

Look What Jesus Did

Ready:

“For the Lord your God is the One who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.” – Deuteronomy 20:4

Set

In 2009 I stepped on a bodybuilding competition stage as a 50 year-old man with multiple sclerosis (MS), an incurable disease of the nervous system. When I was initially diagnosed in 2006 I was devastated. For years I had been a healthy bodybuilder and gym owner, but I now had an enemy in MS. Thankfully, my faith in Christ enabled me to see past what the doctors were telling me—that I was most likely bound for a wheelchair—and focus on the victory that I held in Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:57). I prayed vigilantly to find the answer on my life’s direction in fighting MS, and God made it clear that it was to go back into the gym.

Following His leading, I forced myself to train like a healthy 20-year-old despite the symptoms of pain, numbness, un-coordination, fatigue and all the other unpleasantness of MS. I pushed beyond my limits—sometimes a bit too far—but I had a goal, and that goal was to show the world that my God was stronger than any disease or limitation this world could put on me. I followed Philippians 3:14 (NIV), which says, “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

When I did compete in 2009 I was one of more than 150 athletes who stood on the NPC Florida State Bodybuilding Championships stage and the only one with MS. When I was handed my trophy for Most Inspirational Contestant and given a standing ovation I never once looked at myself and what I had accomplished. I had two thoughts in my mind. One was that I was blessed by being married to Kendra, the woman God had chosen for me, who stood by me, cheering me on through all the stress I inflicted on my body. And the second was that what was just accomplished was attained through the strength of my Lord Jesus Christ. There was no pat on my own back, no feeling of pride and nothing that resembled a “look at what I did” attitude. I was humbled, and I recalled James 4:10 (NIV): “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” I was honored to be in the presence of Christ and in His will. My position was, “Look at what Jesus did!”

Since that day I have had a faith-based book, *David's Goliath*, published with the forward written by FCA's Jimmy Page. I am the co-founder with my wife of a charity that helps people with MS conquer the disease through fitness and health (The MS Fitness Challenge); I write a column named after my charity for one of the largest online fitness publications (EverydayHealth.com); I've been honored by awards and media attention; and in March of this year Arnold Schwarzenegger will be presenting me with an award at his Arnold Classic Fitness Expo. All of these amazing happenings are the miracles that have come from Jesus and His grace on me despite my shortcomings. He is a perfect God in our lives of imperfection.

At the age of 56, I am now training hard for the Arnold Classic and am in my ninth year battling MS, and I plan on at least one more bodybuilding contest before I turn 60. I'm still humbled and honored by the grace, strength and love given to me by Christ in this journey. Whatever our accomplishments in athletic competition or in life, there is only one place to look and give praise, and that is to Jesus.

Go

1. Why is it important to stay humble when you are winning?
2. What are your goals in sports and in life? Are they in line with God's will? How can you know?
3. Do you focus more on your obstacles or on Jesus? What will be the outcome of doing both?

Workout

- 2 Chronicles 34:27
- Luke 9:62
- 2 Corinthians 5:9

Bible Reference:

Deuteronomy 20:4
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