



### **The Thrill of Victory *Or* the Agony of Defeat**

By Wes Eby, Global Representative

I am a huge fan of the Olympics. You might even call me a FANatic! During the Olympic games this summer, my eyes stayed glued to the large-screen TV in our living room. Day after day. Night after night. Procrastinating work. Losing sleep. Rejoicing with the winners. Lamenting with the losers. Dealing with the proverbial lump in my throat while watching the heart-warming stories. Indeed, for me, the famous slogan that appeared on ABC's *Wide World of Sports* for more than three decades—"The Thrill of Victory, the Agony of Defeat"—filled each action-packed day of the 2020 Olympics, which got postponed a year due to the global pandemic.

Yet, even with the challenges that COVID-19 brought—the 12-month delay, quarantined athletes, mandated face coverings, frequent medical tests, empty stadia—this quadrennial event was a success. About the same number of countries/teams (206) and athletes (11,656) participated this year as in the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Success? Just ask the countries of Burkina Faso, San Marino, and Turkmenistan, which won their first medals ever. And what about the thrill that Bermuda, Philippines, and Qatar felt when they won gold medals for the first time? Plus, more countries won medals than in any previous Olympics.

What about the agony of defeat? Consider the U.S. equestrian jumping team that tied for the first place and lost in a jump-off by less than two seconds. Just talk with Will Claye of the U.S. who missed the bronze medal by about one inch. Defeat? What is more disheartening than finishing in fourth place, missing a medal by inches or seconds?

What about the thrill of victory? There's Caeleb Dressel, a U.S. swimmer, who won five gold medals and won the 100-meter butterfly by just .06 of a second. Imagine that! And no greater thrill was witnessed

than the two men, Tamberi from Italy and Barshim from Qatar, who tied in the high jump. When their request to share the gold medal rather than engage in a jump-off was approved, they expressed their thrill with utter ecstasy, jumping into each other's arms, embracing in a bear hug, openly and unashamed, forgetting all about social distancing. Moments like these—and there were plenty of them—are the reason I devoted two weeks of my life to this phenomenal sports event.

## **School Year 2021-2022**

By now, teachers are well into the school year. My question is this: For you, is this year going to be the thrill of victory *OR* the agony of defeat? Just as the Olympic athletes faced numerous challenges, you are dealing with them as well—conflicting health information; masks versus no masks; virtual, online learning; curriculum modifications; lack of funding and resources; angry, upset parents; confused, way-behind students.

How easy it is to enter the classroom or approach any of your assignment with a defeatist attitude! The challenges you face, whether one or many, are bound to bring pessimism and the question, “Can I survive this entire year?” This can lead to what I call the D syndrome, a disease of discouragement, disappointment, despair, dejection, and depression. At that point, you experience the agony of defeat and are ready to resign and change professions—immediately! I pray that no teacher, no educator, becomes afflicted with the D syndrome and suffers the agony of defeat. So lift your heads! For Christians, there is a solution.

## **Kudos to Teachers and Educators**

First, as a retired teacher and long-time educator, let me thank you sincerely for what you are doing to be the best teacher, the best educator, you can be. You have an extremely difficult job, and the current environment in many of our schools only increases the amount of work you must do. I know. I have been there. But I never had to deal with a pandemic, I admit. Please understand there are many of us not in the field of education—or no longer involved—who are in the stands rooting enthusiastically, cheering heartily, applauding thunderously, all the while hoping you experience the thrill of victory. So we take off our hats to you. We sincerely shout: “Kudos! Bravo! Incredible! Fantastic! Awesome!”

## **A Word from the Lord**

No person desires your success more than God does, your loving Father. His comforting promises of His presence with you in every circumstance, including the devastating consequences of a vicious virus, are woven throughout the Bible. Here are a few verses from God's Holy Word (New International Version) that should help spur you to *victory* this year:

“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you;  
he will never leave you nor forsake you.  
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”  
(Deuteronomy 31:8)

“Have I not commanded you?  
Be strong and courageous.  
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged,

for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go  
*and whatever you do.*  
(Joshua 1:9, author added last phrase)

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned;  
the flames will not set you ablaze.”  
(Isaiah 43:2)

Claim those promises. Affirm with bold confidence the Holy Spirit’s presence and guidance. Remind God daily of what He has promised as you confront and tackle the challenges you face daily—and you will face challenges. But *victory* is yours!

“But thanks be to God!  
He gives us the **victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ.”  
(1 Corinthians 15:57, emphasis added)

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