

Who Are the Truly Handicapped People?

Our family has always enjoyed watching the Olympic games. As a person who enjoys playing sports, I find it incredible what trained athletes can do.

Equally amazing is what athletes are doing in the Paris Paralympics, which concludes today. From August 28 through September 8, athletes competed in 22 sports against athletes worldwide. Sports include archery, track and field, blind football (soccer), para-badminton, wheelchair tennis, table tennis, para canoeing, cycling, para judo, swimming, wheelchair fencing, and numerous other sports. These aren't "weekend warriors." They are people who have risen above their circumstances and trained for the opportunity to compete in Paris.

A national news broadcast showed USA's Matt Stutzman winning the gold medal in archery. Stutzman was born with no arms yet he made the decision to become skilled at archery. He had to use his legs to hold the bow, and his toes to aim. Stutzman scored a bullseye while winning the gold medal. A blind soccer game uses a ball with a built-in rattle so players can locate the ball. Coaches tapped on the goalpost's metal frame to indicate the goal's perimeter at the taking of a free kick. The goalkeepers were sighted so they could direct their teammates when defending. Instead of wildly cheering the action, the crowd had to remain quiet so that the athletes could use their acute sense of hearing to locate the ball and the target. All the field players wore shades over their eyes so that different levels of impairment didn't matter. They were all on a "level playing field." The field had sideboards to keep the ball in play on the touch lines.



The Bible tells us that every person is a unique creation of God (Psalm 139:16). We all have impairments. Mankind is imperfect. People with physical or mental impairments have learned to trust God and not themselves. Perhaps the truly handicapped people in the world are those who don't think they need God. They think they can do it all themselves. They are handicapped because they ignore access to God's power that believers have.

Athletes at the Paralympics run on prosthetic blades. Badminton and tennis players scoot around in wheelchairs. Swimmers sometimes have no arms or legs, yet use what they have. The Bible tells us that God gives us what we need. We read in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "*But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness, so that Christ's power may rest with me.*"

As human beings, we don't need to limit ourselves in what we attempt to do. With God, all things are possible. *Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).*

Let us celebrate what God has done through these exceptional paralympic athletes. While paralympic athletes are well-trained to overcome the obstacles in their path, we all have obstacles to overcome. We can overcome the obstacles if we trust God and work hard to align our will with God's will. Who are the handicapped? They are people who try to live life on their own terms and aren't empowered by God for a purpose.

Question: What holds you back from accomplishing what God wants to do through you?

Prayer: Lord, we are in awe of how you empower your people to overcome obstacles and accomplish great things in Your name. We trust that you can do wonderful things through us, too. Amen.