

When Winning a Bronze Medal in Life is Better Than Silver

With the Summer Olympics in Brazil coming to a close last weekend, do you feel like a bronze or silver medalist?

What do I mean? Mark Batterson, in his excellent book *In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day*, says, “A fascinating study done by Professor Vicki Medvec reveals the relative importance of subjective attitudes over and above objective circumstances. Medvec studied Olympic medalists and discovered that bronze medalists were quantifiably happier than silver medalists.

Here’s why: Silver medalists tended to focus on how close they came to winning gold, so they weren’t satisfied with silver; bronze medalists tended to focus on how close they came to not winning a medal at all, so they were just happy to be on the medal stand.

This got me thinking about how I think about my life. Am I full of gratefulness to God for all that He has done for me or am I simply unhappy about what I don’t have in life? Because of all that Jesus has done for us, we are on the medal stand. I know this analogy breaks down quickly because with Jesus we really all won gold. But sometimes our mindset doesn’t show it.

David says a person who will dwell with God, “speaks truth in his heart” (Ps. 15:2). That seems to indicate that sometimes in our heart we might not be speaking truth. We might not be focused on how close we came to not winning a medal at all, as the study states.

David’s son takes up the call by saying that, “... he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast” (Prov. 15:15). This doesn’t not mean that we don’t have difficulty or even sadness, but we lay it on the foundation of gratefulness for

our relationship with Jesus. As Paul writes about it from a prison cell, we are to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil. 4:4). He is saying regardless of our circumstances we are on the medal stand because of what Jesus has done.

This mentality is not about not seeking to improve. The bronze medalist may want gold at the next Olympics. It is more about what is in our heart on the journey. I am a very goal-oriented person, so this is a lesson that I must constantly remind myself. Here are two things that I do to help myself with the challenge:

1. I take a Sabbath. Part of the benefit of taking a day off is it reminds me that I am dependent on God for my life. Reminding myself of this fact helps me remember all the things He has given to me. My salvation is not based on the work that I do. This helps me get my heart looking from the right perspective.

2. I keep a thankful journal. I have shared in detail how I have a simple journal method. This can change your entire outlook on life. The simple act of writing down five things I am thankful for everyday still causes me to pause and see myself on the podium of history. I win big with God.

What simple things could you do to change your perspective? The habit could be life-changing. You may never win an Olympic medal, but with Jesus we won more than we could ever imagine.
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