

Character Quest.. Diligence

As a part of our Character Quest series our next characteristic we need to have in our lives is diligence. We need to be diligent in following after God.

Did you know that your walk with God is described in the Bible as a race? You have to run the race the bible says with diligence. That means to give constant care, to persevere, to give constant effort. Paul says that we should not grow weary in well doing. That we need to keep on keeping on.

A great example of diligence is a scene that took place in the 2004 Olympics. This takes place at the Olympic Indoor Hall on August 18, 2004. Never in history had an American ever taken the gold medal in the coveted men's individual all-around gymnastics competition. On that day five years ago, America's hopes rested on the shoulders of an unsuspecting, freckled-faced gymnast from Waukesha, Wisconsin, named Paul Hamm.

He faced an imposing field of 23 competitors – the best in the world – who came to the Games equally determined to take home the top prize. Like each of those athletes, Paul Hamm dreamed for years of competing as an Olympian for the United States. He was a serious contender for the gold medal – until he took that fateful vault. Maybe you remember what happened. During his final jump on the vault, Paul executed a perfect one and-a-half somersaults in the air, hit the vault, then tried a dismount called a “Tsukahara” – a blind landing with two-and-a-half twists – extremely difficult. Unfortunately, Hamm's tired legs couldn't support his landing, and he lost his balance. His legs tangled and he stumbled to his right, bounced off the mat and collided with the judges' table, where one of the judges was forced to use his own hand to fend him off. **Think about this now -- if they deduct a tenth of a point for taking an extra step on the dismount, how much do they take off for running over a judge?**

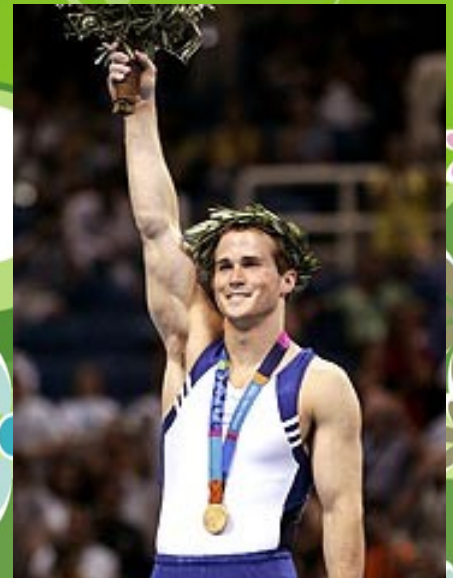
Apparently, they take off a lot! Paul's score of 9.137 score dropped him all the way from 2nd to 12th place in the competition, with only two events left. All those years of practice – all the sacrifices he had made – all the hopes of his family / team / country – washed away in an instant. His dream was over. But that is not the end of the story....

Paul Hamm could have given up a defeated man. After such a crippling mistake, and after looking at his rank on the scoreboard, no one would have blamed him. But Paul Hamm was made of tougher stuff, and that gold medal had been his dream for long enough that he couldn't shake it off that easily. Later, as he recalled what went through his mind that night, he said, “I just went for it. I dug down deep and I fought for everything.”

His next event was the parallel bars, and he gave the best routine of the night, scoring a 9.837 Suddenly, he was no longer in 12th place, but in 4th place. Then he attacked the high bar as if his life depended on it. Hamm executed his routine nearly perfectly, doing three straight release moves that even startled his coaches. He spun off the bar, and stuck the landing as if it were a giant suction cup. And when the scoreboard came to life again, his name was at the top, and the gold medal was his by twelve one-thousandths of a point – the closest margin in Olympic history!

God wants us to remember this morning that in the race of faith / the fight to live a life which glorifies God, giving up / giving in is simply not an option. Watching Paul Hamm in his moment of international humiliation should give us pause. But watching him minutes later achieve his dream / moment of glory should give us hope. We, too, can make the difficult choice to rise from our discouragement. We can look up. We can lighten up. We can lift up our eyes to Jesus, who makes all things possible.

I will be diligent



“Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Hebrews 12:1-2