

The Ultimate Champion

Ready:

“The LORD will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.” - Isaiah 42:13 (NIV)

Set

It's that time again—time for me to dig in and start the countdown to my next competition as a bodybuilder with multiple sclerosis. At 53 years old, I'm a few years older than when I last competed, and it certainly is not getting any easier. But, as He always does, the Lord has stood by me and has allowed me to keep pushing on by encouraging me to battle this disease and win.

In a sport filled with young, healthy men, I often find myself as the underdog, but God has led many people to join me in this journey and help me stay on track. Some even have celebrity status and are looked at as super stars in their fields. I've also, as I enter my fourth year of The MS Bodybuilding Challenge, received many emails and phone calls telling me that I am an inspiration. I've been featured on TV and radio and have been written about in books and articles. Now a Christian publisher is releasing a book on my story. If this all sounds prideful, you and I are tracking along the same lines! All of this is certainly enough to make someone proud of himself and swell his head!

The higher our status rises in sports, the easier it becomes to focus on ourselves and become prideful. I am human, and we all, at times, forget what is really occurring—why things are actually taking place—and pretty soon we begin taking credit for it. All the while, however, it has really been Christ who has led the way and supplied the might and power behind all of this amazing stuff. All that I am able to do is through His power and will. If it were up to me and my own strength, I would collapse just like one of the mountains God could crumble. Just check out Habakkuk 3:6 (NIV), which says, “He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed—but he marches on forever.”

The Lord warns us in Scripture that feeling great about ourselves and walking in pride is not a godly trait and that it leads to our fall. As Christians and ambassadors of Christ we all must always focus on Christ and remember that we are to represent Him and serve as examples to the world. Selfish pride should have no place in our lives, and in all of our triumphs as athletes and coaches, we should be the light of our Lord, shining with His humility and love.

As Jesus said in John 15:5, apart from Him we can do nothing. There is no strength in ourselves, no triumph without Him, whether in sports or in life in general. Yes, He wants us to

be champions, but champions for Him. When we look in our mirrors, we should see ourselves as vessels for which God can use to do His will—people who can touch lives for Christ. For me, I stand tall in that, not in the wins I achieve, but in the knowledge of His grace, love and power. I am a warrior for Christ, and He is the Ultimate Champion.

Go

1. Do you struggle with selfish pride after victories? Is it difficult to give God the credit for the ability you have to compete?
2. Do you acknowledge God's power in giving you the strength to achieve goals? Why or why not?
3. Who are your role models? Following the examples of others isn't a bad thing, but do you look to the world's super stars and champions above Christ?

Workout

- Leviticus 26:18-20
- 2 Chronicles 26:16
- Psalm 10:4

Bible Reference:

Isaiah 42



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