



THE POWER YOU NEED TO NEVER GIVE UP

RELENTLESS

JOHN
BEVERE

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE BAIT OF SATAN*

Praise for
Relentless

“*Relentless* will stir your passion for the things of God and strengthen your resolve to stand firm in faith and pursue the destiny that God has laid out for you.”

—JOYCE MEYER, best-selling author and Bible teacher

“John Bevere has a mandate on his life to serve the body of Christ. His desire to see everyone find and flourish in their God-given destiny is evident in his teachings. His love for Christ and deep revelation of the Word of God will have you pursuing the cause of Christ, relentlessly.”

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of *Sun Stand Still*

“Each book John Bevere writes is a worthy contribution to building a solid, healthy, and fruitful life in Christ and for Him! Thanks John, for another brick!”

—JACK W. HAYFORD

“*Relentless* is what the enemy is toward us. It is time we were likewise, relentless in both our faith and actions. God is raising up a tenacious people who will not rest until His will is done. This book is an invaluable tool in this pursuit.”

—CHRISTINE CAINE, director, Equip & Empower Ministries,
and founder, The A21 Campaign

“A few years ago I was given a bracelet with the words RELENTLESS on it . . . and I have worn the bracelet ever since, to remind my heart about my pursuit of Christ and His purpose for my life. This book, by the awesome John Bevere, continues to tell the great unfolding story of our passion and pursuit of Jesus and His incredibly great love for us. I *know* that this teaching will open the space of your heart that yearns for more.”

—DARLENE ZSCHECH, worship leader and singer/songwriter

“*Relentless* is one of the most spiritually provoking books I’ve read. John compels us to go beyond just enduring in life to overcoming with God’s authority in every area of our lives. It is a timely message of empowerment for the body of Christ that will propel you into the call of God on your life in a fierce and bold way. If you truly have a desire to finish strong and live relentlessly in every area of life God is calling you to, you’ve got to read this book.”

—STOVALL WEEMS, lead pastor, Celebration Church, Jacksonville,
Florida, and author of *Awakening*

“John Bevere’s new book *Relentless* is a must read for those who have experienced a stumbling block of adversity. *Relentless* will walk you through God’s grace as He uses the valleys and storms in life to equip us for His destined purpose. John reminds us that God never gives up on us and we should never give up on Him.”

—JENTEZEN FRANKLIN, senior pastor, Free Chapel, and *New York Times* best-selling author

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I dedicate this book to my son...

Alec Bevere

*You have overcome obstacles and risen above adversity.
Already your life is a testimony of God's favor and grace.
I am so proud of you and will love you forever.*

CONTENTS

- Introduction ■ 1
- 1 Relentless ■ 3
- 2 Ruling in Life ■ 13
- 3 The Power Source ■ 25
- 4 How Jesus Walked ■ 35
- 5 Distinguished ■ 47
- 6 See or Enter ■ 65
- 7 Who's Behind the Trouble? ■ 83
- 8 Arm Yourself ■ 101
- 9 Strong in Grace ■ 117
- 10 The Armor of Humility ■ 123
- 11 Throw Off the Weight ■ 137
- 12 Be Sober and Vigilant ■ 153
- 13 Resist the Devil ■ 165
- 14 The Highest Form of Resistance ■ 179
- 15 Relentless Prayer ■ 193

16 Run for the Prize ■ 207

17 Close to the King ■ 221

18 Never Give Up! ■ 229

Appendix A:

Prayer to Become a Child of God ■ 239

Appendix B:

Why I Use So Many Different Bible Translations ■ 243

For Further Reflection and Discussion ■ 245

INTRODUCTION

Shortly after I began writing this book, I watched a movie that vividly illustrates the importance of being relentless. *The Ghost and the Darkness* stars Michael Douglas and Val Kilmer, and it is based on an event that took place in the late 1800s.

A brilliant military engineer named Patterson (Val Kilmer) is hired to oversee the building of a railway bridge to span the Tsavo River of Uganda and thus increase the reach of the British East African Railway. The project is already behind schedule when Patterson arrives on site.

He soon learns why. Workmen have been disappearing. They vanish under the cover of night, never to be seen again. Patterson quickly learns that two man-eating lions have been stalking the work campsites. To stop their killing rampage he sets traps and tries various different methods, but the deadly duo seem to anticipate Patterson's moves and escape his snares.

When the death count reaches thirty, the railroad enlists the help of American hunter Charles Remington (Michael Douglas). His tracking and hunting abilities are renown, yet the lions continue to kill at will. Night after night they wreak death until the workers come to believe the lions are evil spirits that cannot be stopped. As the death toll passes 130, panic and fear grip the men of the work camp and Patterson and Remington watch helplessly as the entire work force flees by jumping onto a train as it rolls through Tsavo.

It's this life-defining moment that stirred me. The lines are clearly drawn. On one side you have a cowardly supervisor who feeds the fear of his men while inciting them to abandon the work they agreed to finish. On the other side you have three men—Remington, Patterson, and Patterson's aide—who refuse to shirk their duties or allow fear to drive them to defeat.

The three men are left to face the cunning monsters on their own. They try and fail to kill them multiple times. The task before them is daunting and extremely dangerous. It could cost them their lives, but they are determined to stop the opposition and finish the bridge. They are armed with superior

weapons. Remington and Patterson are convinced that they will ultimately win if they are wise, alert, determined. . .and *refuse to give up*.

Space and time here doesn't allow for many more details, but this you must know: the man-eating lions are finally stopped. But victory comes at great cost.

The workmen return, and now they see their project engineer, Patterson, quite differently. He is the one who faced death and did not yield. The men hold him in such high regard that they rally behind his cause and accomplish the seemingly impossible. The bridge is completed on time!

As ambassadors of God, we too build bridges. Ours don't cross rivers; they span the gap between heaven and earth. Likewise, we face opposition, and the Scriptures depict our adversary as a lion seeking to devour. But, just as with the lions of Tsavo, our enemy doesn't possess weapons. . .we do. He's been disarmed, and we have been armed with the most powerful weapons available to men and women.

There are battles to be won and strongholds to overcome. Often these are rooted in mind-sets, modes of operation, and patterns the enemy has instilled in the people of this world. Our opposition is formidable, but "in Christ" we are more powerful.

So we face a very important question: *Will we be like the frightened workmen who fled adversity to save their lives, or will we be courageous and relentless as we pursue heaven's mandate?* I believe within this message are truths that have the potential to forge within you a relentless stance. Not only will these truths strengthen you to stand strong, but they will equip you with the power to overcome and make a positive difference.

It's essential that you be grounded in this knowledge. For far too long God's people have gone into captivity and been destroyed for a lack of it (see Isaiah 5:13; Hosea 4:6). Correct knowledge weaves a foundation of faith, and by faith we effect change in a lost and dark world.

You were created to make a difference in your world of influence. Together, let's prayerfully accept the challenge as we discover the relentless power to never give up!

RELENTLESS

Finishing is better than starting.

ECCLESIASTES 7:8 (NLT)

Imagine you agree with me on this: *how we “finish” is more important than how we “begin.”*

In the Christian life, the ultimate finish will be having our Lord say to us at the end, “Well done, My good and faithful servant!”

What will it take for you and me to hear those remarkable words from the One who means everything to us?

To finish life well requires that we live life well. This certainly includes knowing how to “never give up.” It means having a *relentless* spirit.

How do we acquire that? And why is it so important?



Honestly, I am concerned that many believers are not going to finish well. God once gave me a sobering vision that relates to the theme of this book.¹

A man was rowing a boat against the river’s strong current. He was straining hard to advance against the flow of the water—a tough task, but doable.

Other boats, bigger and luxurious and containing parties of people,

1. I briefly shared this vision in a previous book, *A Heart Ablaze* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999). I now feel such an urgency to retell this story and elaborate upon it in more detail.

frequently passed him flowing downstream. The people on these boats were laughing, drinking, and at ease. Occasionally they would look over at the man battling the current and mock him. He had to fight for every inch of progress while they did very little to absolutely nothing for theirs.

After a while the man grew weary of pressing against the current. Tired and discouraged, he put up the oars. For a few moments he continued to drift upstream from the momentum, but soon came to a standstill. Then something sad and terrible happened: though still pointed upstream, his rowboat began to drift downstream with the current.

Soon the man noticed another party boat. This one was different from the other party boats for—like his own rowboat—this party boat also was pointed upstream, yet was flowing downstream with the current. This boat also carried people who were laughing, socializing, and at ease. Since it was pointed upstream—the direction the man had wanted to go—he decided to hop on and join with them. They now became a close-knit group. Unlike the other party boats that faced and traveled downstream, this boat pointed upstream. But, sadly, it continued flowing downstream with the current.

What is the interpretation of this vision? The river represents the world and the rowboat is our human body that enables us to live and function in this world. The man in the rowboat is a believer; his oars symbolize God's unmerited grace. The party boats depict those joined in one purpose, and the river's current represents the flow of this world, which is under the sway of the evil one.

By the oars of grace, the man has the ability to resist the current and move upstream to his destiny in advancing the kingdom of God. His physical strength represents his faith. Sadly, his strength wanes and he grows weary of the fight. He doesn't think he has what it takes, when in reality he does. Consequently, he eventually runs out of steam and quits.

Once the man quits rowing, the boat continues moving forward (upstream) for a short time due to sheer momentum. And this is where deception moves in. He still sees some fruit in his life, even though what produced it no longer propels him. He erroneously thinks he can live at ease—no longer alert and vigilant—and still lead a successful Christian life.

Finally, the boat comes to a standstill, and then it begins to drift backward (downstream)—slowly at first, but eventually at the same speed as the current.

Here's the telling part of the vision: while his boat is still pointed upstream, he drifts backward with the current. He now has the appearance of Christianity—knows the talk, the songs, and the mannerisms of the kingdom—but in reality he is conforming to the ways of the world (see 1 John 2:15–17).

Eventually our protagonist spots another boat, a party of other “believers” like him. They all consider themselves part of the church because they, too, are pointed upstream. They know the talk, the songs, and the mannerisms. However, they are at ease because they've settled for a fruitless “Christian” life and are under the sway of the evil one who controls the current.

Those in this “Christianity boat” are no longer persecuted or mocked by the nonbelieving world. In fact, they are accepted and sometimes hailed by the world's influencers. They no longer press, press, press forward as the apostle Paul encouraged every Christian to do: “I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). In fact, these drifting believers have little or no resistance to the ways of the world.

Consider what the apostle John wrote:

Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out—but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity. (1 John 2:16–17, MSG)

The vision I've described for you depicts three types of people: the *believer*, the *unbeliever*, and the *deceived*.

- The *unbeliever* just flows with the current, oblivious to the reality of wanting, wanting, wanting.
- The *believer* must press, press, press in the fight of faith to attain kingdom advancement.
- The *deceived* hides his or her motive of wanting, wanting, wanting through “Christian appearance” and the misuse of Scripture.

I know this vision presents a disturbing view of people of faith today, but it forces each of us to ask a vitally important question: “Which person do *I* resemble?” After all, God’s Word commands us to . . .

Test yourselves to make sure you are solid in the faith. Don’t drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourselves regular checkups. You need firsthand evidence, not mere hearsay, that Jesus Christ is in you. Test it out. If you fail the test, do something about it. (2 Corinthians 13:5, MSG)

After seeing this vision and becoming aware of its interpretation, I became even more convicted by these words written to the Hebrew Christians:

Lift up your tired hands, then, and strengthen your trembling knees! Keep walking on straight paths. . . . Guard against turning back from the grace of God. (Hebrews 12:12–13, 15, TEV)

As children of God, we should desperately want to finish well for His glory. You and I should never want to turn back from God’s grace by growing weary, putting up our oars, and drifting with the current of this world’s system.

We need look no further than Scripture to find examples of what happens when people do or do not finish well. Consider Solomon, son of David and the wisest, richest, most powerful man of his time. He achieved heights that no human being for generations before or many afterward even came close to. However, he faltered—put up his oars—in the latter part of his reign, turning his heart from God to align with the world’s system.

Because Solomon had many foreign wives, more than likely he experienced tremendous conflict within his household over being single-minded in his allegiance and obedience to Jehovah. In order to keep peace, he did not remain loyal to Jehovah, but rather built altars for and even worshiped his favored wives’ foreign gods.

Solomon suffered greatly from his folly, but his children and grandchildren were affected even more profoundly. The kingdom that was entrusted to him, one that was strong from his father David’s faithfulness and grew even stronger with Solomon’s excellent start, suffered, was divided, and eventually withered

from his failure to finish well. Israel's history would have been significantly different if Solomon had remained *relentless*.

Now let's compare Solomon with John the Baptist. John was resolute and held fast to truth, valiantly living and proclaiming it. He, like Solomon, was faced with adversity, but John's potential consequences were far worse, for it wasn't a wife or several but the king of Judea who didn't embrace the truth John proclaimed. Solomon faced a conflicted household, but John faced jail, torture, and possibly even death. Yet in the face of such cruel and extreme consequences, John remained immovable in his stance for truth, both in how he lived and the message he proclaimed. The result: John's legacy is superior to Solomon's.

Not only did John and Solomon face adversity—a rapid river's current—but so do you and I. We are in a serious battle against the world's vain, shallow values. Its influence is powerful. Deceptive. Alluring. It's far too easy to grow weary, to think it's okay to cease our perseverance, give in, and drift with the prevailing currents. But the only way for you and me to finish strong is to be relentless in our faith. In doing so we will become something to be reckoned with, a genuine threat to the kingdom of darkness.

A RELENTLESS SPIRIT

What does it mean to be relentless? The term describes an attitude or posture that is resolute, persistent, and unyielding. Simply put, it does not relent. To relent is to become more lenient, to slacken, or even to concede. Some of the synonyms that help define *relentless* are “adamant, rigorous, severe, uncompromising, unstoppable, tenacious,” and even “dogged.” Other descriptions include “constant, gritty, single-minded, steadfast, persistent,” and “stringent.”

Relentlessness can apply to an evil, unyielding force, but for our discussion we're going to consider it in a positive, godly sense. Therefore, we'll apply the term to one who is valiant, courageous, and determined to complete the task at hand. Whether for the short-term or the long-term, a relentless heart is in it to finish according to the desired end. Nothing will deter him or her from the completed goal.

As we contemplate the relentless believer, we're talking about one who is absolutely unyielding in faith, hope, and obedience to God—no matter what the adversity. The relentless believer, committed in every way to finishing well,

is a history maker in the truest sense and will forever be known by heaven as one who warranted the Master's hearty "Well done."

These words on being relentless have not always described a man I know well—*me!* In fact, instead of having a relentless spirit, I had a "give-up" spirit. To be blunt, I was a quitter.

I became a child of God in 1979 while attending Purdue University. At the completion of that semester I returned home brimming with such enthusiasm that I immediately shared my newfound faith with my Catholic parents. My mother's reply? "John, this is one of your new fads. You'll quit this just like you've quit everything else."

The piercing sting of her comment wasn't her negative words or what seemed like a degrading indictment. No, it was quite the opposite because she was painfully right: I had a history of quitting almost everything.

—

The relentless believer...is a history maker in the truest sense.

—

I recall fighting the fear, as a single man, that I would never be able to have a lasting marriage. I typically stopped seeing girls past the second or third date. They were attractive and gifted and possessed great personalities, but I grew tired of them. Other guys would later date these same girls and form lasting relationships. Yet my pattern was to go from one girl to the next.

And it wasn't just in dating that I was a quitter. I began piano lessons but begged to quit after six months. My parents wouldn't let me. Finally I became so apathetic that my piano teacher pleaded with my mom and dad to let me give up piano. In all her years of teaching piano, I was the only student she ever had encouraged to stop!

Later, I talked my parents into letting me take guitar lessons. We purchased an expensive guitar and I started strumming with passion, but it lasted only a few months.

In sports, same result. I played baseball and quit after a couple of years. Then it was basketball, which lasted only one season. Next came golf; again, one season. Track and field: same result.

The list continues. I'd start reading books but never finish. In high school I

read only one book in its entirety—Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*. It was required reading, and since the book was short and I enjoyed fishing, I finished it.

I joined clubs only to quit a short time later. I turned to special interests and bought expensive equipment, only to allow it to sit in the closet or rust from lack of use after a strong and enthusiastic start.

In short, my mom was accurate in her assessment. Would I repeat my established pattern? Would I quit Christianity, my newfound faith in God, my new passion? Would my Bibles and study books end up in the closet with all my other short-lived interests?

The good news is that this former quitter has been passionate about Jesus Christ now for more than thirty years. I’m as committed today—yes, even more so—as I was when I came home and told my parents about my new faith. God Almighty, my Father, changed me from one who quickly conceded or tired. Through His Holy Spirit, He built within me the virtue of a relentless spirit.

God made me a *relentless believer*.

If you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord, that same virtue is available to you. But it has to be developed. That’s the purpose of this book—to reveal how you can increase and enhance this ability that God has freely given you so you can live well and finish strong.

GOD WROTE A BOOK ABOUT YOU

Do you realize who you are and how much God needs you—to fulfill your destiny in advancing His cause here on earth? Does it surprise you that the heavenly Father is depending on you?

God has specifically designed a life-course for you! Your entire life was mapped out prior to your birth. The psalmist declares:

You saw me before I was born.

Every day of my life was recorded in your book.

Every moment was laid out

before a single day had passed. (Psalm 139:16, NLT)

God wrote a book about you before your parents even thought of having you—*before a single day had passed*. Celebrities and rulers aren't the only ones with books containing their life story. No, yours is recorded too, but the amazing reality is this: it was mapped out and penned by God before you were born.

You may protest, "John, you have no idea who you're talking to! My life has had bumps, bruises, and even wrecks due to my bad choices. Did God author that?"

No, a thousand times, no! God mapped out our lives, and it is up to us to make the right choices in order to walk in the exhilarating path He created for us. Wrong choices can detour us, but genuine repentance can right the ship.

You may again question, "But I've had terrible things happen that were not the result of bad choices. Life has dealt me some hard blows. Did God author those disappointments and hardships?"

Again, no! We live in a fallen world. Consequently, Jesus said we would have tribulation and would suffer adversity. The good news is that because God knew what manner of evil would try to overtake you before you were born, in His wisdom He made paths to escape and even come out triumphant. This is why in His Word He calls relentless believers "overcomers."

Hebrews 12:1 exhorts each of us, "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." God has set a race before you, me, and each of His children. For you to finish the race well means you'll have to run with endurance, or *relentlessness*. It cannot be completed any other way. It's interesting to note that this is the single virtue highlighted in this passage. The writer doesn't say "Let us run with happiness" or "Let us run with purpose" or "Let us run with seriousness." Don't get me wrong—happiness, purpose, and seriousness, as well as other virtues, are all important to the Christian walk. But the key virtue is *relentlessness*.

It takes a *relentless* spirit to finish well. Finishing well requires persistence and endurance. I love The Message Bible's rendition of Hebrews 12:1: "Strip down, start running—and never quit!" Completing our course is crucial not only for us but also for those we are called to influence. It's important not to turn back or veer from the path that God has put before us. If you are a child of God, you have what it takes! God has placed that enabling power, the Holy Spirit, within you. If you remain steadfast, you will be able to declare with the apostle Paul, "I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful" (2 Timothy 4:7, NLT).

You may be facing adversity in your marriage, family, employment, business, school, finances, health, or elsewhere. Your situation may seem utterly hopeless and without solution—intimidating, exhausting currents trying to force you to give up and drift downstream. The good news is, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27). No matter how tough your circumstances, they are not impossible to God. But Jesus did place an important qualifier on this promise. “*If you can believe,*” He said, “all things are possible to him who *believes*” (Mark 9:23). It takes a *relentless believer* to see the impossible become possible. That’s what this message is all about: facing what is beyond your human ability and, by God’s strength and grace, seeing the impossible made possible.

Hear me! God desires to call you “great in His sight” (Luke 1:15). He is *for you*, and no one wants your success in life more than God Himself. He’s prepared for you a fabulous life and foresees a great finish in which you leave a legacy of faith, significance, and greatness to the benefit of others. But it’s all contingent on you being a *relentless* believer.

You may be thinking, *But, John, honestly, I’m not exactly a resolute type of person. I don’t have a history of sticking it out through tough times.*

—
No one wants
your success in life
more than God.
—

If that describes you, there’s more good news. Your history doesn’t matter. Because of the grace of Jesus Christ, you’re not doomed to repeat the past. It’s indeed possible for you to become a *relentless believer* and to finish well. You’re a candidate for great joy in seeing a desirable end. Whether it is for a short-term chapter of your life or your full lifetime, you are destined to be great in the sight of God. This is His promise!

There’s no escaping the adversity waiting for each of us if we follow the path of Jesus. The stakes are high and the eternal rewards priceless. You have a vicious enemy who, to put it bluntly, wants to destroy your influence and wreck your God-assigned mission. As far as Satan’s concerned, you are a threat and need to be stopped—indeed, he will be happy when you are “dead.” But because of what happened at the cross, Satan is a defeated foe! Every battle we face against him is already won! But we still have to fight him, his cohorts, and their influence—*relentlessly*. Together we will learn how.

You were created to make a difference in this world. You are a child of the King, destined to rule on His behalf. The keys to the kingdom are in your pocket! As you walk closely with Him and commit to being relentless in your faith, He will give you all the strength and guidance you need to overcome the strong currents that flow against you.

Before we move on, let's commit this journey together to the Lord:

Dear God, as I read this book may Your Holy Spirit teach and enlighten me. I want more than mere information or inspiration; I want to know the richness and enormity of the calling You've placed upon my life. I want to know the power You've placed within me to accomplish my destiny.

Through this message, strengthen me to stand firm in truth and relentless in battle against any adversity that arises to hinder what You want accomplished through me. You've brought me forth for such a time as this; I pray that the message of Relentless would equip me to help fulfill Your divine plan while bringing glory to Your name and joy to Your heart. It's in the name of Jesus Christ that I make this request. Amen.