

I'm Done

Ready:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.” – Philippians 2:3 (NIV)

Set

Knowing when to put your hand up and say, “I’m done,” (or in today’s vernacular, “I’m good”) indicates contentment in your present circumstances—a godly quality, as well as a sportsmanlike trait. Turns out, one of the greatest displays of sportsmanship in the history of athletics was also one of the quietest.

Unbeknownst to many outside of the sport of weightlifting is the story of the Olympic athlete who, when faced earlier with the opportunity to win the World Championship weightlifting competition in 1951, said instead, “I’m done.” Jim Bradford was ready, willing and able to snatch the title away from longtime champ John Davis. Bradford, an African-American who had no formal training, worked his way through Junior and Senior Nationals contests to land the spot second to Davis in Milan.

Bradford was at his best in form and fitness, but his opponent was not. Davis had suffered a leg injury earlier that was resurfacing as he pushed through his first clean and jerk lift. Bradford responded with ease. When Davis went back up, he managed to lift just enough to take the lead over Bradford. Davis was in pain, and Bradford knew it. So here was the moment in history when a great athlete made a great choice. Bradford knew that if he made another lift, it would no doubt surpass Davis’ because of Bradford’s present condition. If that happened, the undefeated champ would insist on returning to the stage once more, and Bradford knew that the “once more” could mean the end of Davis’ career and could possibly cause him permanent damage.

Bradford wanted what all athletes want. He dreamed the dreams of most competitors—to be No. 1. But he decided that it wasn’t worth it. He declined his next lift, choosing instead to hold up his hand and say, “I’ll stop here. I’m done.” Bradford put the care and concern of his fellow weightlifter in front of his personal glory.

The Bible says in Galatians 6:9-10: “So we must not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don’t give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.” Simply put, God commands us to put others—even our competitors—before ourselves, and athletes are no exception. He wants us to be so surrendered to Him that we value others above our personal achievements.

First Peter 5:6 says, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time.” The great thing about God is that He will honor our obedience to Him when we choose to love others above ourselves. If we follow His leading and don’t worry about forcing our way to the top—instead, letting Him fill us and use us—He will recognize our Christ-like behavior and “exalt” us in due time.

The story ends with Jim Bradford having won silver medals in both the 1952 and 1960 Olympic Games and eight consecutive World Championships, which is a record unbroken to this day. His greatest victory, however, was the one that didn’t make the news: His choosing character over credential.

Go

1. Have you ever had to choose between your own success and the well-being of someone else? What did you choose? What was the result?
2. Think of a time when someone demonstrated good sportsmanship or character to you. How did that make you feel?
3. How does putting someone else’s needs above your own bring glory to Christ?
4. What is one way you can prioritize others above yourself in sports?

Workout

- 1 Corinthians 9:25
- 1 Timothy 6:6
- 1 Timothy 6:11-12

Bible Reference:

Philippians 2:3

Galatians 6:9-10

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