

What Tim Tebow Teaches Us About Stumbling Blocks

To excel at anything in life, we have to learn to handle adversity and persevere when it's easier to quit. Long-term success is only achieved by persistence.

Recall the timeless quote by President Calvin Coolidge: "Nothing in the world will take the place of persistence. Talent will not; the world is full of unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. The slogan 'press on' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ told us a parable about a sower planting seed (Luke 8:1-15). He stated emphatically that it was only by "persevering" that an individual will eventually produce a crop. The problem is many of us throw in the towel prematurely and as a result don't find the achievement and success for which we long.

One of the very best contemporary examples of this character trait is Christian athlete Tim Tebow. He's currently drawing fans in droves to watch him play professional baseball in a late-in-life career change in Columbia, South Carolina.

Critics and naysayers of Tim say, "It's unrealistic. He'll never make it!" Yet this 6 foot 3 inch, 233-pound 29-year-old athlete, surrounded by aspiring 19- and 20-year-old teammates, is on a mission to fulfill his destiny.

Who Is Tim Tebow?

Many sports aficionados believe Tim Tebow is easily one of the 10 most recognized sports figures in America. He is second only to Tiger Woods and LeBron James over the decade in terms

of appeal.

In the mid-'80s, his parents were Baptist missionaries in the Philippines. While there, Tim's mother, Pamela, contracted amoebic dysentery and fell into a coma, then discovered she was pregnant.

She developed a severe placental abruption, and doctors told her to get an abortion because the child would be stillborn. Because of their strong Christian faith, Mr. and Mrs. Tebow believed God for a miracle promising to consecrate their son for God's work. And that is just what happened, as little Timothy was born a healthy baby, to the glory of God!

He was one of five children, and they were all homeschooled even into high school. Tim was able to play on the high school football team, winning the state title with him honored twice as "Florida Player of the Year." Subsequently, he was named one of the top 33 football players in Florida's 100-year history of high school football.

Advancing to the University of Florida, Tim became the first homeschooled high school athlete to ever be nominated for the Heisman Trophy that he won as a sophomore. While there, he played on two national championship teams, both with records of 13-1.

Going on to play for four teams in the NFL, he competed in 34 games until eventually being released. Even though he took a team to the playoffs, many football experts said he just didn't have what it takes.

Every time he faced another setback, Tim was interviewed and displayed grace along with exemplary determination to follow the will of God every step of the way. Eventually, he sensed he should pursue a baseball career, even though he had not played in organized baseball since high school in 2005.

Tebowmania Comes to Columbia

Not since Michael Jordan attempted a baseball career with the Birmingham Barons in 1994 has there been such a stir in minor-league baseball! Fans fill the seats, and Tebow T-shirt sales are brisk.

Although there are a few success stories in switching from football to baseball, like Bo Jackson and Deion Sanders, the odds are slim Tim will make it to the pros. Hitting a baseball unleashed at 90-plus mph is one of the most difficult things in sports. Yet if anybody has the determination and athletic ability to be the exception, it's our favorite son.

In his first three games, Tim hit two home runs (one in his first time at bat, which ignited a frenzy) and was 3-for-13 with 5 RBIs. The Columbia Fireflies, farm team for the New York Mets, are elated to have such a star attraction, and so are tens of thousands of devoted baseball fans, even though he's struggling at the present time.

Only time will tell if Tim Tebow can achieve his goal of playing major-league baseball at the ripe old age of 29. In the meantime, he stands on the field and in life as an inspirational role model whom all of us can pray for and emulate.

Behind the Scenes

I had the privilege to meet Tim Tebow not long ago and count it a privilege to validate his authenticity and humility. Tim says, "Trophies don't last. Awards come and go. Impressive titles move from one person to the next. But how we live can make an eternal impact."

This man of God is an outspoken Christian who faces mockery and criticism with dignity and divine strength. He has a winsome personality and takes his position as an ambassador for Jesus Christ most seriously.

Tim still returns to the Philippines to preach the gospel in

schools and assemblies. He speaks in prisons and schools throughout America, supports more than 40 Filipino evangelists and works with The Tim Tebow Foundation to establish children's hospitals in the Philippines.

He unashamedly claims his commitment to moral purity and abstinence until God brings the right one to be his covenant partner in marriage. Wanna' bet there are more than a few Christian ladies-in-waiting taking note of this special man of God?

For decades, I've tried to encourage people to not let failure make them fearful of trying again. Turn your trials into triumphs; your stumbling blocks into steppingstones; and, your tests into testimonies has been my motivational challenge.

When Tim spoke to 20,000 people at an Easter rally in Florida not long ago, he put it this way, "I still have my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, because at the end of the day, that's what's important, win or lose ... We need to get back to one nation under God, and be role models for kids!"

Here's the deal: In a day in which the American dream has been twisted to mean entitlements and material things—automobiles, free education and a guarantee of future increase—we need to recapture the original meaning of starting from nowhere and achieving something through persistence and hard work.

In an hour when there are so few godly role models, Tim Tebow is a bright, shining light. May we follow in his footsteps as we share these words with our family and friends.

Thanks, Tim. Now go hit a grand slam and set off some fireworks in that beautiful South Carolina sky! {eoa}