

## DO IT FOR A DAY

### DAY 15 – DO IT DIFFICULT

*“I have worked much harder.”*

*–2 Corinthians 11:23*

On October 4, 1912, Teddy Roosevelt was in the midst of his election campaign when he was shot at point-blank range by a suspected assassin. With a .32 caliber bullet lodged in his chest, he got up and still delivered his speech. "I have a bullet in my chest, so I won't be able to give a very long speech," he said. Roosevelt spoke for ninety minutes, while blood from the gunshot wound soaked his shirt.<sup>1</sup> Of course, that was normal. Roosevelt was half renaissance man, half wild man. He earned each of his nicknames: Buck Moose, Wild Horseman, the Horseman, the Dynamo, the Trust Destroyer (the Antitrust), the Happy Warrior, the Hero of San Juan Hill, to name a few.

Roosevelt rode a moose, flew in the Wright brothers' airplane, climbed the Swiss Alps, worked as a laborer in the Dakotas, shot down an armed cowboy in a bar fight, crossed a frozen river to catch some thieves of boats, embarked on a month-long safari through Africa, explored the Amazon River, led the attack on Kettle Hill during the Battle of San Juan, and skinny-dipped in the Potomac River. Think of the latter as the ice bucket challenge of a hundred years ago.

The fun fact? Roosevelt set up a boxing ring in the White House where he could fight anyone brave enough to walk in it.

Teddy Roosevelt gave a number of memorable speeches, including the one in Milwaukee I mentioned earlier, but my favorite is the one he gave on April 10, 1899, at the Hamilton Club in Chicago. **It is more like a sermon than a speech.** By my count, he used the word preach four times and the word doctrine five times. **He defended what he called an intense life.**

**I would like to preach,** not the doctrine of vile ease, **but the doctrine of intense life, the life of hard work and effort,** labor and sacrifice; to preach that the highest form of success comes not to the man who desires mere peace, but to the man who does not shrink from danger, from difficulty, or from bitter toil, and who from these derives the final splendid triumph.

When you have the choice between the elevator and the stairs, take the stairs! In other words, take the path of greatest resistance. It is the road less traveled.

**Teddy Roosevelt may have coined the phrase “the intense life doctrine,”** but the Apostle Paul set the standard. When we look at his life, "I'm crazy to talk like that," he said. **“I have worked harder, I have been imprisoned more times, I have received the most severe whippings, I have been repeatedly in danger of death”**. But wait, there is more!

**“Five times I received thirty-nine lashes from the Jews. Three times they beat me with rods, once they stoned me, three times I was shipwrecked, and I spent a day and a night as a castaway on the high seas.**

**How many scars did Pablo have?** And what about post-traumatic stress disorder “My life has been a continuous coming and going from one place to another; in dangers from rivers, dangers from bandits, dangers from my compatriots, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the countryside, dangers at sea, and dangers from false brothers.” **Anything else?** "I have gone through a lot of work and fatigue, and many times I have not slept." **That's all?** "I have suffered hunger and thirst, and many times I have fasted." **Oh, I almost forgot:** “I have suffered cold and nakedness.”<sup>4</sup>

Remember the idea of the descending contrast thought from the 10th? Maybe you are having a bad day, you got stuck in traffic. I know that is frustrating. I really know. Traffic congestion is stressful. But Paul's summary is a reality check, isn't it?

**We will remember the moments when we pushed our life to the limit and took it out of our comfort zone.**

**It's also true with childbirth,** isn't it? After such pain, followed by many sleepless nights, how can anyone have more children? It's okay, sex has something to do with it. But for many women it is a conscious choice. **Why? They forget the pain and remember the benefit.**

How did Jesus endure the cross? He focused on the joy he expected!<sup>7</sup> His focus is a point-to-point walk. "But not my will be done," Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "but yours." That is the key to willpower, which is one of the keys to habit formation. Jesus imagined the reward, just like you and me.

**If embracing the wave is making it scared, it is making it difficult. And, I might add, do it now.** When I was in eighth grade I wore ankle weights. Why? He dreamed of shooting the basketball hoop. I was overloading myself so I could raise my game.

If you want to grow stronger, you have to add resistance. And then what? Add more resistance. There is no other way to get juice out of the day! It doesn't get any easier.

You get stronger. I eat? You have to subscribe to the doctrine of intense life. You can't avoid hard times, hard questions, hard decisions, or hard conversations. They are things that produce mental strength.

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HOW DO I MAKE IT A HABIT?

## Conquer Your Soul

In the 1900 Halloween celebration, a ten-year-old boy **named Ike** wanted to trick-or-treat with his older brothers. When his parents told him that he was too young, he had a fit. He ran out the front door and beat an apple tree until his knuckles were raw. They sent him to his room, where he continued crying into his pillow for another hour. At that moment, his mother walked into the room, sat in the rocking chair next to the bed, and changed the script with Proverbs 16:32:

**Self-control is better than conquering cities.**

His mother told him that, of all his brothers, he was the one who had to learn to control his passions the most. While bandaging her hands, she warned her that anger only hurts the person who harbors it. (In 1915, Ike graduated from West Point Military Academy. For the record, he ranked 125 out of 164 in discipline. Self-control didn't come supernaturally.)

Before serving as the Supreme Allied Commander of Operation Overlord during World War II, General Dwight D. Eisenhower had to conquer his own soul. Before leading the United States during his two terms as president, he had to lead himself.

By the end of the war, Eisenhower was smoking four packs of cigarettes a day. Then one day he quit cold turkey. I eat? "I just gave myself an order." Well, that's the idea! At some point, enough is enough. Is there an executive order you need to give yourself? What do you need to quit cold turkey? What do you need to start in an instant? What are you waiting for? Delayed obedience is disobedience."

**"How do you conquer your soul? You wage war against your sinful nature until you subdue it. Or maybe I should say, until he submits to a higher power. You have to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ. *You have to take up your cross every day and deny yourself.*"<sup>11</sup> It is the best way to break a bad habit.**

**Leadership begins with self-leadership,  
and self-leadership begins with self-control.**

**The most difficult person to lead is definitely you.**

That's why habits are so hard to create and break. But if you want to conquer a city, you have to conquer yourself first.

## **Do It Difficult!**

Excerpt From

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