

## I. Introduction

- A. Nobody steps foot onto the campus of West Point as a student without earning it. Getting into West Point is one of the toughest challenges a young person will ever face. Out of 14,000 applicants, only 1,200 actually get in.
- B. Almost all of them were varsity athletes. The majority of them were team captains.
  - 1. Academically, they're at the top of their high school classes.
  - 2. Intellectually, they've scored near perfect scores on the entrance exams.
  - 3. Physically, they're apex predators — strong, fit, and ready to rumble.
  - 4. Socially, they've earned the respect of their peers enough to gain a coveted nomination to the school.
- C. In order to gain admission, a candidate's application is reviewed. Each one is given a Whole Candidate Score. It includes class rank adjusted for size of the school, SAT scores, physical fitness performance, and expert opinion on candidate's leadership potential. All those numbers get plugged into a weighted formula, and out comes West Point's Whole Candidate Score to decide who gets in.
- D. Even with all those qualifications, one in five will drop out before graduation. And most of those drop out before the first day of class. They can't handle an intake process called the Beast.
- E. From 5:00 am wakeup to 5:30 physical training, through fast meals, intense classes, mandatory athletics, and every minute scripted... This seven week training period is described in the West Point Manual as, "the most physically and emotionally demanding part of your four years at West Point..."
- F. Most candidates who drop out drop out during the Beast. They spent 2 years trying to get into the school, and then they dropped out in the first two months.
- G. Over time, West Point made an interesting discovery. They discovered that their Whole Candidate Score could not predict who would make it through the Beast and who would drop out.
- H. No correlation. A high Whole Candidate Score did not make it more likely for a student to stick it out, and a low score did not make it less likely. In fact, talent, and grades, and test scores and physical fitness had almost nothing to do with getting through the Beast.
- I. The admissions officers began to wonder, What if we're measuring the wrong things?

- J. The more they studied their process and the information they gathered, the more West Point realized they were missing the most important bit of information of all.
  - K. In all their application process, they had gathered no information about the one quality that determines who quits the Beast and who doesn't.
  - L. What was that quality?
    - 1. It was the quality of how they handled failure.
  - M. When they failed, when they suffered setbacks, when everything fell apart, then what?
  - N. In other words, the primary quality that separated those who made it from those who quit is this ugly, messy, beautiful quality called G.R.I.T.
- II. G.R.I.T.
- A. Welcome to our summer series called G.R.I.T. My talk today is part three.
  - B. Grace Revealed In Trials.
  - C. Grit is toughness. It's the ability to get knocked down seven times and to get up eight. It's a rare combination of determination and passion that makes a person keep on going after failure.
    - 1. Grit is endurance in one direction.
    - 2. Grit is perseverance toward one goal.
    - 3. Grit is mental and emotional toughness to pursue one passion.
  - D. We've talked about how we live in a difficult world. Hard times are going to come. Everybody has trials. Everybody has adversity. Or, as we've been saying,
    - 1. This fallen world is a morally broken pain machine.
  - E. And you're stuck inside it.
  - F. Either the pain machine is going to chew you up or you're going to push it back. Sin is an invader. Sin and death and darkness and pain are alien invaders to God's good world. They've come to limit you. To shrink your boundaries.
  - G. They've come against you to diminish your dominion.
  - H. So what does it take to not wilt?
  - I. It takes Grit.
  - J. Here's our definition:
    - 1. G.R.I.T. is the spiritual toughness to face the tyrants that would steal your dominion and the faith to crush them with supernatural weapons of grace.
  - K. So that's our topic this summer.
  - L. And for a case study, we are looking at a Champion of Grit. He was an old school prophet named Elijah.

- M. And in two short paragraphs he has managed to bring down a whole heap of trouble on his head. And now, it's just getting worse...
- N. He's living in a time of drought. God won't turn the rain back on until Elijah asks him to. King Ahab wants his head. Elijah has been in hiding, and God has provided water in a brook, and food from some ravens.
- O. So now, it's time for another curve ball.
1. And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. (1 Kings 17:7)
- P. Hey thanks, God. You told me to go here and you'd take care of me, so what gives?
- Q. See, this is where Grit comes in. Either you face your giants or your giants crush you. You can't avoid them. Deny them. Can't even pray them away.
- R. It's the spiritual toughness to face the tyrants that would steal your dominion — the drought of water, of money, of health, of love — and the faith to crush them with supernatural weapons of grace.
- S. This brook drying up becomes a catalyst for something beautiful. As we work through this paragraph of the Bible, we will see a new lesson about Grit. Here it is:
1. G.R.I.T. is contagious.
- T. And here are five qualities that make it so.
- III. Five Qualities that Make GRIT Contagious
- A. Because G.R.I.T. believes radically. (1 Ki 17:8-10a)
1. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." So he arose and went to Zarephath..." (1 Kings 17:8-10a)
  2. Your life has two buckets. When you face tough times, you can reach into bucket number one or bucket number two.
- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| a) <u>Bucket One</u> | <u>Bucket Two</u>  |
| Victim               | Victor             |
| Self-Pity            | Determination      |
| Deficit minded       | Asset minded       |
| Robbed               | Blessed            |
| Defined by failures  | Defined by God     |
| Stuck                | Keep moving        |
| Fear                 | Faith              |
| Bucket of Defeat     | Bucket of G.R.I.T. |

3. In bucket number one, once the water runs out, that's it. God has forsaken you. The world stopped spinning. Your life is over. In bucket number one, any setback is terminal.
    - a) I got a C- so I can never get into college, never have a career, and I'm going to die broke.
    - b) I got a rejection letter from a publisher, so writing is not for me (Agatha Christie was continually rejected for five years before a publisher took a chance. Only the Bible and William Shakespeare outsell her books. Theodore Geisel was told his children's books were too weird, before a publisher took a chance on him... and he has \$300 million in sales. You know him as Dr. Seuss).
      - (1) In bucket number one, any setback is terminal. But not so in bucket number two.
    - c) I got a disappointing job evaluation.
  4. You interpret all that evidence personally. I'm not good enough and I never will be.
  5. Bucket number one has what's called a Fixed view mindset: I can't change, I can't grow. I can't. If I don't have the right stuff, I don't have the right stuff and I never will.
    - (1) Once the water runs out, well that's it.
    - (2) Any setback is terminal.
  6. But in bucket number two... you find this powerful catalyst of Grit:
    - a) Faith filled self-talk
    - b) You're quoting Scriptures. You're relying on promises. You're banking your life on the truth of God, the goodness of God, the presence of God, the love of God, and the grace of God.
    - c) You're looking at that dried up brook, and instead of collapsing in a tantrum you look to heaven and say, Okay, God, what's next?
  7. And he tells you. Go to this city. I have commanded a widow to take care of you there. Almost as bad as ravens. A widow? In that era, widow meant poor. Really God, a widow?
  8. But Elijah believed radically, and he arose and went to Zarephath... the place where somebody needed to catch some Grit from him.
- B. Because G.R.I.T. asks boldly. (1 Ki 17:10b,11)
1. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink." And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." (1 Kings 17:10, 11)

2. In those days there were rules for hospitality. It was important to take care of strangers.
  3. The place he goes is on the border of a pagan land. It's possible they worship idols — and they don't believe in the Invisible Creator God of Elijah.
  4. But Elijah sees a widow. He can tell that by how she was dressed. He thinks, maybe this is the one.
  5. He sees her collecting sticks. This would tell him she is flat out broke. She has no servants to do this work for her. And no fields where she can cut down her own trees. So Elijah sees she is broke (strike one) and a widow (in that culture) strike two.
  6. He meets a person who's in as much trouble as he is.
  7. And he says, Please bring me a little water in a cup that I may drink..." This means drawing water from a well, probably. And remember there's a drought, so this is a big request.
  8. So, Elijah is measuring the situation. And he wants to really push her, so he asks for food too. Water, well, she can get that with a little work. But bread? That's a sacrifice.
  9. A person of GRIT asks boldly. They don't sit back and wait for help to come, they go ask for it. Not rudely. Not insistently. Not as a demand. But as a true request.
  10. You can always tell a person's true character by how they act when somebody tells them NO.
  11. Ruth asking Boaz. Rehab asking the spies. Jacob asking the unnamed Grappler. In one way or another, a person of Grit goes forth with a request.
    - a) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16, NKJV).
  12. It never hurts to ask.
  13. And since you're going to ask, ask for the whole nine yards. Because that kind of courage is contagious.
- C. Because G.R.I.T. Inspires Deliberately. (1 Ki 17:12-14)
1. So she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. "For thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not

be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.’” (1 Kings 17:12-14)

2. He’s teaching her the same lesson he just learned. He’s been in the school of Grit, and now, he’s just enrolled her. She needs it, and he supplies it.
3. Look at her answer:
  - a) As the Lord your God lives... she doesn’t say that it’s her God; it’s his God. This is evangelism.
  - b) I just have a little flour, a little oil, a few sticks, and I’m going to make food for me and my son, and then we’re going to die. Which bucket is she drawing from? The defeat bucket or the GRIT bucket?
  - c) Elijah says, don’t fear. Go do your plan, just feed me first, and then feed yourself and your son. And then he gives her a promise that the Lord God of Israel has promised that the bin of flour shall not be used up, nor the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.
4. What’s going on?
5. Not too long ago, researchers did an experiment with kids in middle school. It was about math.
6. The divided students into two groups... the students didn’t know about this; just the teachers and researchers did.
7. For two weeks, all the kids were given a list of math problems to solve. Both groups got the same list. They were given a time limit on how long to work on the math problems. There were more problems than any kid could solve in the time limit. That was on purpose.
8. In Group A, every time the kids turned in their math sheets, the teachers praised them. The teachers said they did all the math problems they expected the kids to do in that amount of time. They were always praised for doing well, no matter how well they did.
9. But in Group B, it was different. Every time the kids turned in math sheets, the teachers also praised them. But then they said something more. Then they said we expect you to be able to do more problems in that mount of time, and we believe you can. About half the time, the teachers said they expected more. And they should try harder.
10. Afterwords, all the kids were given a test of very easy and very hard math problems mixed together.
11. The kids in Group A, where the teachers always praised them, routinely gave up after they encountered hard math problems.
12. The kids in Group B, where the teachers expected more, tried even harder after they encountered difficulty.

- a) Group A learned that encountering difficulty meant it was time to quit.
  - b) Group B learned that encountering difficulty meant it was time to try harder.
13. This fallen world is a morally corrupt pain machine, and God knows you're stuck in it.
14. So, which Group will be more helpful for you to be in, Group A (always praise) or Group B (lots of praise with higher expectations mixed in)?
15. God wants us all in Group B... because life is hard and we're not going to make it if we're trained to think that every kid gets a trophy.
16. Elijah asked for water. That was expected.
17. He asked for food. That was pushing her.
18. He promised an endless supply. That was pushing her even farther, pushing her to a faith that made no sense.
- a) You say you're going to run out. You say you're going to die. You say your son is going to die. Feed me first, and trust God to take care of you.
19. God had just taught him the same ridiculous lesson. Now Elijah was offering the same lesson in Grit to this widow who needed it so desperately.
20. What happened?
21. Grit is contagious.
- a) So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah... (1 Kings 17:15a)
- D. Because G.R.I.T. acts courageously. (1 Ki 17:15a)
- 1. So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah... (1 Kings 17:15a)
  - 2. I'm an author, so I like author stories. I heard an author speak, a Christian woman named Debbie Macomber. I've actually spoken with her a few times. She loves the Lord. And has sold over 100 million books in 23 languages and a whole lot of movies and TV shows on the Hallmark Channel.
  - 3. When she first started writing, she said, her family couldn't afford a typewriter. So she and her husband rented one. It cost \$25 a month. Debbie said she felt horrible about taking that money out of their tight family budget, but they did it. She stayed up late and worked on her first book while the kids and her husband were in bed. It was old school. Typewriter and paper.

4. When she was done, Debbie and her husband agreed she should submit her book for publication, through a writer's conference she would attend. Again, a big financial sacrifice but they chose it.
  - a) Remember, it's a sermon on G.R.I.T.
5. Debbie was convinced this was God's call on her life, and she would follow it as long as she could.
6. Well, she went to the writer's conference. She sat there eager to hear if her book was accepted — very slim possibilities.
7. At the conference, a major New York editor was speaking. This editor had an overhead projector. She was giving a talk on how not to write. On how to submit something that was doomed to be rejected. And this speaker was projecting bad examples onto a screen with an overhead projector.
8. Debbie said she looked and she blinked, and the breath went out of her.
9. This major New York Publisher, giving a speech before hundreds of professionals — a speech on lousy writing and how not to do it — she was using Debbie Macomber's book as an example of how not to write publishable material.
10. Debbie said she choked back tears, and made herself breathe, and sat humiliated, embarrassed and broken hearted.
11. At the end of the talk, when people had cleared the room, Debbie went up to the speaker. She said her name, and the speaker gave her an icy stare.
12. Debbie asked, "Is there any way I can fix this? Do you have any advice for me?"
13. The publisher's gaze softened a little. Debbie Macomber said the publisher/speaker lady reached over, patted her on the forearm, and said, "Oh honey, just give it up."
14. Remember, the one quality that separates those who survive the Beast and those who don't is how they handle failure.
15. Repeated failure. Repeated rejection. Repeated trials.
16. Because the world is a morally broken pain machine, and it is trying all the time to shrink your life.
17. And either you will go postal, or you will go dark, or you will pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again.
18. How would you like to be the publisher who told Debbie Macomber to just give it up? She tried and tried and tried again. And now she has enough success to buy Sweden.



- a) And by the way, she is dyslexic. And was dyslexic in an era when nobody really understood what that was.
- 19. And here is this widow, this impoverished lady, who saw the giants on the horizon — there was starvation coming to get her. And there was poverty. And there was the giant death... all on the horizon. All attacking her dominion.
- 20. And with one uncertain promise from the Lord God of Israel, she went away and did according to the word of Elijah. Grit acts courageously. It is faith on steroids (not that steroids are okay...).
- 21. And here's what happened next.
  - a) So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah. (1 Kings 17:15, 16)
- 22. And this is our last reason why Grit is contagious.
- E. Because G.R.I.T. is rewarded bountifully
  - 1. So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah. (1 Kings 17:15, 16)
  - 2. Grace seeks faith like a heat seeking missile. God always rewards faith with grace.
  - 3. I'm not saying you'll be rich.
  - 4. But I am saying you'll be rich in things that money can't buy. Rich in hope. Rich in love. Rich in purpose and meaning in a crazy mixed up world.
  - 5. The pain machine can't pull your strings any more.
    - a) Nobody owns you but Jesus. Your sins don't own you. The devil doesn't own you. Your addictions don't own you. Your nasty reputation doesn't own you. Other people's labels don't own you. Your failures don't own you. The past doesn't own you. The people who hurt you don't own you. The Man, the government, shadowy conspirators, lousy genetics, disabilities, disease, cultish preachers don't own you.
    - b) The giants on the horizon can't take your territory.
  - 6. You've got a supply line to heaven. And nobody can break it.
  - 7. You've got Grit.
  - 8. Grace Revealed in Trials.
  - 9. And even if you don't see the reward here on earth, you have a mountain of rewards in heaven that other people will not have.

10. You have Grit, and though the world around you is chaotic, you, with Jesus, are resting in the stern of the boat, because with Christ, you have all you need.

11. And that is the most contagious force in the world. May Redding CA and wherever we may live catch GRIT from us... That's my prayer.

#### IV. G.R.I.T. Basic Training

A. Last week, we had this verse:

1. God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; (Psalms 46:1, 2, NKJV).

B. Write it down

C. Carry it with you

D. When in trouble, read it.

E. Panic or whatever.

1. Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls-- Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills. (Habakkuk 3:17-19, NKJV).