

FAR ABOVE RUBIES:

*Insights on living the Christian life
– from a female perspective*



GOING FOR GOLD!

Yes, it's that time again! So, love them or loathe them, the 2012 Summer Olympic Games are due to commence on the 27th July 2012. It is estimated that around 10,500 athletes from over 200 nations will compete for that much sought after gold medal! Many, who would not consider themselves great sports fans, will sit up half the night to watch their country "go for gold." I will never forget the excitement when Mary Peters won the Gold Medal in the Pentathlon back in 1972. What a sense of national pride was also stirred up when Northern Ireland was dubbed "The Golfing Capital of the World" just after Graeme McDowell won the US Open in 2010, Rory McIlroy won the US Open in 2011 and Darren Clarke won the Open Championship in St Georges in 2011! It even encouraged me to start playing golf with my husband - on the Wii!

As I think of the Olympic Games I am reminded of the race we as Christians are called to run. We must remember, however, that we are not competing against each other and we will all receive the prize when we finish the race. Paul writes in 2 Tim 4 7-8, ***"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to those who have loved His appearing."*** As Christians, we are all aiming towards the same goal and should do our best to avoid a competitive spirit.

To go for gold we need to be disciplined. The Olympic motto is *"Faster, higher, stronger"* and each athlete will do their utmost to achieve this. They will spend hours training every day to build up speed, distance and technique. To keep in the peak of fitness they cannot afford to miss out on training exercises or let their guard down. I believe that as Christians we should be the best that we can be, not only for God, but in all walks of life. When we are given a job to do, perhaps one which we don't particularly like, we should do it to the best of our ability and even go the extra mile (Matthew 5:41)! This can only be achieved through obedience to God's word and walking close to Jesus. I am sure many of you have seen the film *Chariots of Fire* or have heard the story of the runner Eric Liddell, who refused to run in a heat for the 100 metre sprint for the Paris Olympics, which was his best event, because it was being held on a Sunday. Unwilling to compromise his Christian principles, Eric's decision to pull out was made several months before the games when the schedule was published. It was then that Eric started training for the 400 metres race. Just before he started the race Eric was given a note which said, ***"Those who honour***

me, I will honour" (1 Sam 2:30). Eric Liddell went on to win the 400 metres, beating the Olympic and World record with a time of 47.6 seconds! Hallelujah!

To go for gold we need to exercise self control. They have dieticians working with them to ensure that they have the right intake of food which will help build up muscle and not fat. They need to ensure that they get the right amount of rest and do not participate in a lifestyle that would be detrimental to their health or strength. In 1 Cor.6:19-20 we read that our body is ***"the temple of the Holy Spirit"*** and that we are to glorify God in it. We need to be feeding on those things which will build up our body, like reading God's word. There is a lot of good Christian literature out there and wonderful worship CDs which, if we will just take the time to read and listen, will be food for our souls.

To go for gold we need to compete according to the rules. In the Olympic Games there are no shortcuts and no special allowances made. Cheating will result in disqualification. In recent years we have seen those who have tried to win by using performance enhancing drugs, only to be found out and disqualified. Not only have they brought shame on themselves but on the nation they represent. There are no shortcuts in the Christian life. God has given us a standard to live by, and there are no exceptions. Sometimes we feel that God will somehow make special allowances for us - after all, we are not as bad as some other Christians. We should never measure ourselves against others but against God's standard which is His word.

To go for gold we cannot afford to carry excess baggage. If you are carrying extra weight in or on your physical body it will slow you down. That is why athletes train to keep their bodies in peak condition and wear aerodynamic sportswear that fits like a second skin. In Hebrews 12:1-2 we read that we ***"should lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us."*** We all struggle from time to time with issues in our lives - past hurts and disappointments, sin, anger and even unforgiveness which, if not dealt with, can lead to bitterness. You would think that Paul surely had good cause to carry a lot of excess baggage with him when we read the catalogue of wrongs done to him in 2 Cor.11! Not so, as Paul writes in Philippians 3:13, ***"but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind I press on towards the goal."***

To go for gold you need to finish well. I read somewhere that it is not how you start but how you finish that counts. For a runner, getting started is easy, but there will be times when they may have to jump over hurdles or break through the pain barrier to finish the race. They may even think about giving up. It is then that they need to remember that quitters never win and winners never quit! It is the same in our Christian lives. There will be times when we may have to persevere through the struggles and challenges that life throws at us, but if we keep our eyes fixed on the Lord He will see us through. Hebrews 12:1-2 puts it this way, ***"Run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."***