

Monday Morning Rewind - August 11, 2008

Good morning! Ready to go for the gold? Even as we celebrated the opening ceremonies of the Beijing, China Olympics, we paused to consider the spiritual parallels between the games and the Christian race.

Five lessons stood out:

1. Excellence is attractive. We yearn for life above the ordinary. We admire excellence, and dream of being and having the best. The church, too, must have goals to stay alive and reflect the excellence of its Lord. Christ's excellence came not on the field of play, but in the arena of love and sacrifice. He showed us what human flesh is capable of when linked to and dependant on the Divine.

"To everyone who offers himself to the Lord for service, withholding nothing, is given power for the attainment of measureless results." (Ellen White - 7T, 30)

Through Christ we may become excellent servers, excellent healers, excellent givers, and excellent lovers.

2. Failure is not fatal. Don't be discouraged when you fall down. Don't quit. Keep running. Keep pursuing the goal, because "We will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Gal. 6:9).

Jesus never quit. That's why He is our standard. He went the distance for you and me. He's worthy of our admiration and imitation.

3. Eliminate resistance at all costs. Ken Blanchard said: "There's a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when it's convenient. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results."

By this standard most Christians today are merely "interested" in following Christ.

Real athletes are committed, consistent, and consecrated to their goal of winning. Swimmers shave their heads and body hair to eliminate drag in the water. They want to win. They will do whatever it takes to cut resistance-to sacrifice anything that may slow them down.

What slows us down spiritually? What are those things in life that drag us away from the goal of Christlikeness? We need to cut the resistance. Throw off the weights.

"Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:7-8)

4. Together we win. We need each other. Eccl. 4:9-10 - Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

Why do geese fly farther than eagles? The lead goose breaks the wind and the upward draft lifts the bird behind, so that he can fly without much effort. When head goose gets tired, he drops back in the formation to get a rest and ride on the strength of another. Sometimes you can be too tired to pray for yourself. That's when you should rest on the prayers of your teammates. Don't suffer alone.

5. Trust and Obey the Coach. One difference between the games and our Christian walk, is that victory is not completely up to us. As much as we may want to win the Christian race, want sanctification, intimacy with God, He wants us to win even more. J.I. Packer writes:

"What matters supremely, therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it-the fact that he knows me. I am graven on the palms of his hands. I am never out of his mind. All my knowledge of him depends on his sustained initiative in knowing me. I know him because he first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters.

This is momentous knowledge. There is unspeakable comfort. . . in knowing that God is constantly taking knowledge of me in love and watching over me for my good. There is tremendous relief in knowing that his love to me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery now can disillusion him about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself, and quench his determination to bless me."

With a coach like this, how can we lose? Rewind to Philipians 3:13, 14. If we apply these lessons learned from the Olympics to the race we're running, we will receive the applause of heaven and, like Paul, will win the gold-the crown of righteousness. -Pastor Randy