch what God does. Well, I hope you make a point to really wrestle with some of these ideas. I'd love to hear from you and hear what your ideas are and how you've experienced some of these things that have caused you to consider throwing in the towel. If you'd like to reach out to me, you can again go to my website, navigate to the Connect tab and send me a quick message over there. And if you found this episode valuable to you or you think it might be valuable to somebody else, I'd really appreciate it if you would share it with a friend.

And if you've been a long time listener and perhaps you haven't rated or reviewed this podcast, that is a gift to me. I love hearing your feedback, and not only does it encourage me, but it also helps extend the reach of this podcast to those who need to hear it. Well, again, thank you so much for tuning in this month. That's all we've got time for again. I always sign off like this.

Remember, you don't have to live sent you get to. We'll see you next time.

I'd love to hear from you this week. Reach out to me at justinwester.com/connect. Remember, you don't *have* to Live SENT, you get to. See you next episode.

Justin