

Adversity; The Test of Competitive Determination

We have been there- we plan our training schedule, outline our diet, and schedule our life around an important upcoming competition. Then, *LIFE INTERFERES*.

It could be a heavier than expected study load, sickness, family commitment, or injury, but something throws you off-track and sets you back. This is the testing point of your regimen. You can break training and just go to the event “for experience”, with every intention of losing or not doing well, or you can simply quit and back out of the event. These are cowardly and sinful ways of dealing with the intrusions. The champion adapts and puts forth his best effort regardless of the obstacles. This is the virtue called “fortitude”, developed by St. Thomas Aquinas, which means a resolve of spirit in the face of adversity and obstacles. The true Christian competitor, and champion, has this resolve- this inner drive and power. It is not “tunnel-vision”, as this ignores all other elements in life. This virtue recognizes that there are other parts of life that may demand attention and finds the optimum path to excellent performance. The great Philosopher, Aristotle, called this the “golden mean”. Modern Ethics refers to this balanced approach to life as “synchrony”.

A Biblical figure may help illustrate adversity; Samson. His account is in Judges 13-16. Throughout his life, Samson relied on physical tremendous power to solve his problems. Whenever he called upon or needed his invincible strength, it was there. He lost his strength to Delilah, as she cut his hair; the sign of his power, a gift from God. While he was still a powerful man, naturally, he was no longer invincible and was overcome by the enemies who were lying in ambush for him. They captured him, gouged out his eyes, and put him to work in a milling house to turn a grist mill. These mills would grind the wheat for the people of the city and the work was usually done by a team of slaves or donkeys. The Hebrew Bible suggests that he had to turn the milling wheel alone. TALK ABOUT LIFE INTERFERING?

Eventually he was brought to the temple of the god, Dagon. Samson was exhausted, conditions in the milling houses were brutal and there was little rest. He was put on display for the Philistines, Israel's enemy. He was put between the pillars which supported the inner room of the temple. If you are wondering, archaeology has found temples from this time period that fit this description and has proven that such structures did exist in the time of Samson. After this ordeal, he summoned the faith to call to God once more to be remembered and to be granted his fullest strength. He did not wait for a sign, he acted on faith alone. With tremendous force, he dragged the pillars off of their bases, collapsing the temple and killing all who in it- including himself. By faith he overcame the exhaustion and horrific tortures inflicted upon him. For this faith, Samson is recognized as a “Hero of Faith” in the New Testament (Hebrews 11:32).

The lesson of Samson for competitors is clear; by faith we can adapt and overcome all challenges in our training. It is an act of faith, in God and His grace; that we always keep our

resolve in the face of the obstacles that life throws in our way and strive for our own individual excellence.

Read the following passages

- Judges 13-16
- Hebrews 11:32

Answer the following questions

1. When LIFE INTERFERES and our training gets thrown off, how do we avoid bitterness, resentment, or anger?
2. When LIFE INTERFERES, how do we prioritize the situation to get the most out of ourselves? Examine exactly what needs to be accomplished? Time management? Review strengths and weaknesses?
3. When LIFE INTERFERES with someone on our team or support system and this throws off our training- How do we adjust to the interruption that results? How can the “slack” be picked up and by whom? How do we deal with the anger that might emerge?



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