

Planet's Fastest Woman Slowed by God

Reuters - Jerry
Lampen



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—Marion
Jones

Once named the fastest woman on earth, Olympic track star Marion Jones could no longer run from God when she found herself in a federal prison.

"God put me in a situation and slowed down my life enough to say: You know what, Marion, I should be the most important One in your life," she told the Christian Broadcasting Network.

Jones described her relationship with God, prior to her conversion, as nominal, consisting of a flippant "Lord, help me" before a track race or an offhanded "Thank you" if she ran well.

She quickly ascended to fame and fortune after the 2000 Olympics, when she became the first woman to take home five medals.

Gracing the covers of *Vogue* and *Time* magazines and

signing million-dollar endorsement deals, Jones thought she had finally put herself on the right tack.

But in 2007 everything came to a screeching halt when she was convicted of perjury for lying to federal officials about taking performance-enhancing steroids.

She was stripped of her records and medals and sentenced to six months in Carswell Federal Prison in Fort Worth, Texas. She says she unknowingly took the drugs, but did recognize them when confronted about them.

While in prison things got worse. A fight with a fellow prisoner landed Jones in solitary confinement for 49 days with only a few photos of her young children, her Bible and her memories. There, during what she calls “probably the worst part of my life,” she turned to Christ: “I found myself opening up [the Bible] and the Word was just kind of oozing into me. I was like a sponge. Sometimes God puts you in situations where there’s nothing else and you have to turn to Him, and I feel comfortable saying that.”

Two years after being released, Jones signed with the Tulsa Shock in the WNBA. Today she travels the country with her ministry, Take A Break, inspiring youth and college students to think before making decisions that will affect their future—something Jones wished she’d done when

she was questioned about her steroid use years earlier. Last year God opened a door for Jones to share her message internationally at the invitation of the U.S. State Department.

She considers the work she now does even more important than her previous occupation.

"I wouldn't wish [my experiences] on my enemy—but actually I would, if it would change them in such a positive way," she says.

"It has helped me to prioritize what's important in my life and it's not fame, it's not fortune. It can only be Him. I've finally realized that I have a plan and it's His plan for [me]."