Most of us have seen ABC’s *Wide World of Sports* and heard the phrase “the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.” While that phrase holds some truth, any world-class athlete will quickly tell you that more prominent is the reality of “the agony of victory.” To be the best at anything requires one thing—agony.

The United States water polo team, which won the gold medal at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, admitted that they had tasted “the agony of victory.” Due to the long hours they had given to the perfection of their sport, their wives left them; and others were fired from their jobs. Winning the gold was not all thrill. The road to victory was paved with agony.

**Understanding Agony**

*Webster’s definition of agony: ____________________________*

But what does “agony” have to do with this year’s study? Actually, it is simple. All great champions—whether they be Olympic gold medalists, world-class athletes, or master violinists—all have this one thing in common: they willingly “agonized” for years to get to the top.

The same is true of those who become champions for God. No one just accidentally becomes a David or a Moses. God’s champions, like sports champions, become that because they have paid the price of “agony.”
Note Jude 3: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

“Earnestly contend” comes from the Greek word *agon* (ah–gohn’). *Agon* occurs _________ times in the Greek New Testament.

**How agon is translated**

(5 times) (1 time)
(5 times) (1 time)
(2 times) (1 time)
(1 time) (1 time)
(1 time) (1 time)

Thus, the first mark of a true winner is that he ________________ for the faith.

What does the word “agony” in Jude 3 imply?

______________________________________________________________________________

This is seen in two ways:

1. The agony of _______________________
2. The agony of _______________________

What word in Hebrews 12:1 is the same Greek word as “contend” or “agony” in Jude 3? __________________________ Read Hebrews 12:1, using the word “agony” in place of “race.”

What phrase in 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 is the translation of the Greek word for “contend” or “agony?” __________________________________________________________________

**The Essence of the Word “Contend” In Jude 3**

1. A man’s struggle ____________________________________________
2. A man’s struggle ____________________________________________

Again, it is not the violence of war or the thrill of beating someone that is the focus of *agon*, but the struggle required to excel.
Applying Agony to Ourselves

Over the next nine months we face the agony of school and the agony of ProTeens. But the agony we speak of is not the agony of facing homework and teachers and principals. Rather it is the agony of driving ourselves to ________________________________.

Let’s make 2 Timothy 4:7 our goal for the year: “I have fought (agonized) a good fight (agony), I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”

At-Home Bible Study (Level Two Only)

The word agon occurs in each of the verses below. Look up each verse and record the thing we should agonize (struggle, fight, or contend) over. The word(s) in parentheses beside each reference is the English translation of the word agon in the Greek New Testament. (Hint: Read each verse carefully and put the word “agony,” “agonize,” “struggle,” or “struggling” in place of the word(s) in parentheses below. Then record the thing we should agonize over in the blank.)

1 Thessalonians 2:2 (“contention”) ________________________________________________

Luke 13:24 (“strive”) ____________________________________________________________
(Hint: The “strait gate” is the gate of salvation.)

1 Corinthians 9:25 (“striveth”) __________________________________________________
(Note: “Mastery” means “to be the best you can be for God.”)

Romans 15:30 (“strive together”)________________________________________________

1 Timothy 4:10 (“suffer reproach”) ______________________________________________
(Hint: “Therefore” points back to a word found in both verses 7 and 8. It is the goal for which Paul “agonizes.”)

Hebrews 12:4 (“striving”) ______________________________________________________

Jude 3 (“contend”)____________________________________________________________

By the way, did you have to struggle to answer these questions and then memorize them for the quiz? Aren’t your salvation and your Lord worth the struggle? Keep it up.

Remember: Those who taste the thrill of victory are those most familiar with the agony of struggle.

Your work on this lesson is “contending for the faith;” you’re experiencing the “agony of victory.” Soon you will know “the thrill of victory.”