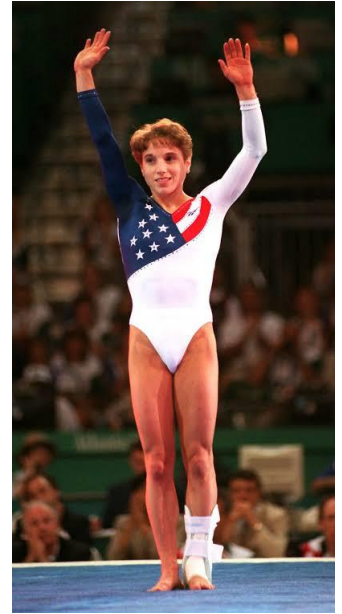


You Can Do It

We were there. Our seats were in the second to the top row of the Georgia Dome. The US Olympic gymnastics team, dubbed “The Magnificent Seven,” was competing for team gold in the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. The final event of the meet was the vault, and Kerri Strug was the last US gymnast. TV commentators said she needed a score of 9.6 or above on either of her two vaults for the US to win gold. The US would medal but the color was up to Kerri. Her first vault was a disaster. She scored a 9.162, coming up short on the landing and falling backward to the mat. Kerri felt her left ankle pop on the landing. As she limped back to the top of the runway, pain was searing through her leg. She knew she was in deep trouble. She could not land her second vault on the injured leg, yet she didn’t want to let her team and country down. Her once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Olympic gold seemed out of reach.

Her teammates knew what she was facing, and they encouraged her. Strug looked at her coach, Bella Karolyi, who nodded his head and said the now-famous words, “You can do it, Kerri. You can do it.” With that reassurance, Strug refocused her attention on the task at hand. The world held its breath, and she rushed down the runway. She did a handspring on the mat, touched the “table,” and rotated one and a half times as she glided through the air. The run-up to the vault was painful, but the landing was sure to be a hundred times worse. Kerri Strug “stuck” a one-footed landing, absorbing all the weight on her right foot. She saluted the judges before collapsing on the mat in pain. Seconds later, the score flashed on the screen: 9.712. It was a gold medal performance for the ages. After she received medical attention immobilizing her leg, Bella Karolyi carried Strug to the medal stand to receive her gold.



Overcoming adversity isn’t something that happens on its own. We can’t merely “will” something away. Kerri Strug had spent countless hours training for that moment but had never trained for a one-footed landing. An essential part of that training was mental focus and trust in her coach. His reassurance at the moment of truth was the only way Kerri could have attempted the seemingly impossible task. It took courage, determination, and reassurance to attempt the miraculous. “You can do it” was the reassurance that she needed to turn trust into reality. Overcoming the seemingly impossible became Kerri Strug’s finest hour.

We can train for life by growing our faith and trusting the Lord. We don’t have to rehearse every possible twist of fate, nor can we imagine what obstacles we will face. When a seemingly task is in front of us, we need to focus on Jesus. We need to be “one with Jesus.” If it is His will, He will say to us, “You can do it.” The Bible tells us, *The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. (Deuteronomy 31:8).*

Trust the Lord and, with Him at your side, have the courage to take the first step down the runway of life. Life is not without pain, but rising above it might be your finest hour. Let Jesus help you overcome the obstacles in your path. Focus on Jesus. You can do it.

Question: When have you accomplished something you thought was impossible, but you placed your trust in the Lord, and did it?

Prayer: Dear Lord. We place our lives in Your hands. Lead us where you want us to go and give us courage to follow You. Amen.