



Monday Matters

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Finishing Strong

I remember our pastor when we lived in Phoenix, Tommy Barnett, would say "You need to finish strong. It's not how you start - it's how you finish." It was one of his pet sayings and he had many illustrations to go with it.

This week I was reading an article put out by CBS News and it fit right into the idea that one should always strive to "finish strong." Gabe Sonnier had worked for the same elementary school for over thirty years. He was a janitor, mopping floors, cleaning restrooms and always picking up stuff kids dropped on floors.

Westley Jones, then principal of Port Barre Elementary School, came up to Gabe one day to have a little chat. Mr. Jones told Gabe, "I'd rather see you grading papers than picking them up."

At age 39, Gabe took that statement to heart and when he wasn't cleaning classrooms, he was sitting in a classroom earning his teaching degree. Once he received his degree he landed his first teaching position at Port Barre. He continued his education, earning his Masters in Science and Education.

So where is Gabe Sonnier today? He is Principal Gabe Sonnier at Port Barre Elementary School. "Isn't that something?" Mr. Sonnier asked with a big grin on his face.



It really is something. Gabe hasn't forgotten where he came from. It is hard to believe but he still cleans his own office today. Obviously, you can take the janitor out of the mop room, but you can't take the work ethic out of the janitor.

And here's the lesson straight from the Principal: "Don't let your situation that you're in now define what you're going to become later," Mr. Sonnier said. "I always tell them it's not where you start, it's how you finish."

Asked if he had finished he replied that he would not mind being the school superintendent for the district one day. Now that's finishing strong.

No matter where you are, what you are doing, don't be content. Keep pushing on and up. Don't give up on your congregation or people you work with or for you. Encourage them to strive for something better - spiritually, mentally, physically, etc. As Tommy Barnett and Gabe Sonnier have said numerous times, "Finish Strong!" It doesn't matter how you start but how you finish.



"I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward-to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back." Philipians 3:12-14 (Msg)



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