

“I Did It For Me”

The build-up for the Olympic Games was relentless. The United States was expected to win Gold in multiple sports. Anything less was a failure. Olympic gymnast Simone Biles was a prime example. Because of her past success, she was acclaimed the Greatest of All Time (G.O.A.T.) which brought with it the expectation of Gold every time she stepped into the gym. For 18 of her 24 years of life, Simone has prepared for Olympic competition. Her international accomplishments are outstanding: more World medals (25) and World gold medals (19) than anyone else in history. Coming into this year’s Olympic Games, her gymnastic routines were the most difficult ever attempted. We overlooked the fact that she needed to be at her best to safely perform them. The expectations of perfection and weight of the world were squarely on her shoulders. What does the Bible say about expectations? *For am I now seeking the approval of man or God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10).* In reality, there is no satisfying man. If Simone wins Gold, it is expected. If she wins, instead of praising her accomplishments, the attention shifts to whether or not she will compete in the *next* Olympic Games. Expectations never end.

Before her first event, Biles said she was “feeling the weight of the world on her shoulders.” None of us have likely experienced the enormous stress that Simone Biles was enduring. As a result, she wasn’t up to her unsurpassed standard of excellence in the qualifying round, but she and her talented teammates advanced to the team finals. Then in the team finals, after one vault, Biles withdrew from the rest of that day’s events. “I had no idea where I was in the air,” Biles said. Her mind didn’t allow her to complete the complicated tricks she had prepared. Knowing herself well, Biles said, “It is OK sometimes to even sit out the big competitions to focus on yourself because it shows how strong of a competitor and person you are – rather than just battle through it.”

Simone Biles is a young lady of faith. In her book, *Courage to Soar*, she credited “faith and family to help her stay focused



and positive” as she prepared for the Olympic Games. But, at this most public moment, with the world watching, Biles focus wasn’t up to the task at hand. It was time to step back and re-group. For an entire week, Simone Biles cheered others on in their gymnastic pursuits – not only Americans but competitors from other countries. On the final gymnastic event of the Olympics, Biles modified her balance beam routine, earning a bronze medal. Her comment was, “I did it for me.”

Expectations of others are their expectations, not yours. The bronze medal on the balance beam was a fantastic accomplishment. It was rightfully Biles's choice to withdraw until her mental condition allowed her to use her exceptional skills to safely compete. She was at peace with her decisions because God was with her. *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:27).*

When we are faced with the expectations of others, our response should be to seek God’s guidance. It doesn’t matter what other people think. It only matters what God thinks. God’s presence in her life gave her the strength to succeed and overcome the stress and anxiety on that balance beam. *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).*

Jesus himself didn’t live up to the people’s expectations. He was a carpenter’s son who associated with sinners. He rode into Jerusalem to the cheers and expectant cries of “Hosanna” (which means “God save us”) from people who wanted Jesus to save them from the Romans, not from their own sins. A few days later, Jesus was crucified, flanked by two sinners. What happened next – the Resurrection – was the greatest victory of all. Jesus chose the path He took as our Savior. To do that He let go of the expectations of others. With God by her side, Simone Biles made her choice as well, only stepping up when she was ready. Her success on the balance beam was her reward for years of hard work. She didn’t owe us anything. As Simone Biles said, “I did it for me.”

Questions: When did you feel the peace of God at a time when you were stressed? How do you deal with the expectations of others?