

called to COMPETE

LESSON 12

DETERMINATION

*“I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”*

2 Timothy 4:7

Her elementary school classmates used to mock her for her skinny “chicken legs” when she ran. But that all changed when she joined the track team in ninth grade. Allyson Felix is still listed at only 5-foot-6 and 125 pounds, but she isn’t teased by those who watch her run anymore. Not after she became the fastest woman in the world. After breaking Marion Jones’ national high school record in the 200 meters, Felix stunned the world by earning a silver medal at the 2004 Olympics at the age of 18. Later she became the world champion in three events—only the second woman ever to win three gold medals at the World Championships.

Felix’s determination to run isn’t only about winning. She said, “When you recognize that your athletic career is in God’s hands, it can keep you from getting caught up in the ‘winning is everything’ philosophy that so many coaches and athletes follow. Naturally, we all want to win or be successful, but unless we’re doing our sport God’s way, we’re not honoring and giving Him the glory. Whether you win or lose, you need to realize that your priority or goal is to bring the glory to God. Once I understood God’s perspective on sports, it helped me to enjoy my sport and gave me a greater purpose for running.”

- Do you think Christian athletes are more determined than other athletes? Why or why not?

WARM UP

Determination is working intently to accomplish goals regardless of the opposition. Determination is the resolve to keep going in spite of roadblocks. No matter how daunting the task, determined people finish the job.

In Philippians 3:12-14, Paul tells us to press on for the goal and the prize found in Christ Jesus. God calls us to never go backward. Attempt something great for God, and do it with all your might. Few things are more rewarding than the exhilaration of achievement after wholehearted effort. The stronger the current opposing us, the sweeter the victory.

Christians need to persist against a variety of obstacles. We are never finished until the race is done. Our adversary, the devil, tries to discourage us constantly, but through determination we can accomplish our goals in spite of a variety of obstacles.

1. How much do you listen to “naysayers” and those who talk negatively? How can you best respond with an attitude of determination?
2. Have you ever felt like quitting something but then did not? How did it make you feel to pursue, to keep going? How does quitting impact other people?
3. How do you respond when your determined efforts are shattered? Where do you go to find hope?
4. Describe a time when you or your team showed great determination. What ultimately happened?
5. What are the keys to determination?

WORKOUT

PHILIPPIANS 3:12,16

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

CONTEXT

The Apostle Paul uses the analogy of a runner to describe the Christian's spiritual growth. Since believers have not reached their goal of Christlikeness, they must continue to pursue it like the runner in a race. This goal of becoming like Christ is repeated many times in the Bible and is clear from passages like Romans 8:29, "For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers."

EXPLORE THE MEANING

1. What is the upward call of God?
2. How is Paul determined to meet this goal?
3. How is it possible to forget what lies behind?

MAN'S WAY OR GOD'S WAY?

Many athletes pursue goals that will only disappoint and frustrate them throughout their careers, but the Christian

athlete should have a much greater goal. Just as the Apostle Paul was still striving with the purpose of being Christlike, how much more should we be striving to be like our Savior? Christlikeness should be our goal in all we do. We should be determined to obtain it and press forward at all times. Paul was determined to be obedient so as to not disqualify himself from the prize. He had a goal and was determined to meet it.

GOING DEEPER

1. What are the common goals many athletes spend their lives pursuing? How can these be disappointing?
2. Are most athletes determined to become more like Christ? Why or why not?
3. How difficult is it to “press on” in life?

COMPETING GOD’S WAY

The Greek word for “press on” in Philippians 3:12 was used of a sprinter, and refers to aggressive, energetic action. The Apostle Paul was pursuing his goal of becoming like Christ with all his strength, straining every spiritual muscle to win the prize. As a coach and former athlete, I can relate to Paul’s aggressive pursuit of his goal. Each season, our coaching staff lays out individual and team goals for the year. However, for the Christian athlete or coach, nothing should take the place of our ultimate goal, which is becoming like Christ. I’m determined to help our team reach its goals, but nothing compares with our ultimate purpose as believers to conform to God’s glorious image. This was not only Paul’s goal, but should be the goal every Christian athlete should strive to attain.

ASSIGNMENT

- Bible reading: John chapters 20-21.
Watch Lesson #12 @ www.calledtocompete.com.