



BIBLEWAY MINISTRIES

MAKING A DIFFERENCE—THE BIBLE WAY



The Pressure of the Olympics

Naomi Osaka's withdrawal from the French Open in 2021 reminded us of the extreme pressures serious athletes face in competition. She indicated her mental anguish was too much, and we were shocked she would forgo her great opportunity to become a champion.

Then Simone Biles, who had captured the hearts of Americans in the 2016 Olympics, decided to drop out of the 2021 Olympics due to mental pressures. She was expected to do nothing less than bring home gold medals. Talk about pressure!

Caeleb Dressel, who won 5 gold medals in the swimming competitions and set one record in the 100-meter butterfly competition, told *USA Today* about the mental pressures of the Olympics, "It does mean something different, an event that happens every four years, for a race that happens 40-something seconds or 20-something seconds, you have to be so perfect in that moment. Especially you add an extra year; it's a five-year buildup to be perfect."

"There's so much pressure in one moment. Your whole life boils down to a moment that can take 20, 40 seconds. How crazy is that? For an event that happens every four years. I wouldn't tell myself this during the meet; but after the meet, looking back, I mean, it's terrifying."

Most of us cannot imagine the intensity of these pressures. Whether athletes come home with or without a medal, the entire world will know of their success or failure. That's pressure! How crazy is that?

But no matter what we do in our brief stay on this earth, we, too, can be overwhelmed by the pressures and stresses that come with life.

As believers, 100% of our time is spent preparing for the big event that comes when we stand before our Lord. There will be no gold, silver, or bronze medals awarded. Instead, we hope to hear

Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21)

Soon many will forget Dressel's name, his Gold Medals, and the record he set in the 2021 Olympics. If the Lord should tarry His return, others will come after Dressel who will break his record.

During his preparation for ministry, Paul said, "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified." (1 Corinthians 9:25-27)

When we compare preparation for the 2021 Olympics to our preparation for the Race of Life, it can be a little scary. Fortunately for us, our race is not run with speed, but patience. It is not won by the swift, but by those who hold out and endure to the end. (Hebrews 12:1b)

The thought of undertaking such a competition on our own can be downright frightening. The good news is, Jesus promised to give us a Comforter in this contest. (John 14:16) This Comforter will come alongside us during the race and help us when we fall short or reach stressful points that would tempt us to quit. He will give us the strength necessary to make it to the end of the race. It is with this encouragement Paul could say, "I press on towards the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14)

Brother and Sister Olympians, if you are feeling stressed out in your journey, if the race seems too hard for you to run, be encouraged. You are not on just any team — "... We are laborers together with God." (1 Corinthians 3:9)

- Dr. L.W. Edwards

Can You Tell Me Who Jesus Is?

Who is Jesus to you?

- To a woman with a history of broken relationships, He was living water.
- To an adulteress, He was a defender.
- To a blind man, He was an optometrist.
- To a deaf man, He was a speech and language therapist.
- To a quadriplegic, He was a doctor.
- To tax collectors and prostitutes, He was a friend.
- To weather-beaten seamen, He was peace in a storm.
- To hapless fishermen, He was a fishing expert.
- To a demoniac, He was an exorcist.
- To a child, He was a grownup with a friendly face.
- To a distinguished military leader, He was a commander-in-chief.
- To a religious leader, He was a professor of theology.
- To 12 men who argued about who was the greatest, He was a servant.
- To the people who crucified Him, He was a forgiver.
- To a world that didn't know Him, He was a Savior.

If Jesus is all of these things and so much more, then why do we struggle so much to introduce Him to others?

Overcoming the Fear Factor

The very thought of beginning a spiritual conversation with another person often generates uncomfortable feelings. As we think about how the other person will respond, what they will think of us, whether we've chosen the wrong time or what other social consequences we might face, our enthusiasm morphs into anxiety. Confidence ducks for cover behind fear or shame. Our eyes dart toward the nearest exit. Our minds race to plan our retreat. Our heart rate and breathing speed up. Stress

sweat forms on our forehead and upper lip. Our stomach tightens. — You get the idea.

In John 4, Jesus used a well to introduce Himself to a Samaritan woman. Over the course of their conversation, the woman's demeanor toward Him shifted from apprehension to warmth and openness. As the conversation naturally developed, Jesus pivoted toward spiritual things and helped her see her need for Him.

We can use a similar strategy as we share the gospel. Much of our anxiety about sharing Christ with others fades as we build intentional relationships.

Follow Your Doctor's Example

When you schedule a doctor's visit to address a persistent cough which has been bothering you, your doctor won't instantly prescribe cough medicine. At least, they shouldn't. After listening to you describe your symptoms and doing an examination, they will have more information to make a diagnosis and prescribe proper treatment. Your doctor uses listening and observation to understand and meet your needs.

Our approach to sharing Christ with others should be similar. Effective soul-winners listen and observe so they can understand and show how Jesus can meet others' needs. Of course, listening and observation occur in the context of relationships.

Missionaries often share the gospel in countries where it is difficult, dangerous or even illegal to do so. When they proclaim their faith, they don't stand at street corners and yell at passers-by that they are going to hell or write ominous messages about God's coming judgment on a sandwich board hoping someone will read and be saved. Instead, they build relationships.

Meeting People Where They Are

Here are some creative ways they do it:

- Meeting physical needs when resources are scarce
- Watching and discussing movies and their themes
- Starting a college community group
- Partnering with displaced refugees
- Hosting medical clinics . . .

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