

Going, Going... Gone

Ready:

"So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

-2 Corinthians 4:18

Set

On Tuesday, November 20, five-time Olympic champion Ian Thorpe retired from competitive swimming at the age of 24. He said that breaking records "wasn't as inspiring as it should have been." As a teenager, Thorpe splashed into the swimming scene and swam to 13 world records between 1999 and 2002, and he became an international star after dominating at the Sydney Olympics.

Even with all the success, Thorpe realized that it was not all that it was cracked up to be. The medals, titles, records and accomplishments did not last long. The fans went home. The cameras were turned off. And Thorpe was left with an empty feeling that success could not fill. Not even breaking 13 world records lasted! This just proves that the external stuff fades quickly! The seen is temporary. World records are temporary. They are never enough.

Based on the verse above, it may sound a little crazy to focus on the unseen. If we can't see it, then why is Paul encouraging us in 1 Corinthians 4:18 to focus on the unseen? He knows that world records do not last. The world is the seen, and heaven is the unseen. As Christian competitors, God wants us to do our best. If it means breaking 13 world records or just playing pick-up basketball, God wants us to play for Him. Check your heart. What are your motives? Winning titles? Breaking records? Getting trophies? Or perhaps it is playing for Him.

The external stuff disappears. As a 24-year-old, Ian Thorpe realized that the glory of all the accomplishments was not significant. Blink and it is gone. If your focus is on the seen, then "Let the competition begin. Let the glory be mine." If it is on the unseen, then "Let the competition begin. Let the glory be God's."

Go

1. What have you won in the past that was significant at the time, but now is no big deal? What happened?
2. Why is it so easy to focus on the seen? Why is it so hard to focus on the unseen?
3. List three ways that can help you keep your focus on the unseen.

4. Who is a great example in your life that focuses on the unseen?

Workout

Proverbs 23:4-5

James 4:13-14

Overtime

"Lord, I want to compete for You alone. I am resolved to focus on the unseen, not the seen. Help me to remove the things that blur my vision. Too often I dwell on the external stuff. Show me that all I need is You. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Let all the glory be Yours."

Bible Reference:

James 4



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