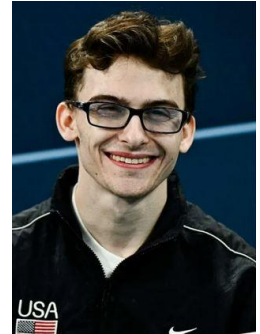


Perseverance Leads to Hope

One of the captivating storylines of the Paris Olympic Games is men’s gymnast, Stephen Nedoroscik. Born with strabismus (cross-eyed) at birth, Stephen sought to overcome what may have sidelined others. Only with perseverance can we overcome obstacles. The Bible tells us, *“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”*(Romans 5:3-5).

Stephen Nedoroscik made the US Olympic team because of his specialty on the pommel horse, an apparatus that the United States has been weak in the past two decades. Stephen focused all his training on the pommel horse event. At the 2024 team finals, he waited patiently for his turn, even serving water to his teammates. He cheered on his teammates and spent time in meditation. Sitting on the sideline, he looked every bit as the electrical engineer that he was. He did not appear to be a world-class athlete, wearing those thick, Clark Kent-like glasses. Behind his non-athletic look, he was the two-time national collegiate champion and 2021 world champion on the pommel horse. He now was in position to use his special skill to clinch an Olympic medal for his team and end a 16-year Olympic medal drought for the US men’s team. His lifetime of preparation came down to 45 seconds. Stephen removed the glasses, donned the imaginary “Superman” cape, and secured the medal for the United States. His score of 14.866 did it.



Success is rarely present without struggle, even for Olympians. The public doesn’t see what Stephen had to overcome to reach the podium. Stephen said his troubles have been challenging but helpful. “Running into trouble on the apparatus early on taught me how to fight, how to stay on, how to really go for that routine,” he said. “And I think that that has stuck with me throughout.” *He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak* (Isaiah 40:29).



Any great accomplishment requires perseverance. To succeed in any endeavor, we must work hard to overcome the obstacles in front of us. “I don’t think I actually use my eyes on pommel horse,” he told The Washington Post. “It’s all feeling. *I see with my hands.*” Even growing in our faith requires perseverance. The good news is that when we persevere, we find that we have grown in character and abilities. The success of the U.S.A. Men’s team and Stephen Nedoroscik remind us all today that perseverance can lead to the life we all desire.

Question: What obstacles do you need to overcome? Stay the course. Perseverance builds character, which leads to hope, and the Holy Spirit transforms your hope to accomplishment. With Christ at your side, push ahead.

Prayer: Lord. Together we can overcome the obstacles in my path. Lead me in the way you want me to go and give me the strength to succeed. Amen.

(Some of the conclusions for this story are from Rev. Keith King, St. Luke’s Methodist Church, Oklahoma)